



The War on Drugs ideology in Brazil

A ideologia da Guerra às Drogas no Brasil

Pedro Henrique Antunes da COSTA*
Kíssila Teixeira MENDES**

Abstract: The article focusses on the War on Drugs (WOD) in contemporary Brazil, analysing the ideologies that constitute it, as well as its ideological character. It is a theoretical and analytical exercise, revisiting works on the subject from a critical perspective, based on the assumptions, concepts and authors in the Marxist tradition. We conclude that when employing ideologies, WOD is also ideological, making us believe that it aims to combat an evil (drugs), masking its socio-cultural, political and economic objectives. It is not merely ignorant or a failed project, which did not achieve its proposed goal of eliminating certain substances and their use. On the contrary, it has been an effective project in what it set out to achieve - the maintenance of inequality, the control and extermination of part of the population - as well as being a well-conceived rationale that nourishes itself from others, derived from the social dynamic itself, as the structural conflict of class and racism.


Keywords: War on Drugs; Ideology; Poverty; Racism; State violence.

Resumo: O presente artigo tem como objeto a Guerra às Drogas (GD) no Brasil contemporâneo, almejando analisar as ideologias que lhe constituem, bem como seu caráter ideológico. Trata-se de um exercício teórico e analítico, resgatando produções sobre o tema num viés crítico e se baseando em pressupostos, conceitos e autores da tradição marxista. Constatamos que, ao se utilizar de ideologias, a GD é também ideológica, o que nos faz acreditar que visa combater um mal (as drogas), escondendo objetivos socioculturais, políticos e econômicos. Não se trata de mera ignorância ou projeto falido, que não deu certo frente ao seu suposto objetivo (eliminar determinadas substâncias e seu uso). Pelo contrário, é um projeto eficaz naquilo que se propõe - a manutenção da desigualdade, o controle e o extermínio de parte da população -, assim como uma racionalidade bem engendrada e que se nutre de outras, oriundas da própria dinâmica social, como o antagonismo de classe e o racismo estruturais.

Palavras-chave: Guerra às Drogas; Ideologia; Pobreza; Racismo; Violência estatal.

* Psychologist. Doctor of Psychology at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora. Professor of the Department of Clinical Psychology at the Universidade de Brasília. (UnB, Brasília (DF), Brasil). Campus Darcy Ribeiro, Instituto Central de Ciências Sul, Asa Norte, Brasília/DF, 70910-900. E-mail: <phantunes.costa@gmail.com>. ORC ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2404-8888>.

** Psychologist and Social Scientist. Masters and Doctorate in Psychology at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora. (UFJF, Juiz de Fora, Brasil). Campus Universitário, Instituto de Ciências Humanas, Rua José Lourenço Kelmer, s/n - São Pedro, Juiz de Fora/MG, 36036-900. E-mail: <kissilamm@hotmail.com>. ORC ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7817-599X>.

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Introduction

This article analyses the War on Drugs (WOD) in contemporary Brazil, with an emphasis on the ideologies that form it. The argument focusses on demonstrating how, by using ideologies on drugs and reality, WOD itself becomes ideological, hindering the ability to understand and address the problem and its interface with the social question (SQ). Because it is neither irrational nor haphazard, it serves purposes that ultimately reinforce the maintenance and intensification of social and racial antagonisms. To elucidate the arguments about such statements, we will carry out a theoretical and analytical exercise, revisiting productions on the subject from a critical perspective.

WOD is one of the material forms of the prohibitionist paradigm, where the state views drugs as a problem in themselves and their use as harmful, defining which of these substances should be illegal - removed from production, marketing and consumption - and legal, tolerated at a certain level, and in some cases promoted. We know that their motivations are varied: moralistic, economic-mercantile and (geo)political (FIORE, 2012). This is how the State views drugs and the relationship established with them, where the conception we have of them and their consumption are constituted and constitutive of historical particularities and movement, responding to the conditions posed by reality. No wonder WOD appears in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in a scenario of increasing poverty in Europe. In this scenario, the state has re-functionalised and resized itself, seeking to sustain the dynamics of accumulation and increase profit rates, whilst also embracing the demands and needs of the working class. WOD, in turn, became one of the ways for the state to assume the management of SQ regarding drugs and their intersection, facing the pressures of the working class and the demands of the market and the bourgeoisie, along with needs of economic and geopolitical expansion. (GONÇALVES; ALBUQUERQUE, 2016).

Despite the alleged failure of early attempts to implement this model, specifically in the production and prohibition of certain substances such as opium in China and India by British and alcohol in the United States of America, the WOD became global from the 1960's and 1970's, led by the US and the United Nations (UN). Not coincidentally, this corresponded with the beginning of a structural crisis of capitalism, with sharp falls in accumulation (HARVEY, 1998), which leads us to consider the intimate connections of this policy with the restructuring of capital and the neoliberal project, as outputs from this scenario. Regarding this debate, Matsumoto, Frias and Almeida (2018) point out the effects of this crisis on the elimination and imprisonment of certain poor and black subjects considered by the State as surplus to or causes of the so-called social ills. Added to this is the management of poverty and other expressions of the SQ generated within capitalist society itself, through a control bias, in the criminalisation and elimination of

the part of the population most affected by it. Therefore, instead of targeting poverty, it targets the poor, understanding that controlling and suppressing them would mean combating and minimising the former, with the state renewing a social *Darwinism* with classist and racist undertones.

The adoption and intensification of the hegemonic prohibitionist paradigm and its WOD model stem from their objective of securing commercial and economic interests, in addition to the segregationist and colonial/imperialist political plans, which relate to economic, political and geopolitical dimensions. Highly profitable, it strengthens international trafficking, merging with finance capital by being associated with money laundering schemes, fostering an entire arms-war market. In addition, it has been and continues to be used for the expansion and strengthening of European and US imperialist and colonial intentions. In Latin America, drug control is one of the justifications for US government domination and control - with Latin American countries seen as producers of these substances - along with their people, who are the preferred targets of mass incarceration and the social and racial criminalisation of poverty.

Such factors dominate the incongruities of WOD, such as its grounding in the unrealistic concept of a *drug-free society* (which sets itself an unattainable goal) and a belief in their deleterious social consequences, which are not present in the practice of substance use. However, as the reflections themselves already signal, the economic and (geo)political dimensions themselves do not explain this model, due to its explicit violence, criminalisation and venality. As an example, in Brazil, under Law 11.343, from 2006 until 2016, the number of prisoners for drug trafficking increased from approximately 31,000 to 203,000, an increase of over 600 % (BRAZIL, 2016). Around 28% of the Brazilian prison population is related to trafficking, overlapping with processes of racial criminalisation and poverty. According to the Brazilian Public Security Forum, in 2017, 5,159 deaths were recorded as a result of police interventions (an average of 14 per day), representing a growth of 21%, many of which refer to WOD (BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SECURITY FORUM, 2018). Also, in 2017, 75.5% of homicide victims were black, and for each non-black individual murdered, 2.7 blacks were killed, again, with very little relationship with the WOD (BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SECURITY FORUM; INSTITUTE). ECONOMIC RESEARCH, 2019). Data on this violence is mounting and we could present others, but we believe we have already demonstrated its essence and purpose.

So, we ask ourselves: how does WOD, despite its contradictions and corruption, remain? This leads us to consider the importance of ideology in sustaining this war, limited to a social totality, and how it cannot be understood separately from the economic and political dimensions of contemporary Brazilian reality. The objective of this article is to point out some clues that lead us to further clarification on the following questions: What is the role of ideologies in the maintenance and resurgence of WOD in the present day? How does its ideological dimension contribute to the normalisation of a logic of control and elimination of certain subjects and social groups, masking its venal character?

Some thoughts on ideology

Before answering the above questions, it is necessary to clarify what ideology is, or rather how we will treat ideology, given its polysemy and controversy in the humanities. The intention, therefore, is not to provide an exhaustive or in-depth view of the concept, but to clarify the key interpretative and theoretical-conceptual bases used to understand reality and the objectives we have set ourselves. Despite the plurality of meanings, ideology will be treated based on some assumptions and authors of the Marxist tradition - even though there is no consensus within them. Opposing idealistic perspectives, we choose to understand ideology from a dialectical historical materialist perspective. Not only a set of abstract ideas, much less a mere product of the social imagination, our grounding is anchored in the very structures that shape social life, lived relationships and social practices. Using Löwy (2010), this set of ideas is our social worldview, that is, “[...] structured sets of cognitive values, representations, ideas and orientations [...]” (LÖWY, 2010, p. 13), unified “[...] from a social point of view, of determined social classes [...]” (LÖWY, 2010, p. 13). For the author, these social worldviews can be both utopian - pointing to a non-existent reality and contributing to the overthrowing of order - and ideological - legitimising and maintaining the social order.

Nor will we deal with ideology in any social formation, but in capitalist society, which, despite its ebbs and flows and local and historical particularities, has produced class antagonism, sustaining itself in highly varied forms with the state as the guarantor. Following these parameters, ideology emerges from the historical process itself, resulting from the social division of labour and private property, fostering the splitting and estrangement of the human being from his activity, himself and human genericity (MARX; ENGELS, 2007; KONDER, 2002). Thus, there will be an obscurity about reality, because it is based on the relationships we establish with ourselves and this reality, which, in turn, materialises in the way we act and organise ourselves in society, disguising the domination inherent in this social order (MARX and ENGELS, 2007). However, following Konder's (2002) caveat: “[...] the process of ideology is greater than false consciousness, [...] it is not reduced to false consciousness, since it necessarily incorporates true knowledge into its movement [...]” (KONDER, 2002, p. 49).

This might lead us to conclude that the predominant ideologies are the ideas of the ruling class. From these statements, three points arise: (a) there is not only one dominant ideology, as if it were something consensual (LÖWY, 2010); (b) ideologies are not necessarily false or irrational, but may be underlaid by reality and truth, which leads us to analyse them not only from the logical formalism of the arguments or their cognitive dimension, but also linking them to the historical movement (past, present and future), the motivations they carry with them, who utters them and the forms in which they are explained, their functionalities and other elements linked to the socio-historical context (EAGLETON, 1997); and (c) this ideological conformity does not occur by simple

imposition or coercion, ignorance or bad intentions, but because they are the expression of the social relations of production that make this class the dominant:

Dominant ideas are nothing more than the ideal (ideological) expression of dominant material relations understood as ideas; therefore, it is the expression of relations that make a class the ruling class, it is the ideas of its domination (MARX; ENGELS, 1845/2007, p. 47).

Consequently, we will remove ourselves from the understanding of ideology through a prism of neutrality. Ideology contributes to the maintenance of this social order through a series of mechanisms: generalisation of the specific, concealment, justification and normalisation of reality, etc. (IASI, 2013; MARX; ENGELS, 2007). Yet, Almeida (2018) and Marx and Engels (2007), maintain that ideology cannot be considered as separate from the state, after all this is the political form of capitalism and plays the essential role of maintaining order - and not an abstract entity apart from civil society, as if it were its driver and producer. For this to happen, it is necessary that it internalise or even normalise its internal contradictions and the sociability which it expresses. This movement, in its turn, can be affected both physically, through explicit coercion, and in a more subtle - and no less perverse - manner by ideology, so as not only to justify, but to normalise its inequalities and exploitative and oppressive character.

The WOD makes this coercive character explicit. One only has to consider the way we view and relate to drugs and how we incorporate them into our daily lives or seek to get rid of them - see data on incarceration and mass criminalisation - but it also exists and is maintained by expressing “[...] dominant social values [...]” (RYBKA; NASCIMENTO; GUZZO, 2018, p. 101), such as: medicalisation, moralism, prejudice and stigmatisation. These serve as support for criminalisation and perverting logic on certain subjects and social groups. In short, a conjunction between conservative bourgeois morals, the health of rationale, coercive biomedical, and hygienist science and repressive public security.

However, in order not to fall into an ahistorical and fatalistic perspective, we must understand ideologies as social products, the fruit of human history, as the materialisation of man's own actions, and his contradictory character, just like reality itself. According to Löwy (2010), “[...] they must be analysed in their historicity, in their historical development, in their historical transformation” (LÖWY, 2010, p. 15). Addressing the ideologies that shape WOD is important not only to demystify them, and WOD itself, but also to contribute to the production of other - utopian - ways of understanding the issue and the reality that conforms it.

The Role of Ideology in the War on Drugs

In order to answer the questions posed by this article, the beginning of an explanation inevitably goes to the historical understanding that WOD is, in fact, a set of engenderments inherent to capitalist social formation, based on the normalisation and reification of the exploitation and domination of man over man. That is, it is the continuation of a way of organising, relating and living, where the many are worth less than the few and is, therefore, constituted by exploitative and oppressive conditions of existence that favour this dominant economic, political and ideological minority. In the case of Brazil, we have the aggravating factor that this antagonistic sociability was forged by processes of invasion and predation, colonisation and slavery, characterising a dependent and subordinate condition in the face of world capitalism, conforming what Darcy Ribeiro (2006) called *mills that grind people*. Using Darcy's terminology, WOD is yet another of the blades and pestles that slice and grind people who have historically been targeted because of their class, race/ethnicity, gender, age and location, among others.

Given the inadequacy of traditional forms of exploitation and oppression of the popular majorities to address the political and sociocultural economic needs of our society, the system reconfigures itself, refining itself according to the historical moment, in order to deal with the inconveniences arising from its contradictions and to sustain itself. As a prime example, we have the restructuring of production in the 1970's, due to the crisis of capitalism, with flexible accumulation supplanting the rigid Fordist model. Initially in the sphere of production, this brought innumerable consequences - what Harvey (1998) called the postmodern condition or ambience- with both being determined reflexively.

Fanon (1980) points out these mutations and sophistications, when talking about the complexity that the forms of racial domination acquire with the ebb and flow of capitalism;

The complexity of the means of production, the evolution of economic relations, which, whether you like it or not, drags that of ideologies, unbalances the system. Common racism in its biological form corresponds to the period of brutal exploitation of man's arms and legs. The perfection of the means of production inevitably camouflages the techniques of exploitation of man and the forms of racism (Fanon, 1980, p. 39).

The WOD can be understood as being interlaced by, and as part of, this process of material and ideological sophistication of forms of domination, exploitation and oppression, when based on a principle that, in the Brazilian case, it is grounded on our social formation since the invasion and colonisation: violence against a subordinate

population. A project that has developed, allied to neoliberalism and the Penal State¹, which, according to Flauzina (2006), “[...] is sophisticated, without substantially changing [...]”, “[...] the inheritance of the slavery statute [...]”, (FLAUZINA, 2006, p. 42). Therefore, when we say sophistication, it does not mean that the processes of exploitation and domination have diminished. Drawing a parallel, we can see how the flexibilisation of modes of production does not imply any reduction in the exploitation and alienation of labour, but rather strengthens the conditions of expropriation and servitude of the working class, with precarious labour ties, outsourcing, increased informality and disenfranchisement, all under the ideology of meritocracy and, more recently, entrepreneurship (ALMEIDA, 2018).

As set out in the introduction, WOD has contributed to the intensification of this domination and oppression, and it is through this that sophistication has occurred, precisely because it is sustained and growing, despite its consequences and contradictions. Moreover, its mechanisms and advances, in the face of the chain and whip (which never really ceased to exist) or straightforward imprisonment, have become more complex, which clouds its purposes by allying itself with other ideological mechanisms: (a) related to the aforementioned understandings about drugs; and (b) around our social formation, such as meritocracy, the myth of racial democracy, the supposed Brazilian way and the maxim that *a good bandit is a dead bandit*, among others – which are incorporated even by those who are WOD's primary targets. A very illuminating example of the complexity and sophistication of such a process are the Police Pacifying Units (UPPs) in Rio de Janeiro's favelas, which, according to Marielle Franco (2018), have replaced police raids, which until then were the *modus operandi* of repressive action by the state in these areas. These incursions result in the occupation of the territory by the police, but without significantly altering security policy or the logic of the growth of the penal state and the elimination of the poor, blacks and slum dwellers.

However, when addressing WOD and its ideological dimension, we must consider its multiple mediations and concrete and symbolic expressions, which instrumentalise drugs as an argument to foster strategies for stigmatisation, racism, criminalisation (especially of poverty) and mass incarceration. This is not a war about substances, but about people: it is a war against the *shareholders of nothing*, that is, those who have little or no part to play in the dynamics of the flow of illicit drugs, but who are associated with it, so that they become *expendable lives*, because of their *unworthy lives* (D'ELIA FILHO, 2015). In short, with this policy the most subordinated groups and members of the working class are affected, such as the young, marginalised, poor and black population.

According to Bucher and Oliveira (1994), the *anti-drug* discourse satisfies a requirement of the ruling classes to “[...] *need an enemy* - if not external, then internal to society [...]” (BUCHER; OLIVEIRA, 1994, p. 145). In the current context of the intensification of the

¹ For a better understanding of the Penal State, read Wacquant (2003).

crisis of capitalism - whose responses, through the restructuring of production and the neoliberal project, have sharpened social inequality - this logic of differentiation and “identifying” enemies intensifies, as a way of blaming the subjects for their life conditions and the structural problems of society and country. This logic is then revealed in xenophobia against refugee immigrants, intolerance to minorities in the struggle for rights and understanding and dealing with poverty and the poor, among others. Regarding WOD, if at some point the *enemy* was the *drugs*, in the current context it is increasingly *people* who are being identified: - the traffickers and drug users.

In this sense, the territories inhabited by these subjects equally become enemies, being seen in some way as dissociated from the city or even antagonistic toward it (FRANCO, 2018). We can draw a parallel to what we pointed out earlier regarding WOD being used for US imperialism in Latin America. In some Latin American countries (Colombia and Mexico, for example), the favela is treated as an “external” territory, a non-city, and is seen as the producer of drugs and the crux of crime that plagues the city, whose residents, especially the middle and upper classes, will be the alleged victims of this enemy next-door. Consequently, the occupation of the favela by the State is now permitted and desirable.

Moreover, the trafficker's label itself implies an endorsement that those identified as such can be killed - which connects with yet another stigma, that of the slum, these two becoming inseparable and serving as an argument for the invasion of certain territories by the State and its repressive arm and ensuring the genocide of this population. It is worth mentioning how this category and its symbolism stem from the illegality of the production, commercialisation and consumption of certain substances, and not from the consumption alone, preventing or hindering us from seeing what these subjects are: workers, many in poverty and precarious life situations.

It can be understood that a part of these subjects, as the poor working class, is crossed by a contradiction, related to the functionality exercised by the system. On the one hand, they constitute the *reserve industrial army* and part of the stagnant relative overpopulation², being a necessary product and lever of capitalist accumulation (MARX, 2013). They cannot be excluded from the mode of production and the capitalist social order. For Ferraz (2010), the illegality of certain productive activities, such as trafficking, constitutes an “[...] efficient form of capital accumulation [...]” (FERRAZ, 2010, p. 158),

² In line with Ferraz (2010) and Rocha (2015), we understand that the workers who make up the base of trafficking, permeated by poverty and precariousness, are part of the stagnant relative overpopulation. For Marx (1867/2013), there are three forms of relative overpopulation: (a) fluctuating, constantly being repelled and attracted to jobs, (b) latent, encompassing rural workers compelled to leave the countryside and become urban workers; (c) stagnant, consisting of workers in irregular occupations whose living conditions are, “[...] below the normal average level of the working class [...]” (MARX, 2013, p. 873).

necessary for lowering wages and, in our case of dependent capitalism, to further exploitation of the labour force.

On the other, even possessing this functionality, why do these subjects remain the target of State violence and elimination? Because the economic dimension does not exist in isolation and determines the rest mechanically. So, due to the conditions of poverty and misery in Brazil, and ideological constructions – e.g. they are not workers and, therefore, are not citizens or subjects with rights - their elimination becomes an expression of the system and functional to it. This is reiterated in our colonial, racist constitution, and in the dependent condition of the country, with its *mills that grind people*, as well as in the growth of the penal state which is, dialectically, the expression and circumstance of the neoliberal policy of dismantling social welfare. In other words, we mean that by targeting such subjects and eliminating them, coupled with economic issues (when treated as commodities), the state acts politically and ideologically to make it difficult for us to perceive and question the nature of this intense social antagonism and the structures responsible for these ills. That is, it *sacrifices* the most subordinate part of its population for its own survival/maintenance.

We have a situation in which the system generates a population surplus, the functionality of the elimination of which can - ideologically, politically and economically - surpass that which it exerts in reproducing the Brazilian capitalist mode of production. Drawing a parallel with the literature, Carolina Maria de Jesus, in the *Child of the Dark* (1963), uses the term *rebotalho* (Literally – garbage) when speaking about herself and the slum. According to Rocha (2015), the ideological support for WOD in Brazil also involves developing the image of the trafficker as a black criminal, poor, young and a slum dweller (to the point of being the other) and the *evil citizen*. In short, a fraction of a dangerous class that needs not only to be controlled but combated and eliminated. Using Marielle Franco (2018) again, the WOD, with its practice of the control and elimination of subordinated subjects and territories, propagates itself ideologically, including as a means for peace, to be accepted by public opinion. The very term *Pacifying* in the title of the UPP's denotes what we have discussed here. We have another contradiction in a relationship in which the ends justify the means: war and death for some, to achieve peace and security for others.

As Rocha (2015) and Matsumoto, Farias and Almeida (2018) set out, WOD is a policy that aims to realise and normalise a predatory class antagonism and racism towards *the lower* - which takes place not only through the normalisation of antagonistic social structures of class and race, among others, but through their intensification, together with their essential barbarism. A conflict that is not war, but basically state extermination of these subjects and social groups. The recent mutations of our society, both in the productive and reproductive sphere (HARVEY, 1998), and the intensification of the structural crisis of capitalism and the offensive of capital and the neoliberal project, along with the *reserve industrial army* and the relative overpopulation of the country, lead us to consider the

resurgence of the forms of control, punishment and elimination of these people - either by the WOD or by other mechanisms employed or justified by the State, such as the penal system, the deliberate shortcomings of social policies (such as health and education) and the present retrogressive politics.

Moreover, in view of the countless contradictions within our society, we should also consider that the illegality of certain substances, both in the production process and in the existence of groups or factions linked to drug trafficking, also has advantages for the State and/or presents tiny connections between this and its actors. On this basis, Fraga and Iulianelli (2011), analysing the marijuana production chain in the Northeast of Brazil, show that the cultivation of this plant serves as an income alternative and source of subsistence for farmers negatively impacted by climate change and an absence of agrarian policies for small producers and the poor. However, due to the illegality of their occupations, their lives are permeated by precarious working relationships and interface with drug trafficking and its attendant dangers. In other cases, where there is a lack or absence of the State with regard to social policies, groups linked to trafficking fill such a role, ranging from fostering the local economy to meeting the basic needs of communities (food, housing, leisure, etc.), as well as contributing to even greater State unaccountability (HIRATA; GRILO, 2017). There are also innumerable overlaps and power arrangements between agents of illegality (supposedly the traffickers) and those of legality (in theory, those of the State). Even disputes between groups or factions over the illicit substance market can be functional because they excuse the State from doing its own dirty, warlike, work.

Why do we, therefore, suppress these multiple mediations and the dialectical character of drugs, understanding them from Manichean and unilateral viewpoints? Going further, why do we not rebel against this logic? Because we are not immune to ideology in the clouding of reality, real purposes and developments related to WOD, which contribute to the normalisation of its contradictions, as well as the very order that forges it and needs to maintain it. According to Eagleton (1997), to understand ideology is to examine the "[...] ways in which people can invest in their own unhappiness [...]" (EAGLETON, 1997, p. 13). Iasi (2013), trying to understand why most submit to the order that keeps it under conditions of domination, says:

They [the workers] view the world and themselves from the elements that make up the consciousness of the bourgeoisie, so it is no wonder that the first practical expression of this form of consciousness is the moulding of workers to the society of which they are a part, and not its denial (IASI, 2013, p. 72).

Arising from this social order, WOD is incorporated into the conscience of a large part of the population, including its main target. The ideas that constitute it and its purposes are assumed to be universal, acquiring the status of truth or natural, rather than being social

and historical constructions with their incongruities and venality. In assuming such a position, we do not dispute that the WOD can incorporate true elements - such as the fact that the relationship with drugs can cause problems, as well as the innumerable ways we relate to things - and we do not treat those who introject it as merely ignorant and unreasonable (EAGLETON, 1997). At a certain level, it comes to satisfy some desires or fulfil subjective, or even concrete needs, which leads us to critically analyse the production of these desires and needs and in what order. So, we agree with condemning the transportation of blacks on slave ships, but we celebrate the recurring image of a poor black man in the back of a police car on a sensationalist TV show. Likewise, most of us repudiate slavery and slave quarters, but accept the fact that two-thirds of the Brazilian prison population is black. We shout out against drugs, addicts and drug dealers (usually when they are poor and black) while we use drugs - licit and illicit.

Since ideologies are historical productions, contradictory and circumscribed to a totality (LÖWY, 2010), the reflections of this article serve to contribute to the demystification of WOD, as well as elements of the social order that produces it, understanding them as the social constructions they are. WOD is not the only way to treat the subject, much less an end. It is not a static mechanism and therefore not impossible to supersede. Hence, anti-prohibitionism and the end of WOD are utopias that come about through the legalisation of these substances. However, taking WOD as a product and conformer of our sociability, we must look to the social metabolism that forges it and is dependent on it in its present configurations. Legalisation, as an advance, is not an end, but a means of demonstrating the contradictions of our sociability with the goal of transforming it into new ways of relating to drugs.

Finally, addressing the ideologies used in the WOD and its ideological character is to explain and criticise the moralism that constitutes it, but also to understand its links with economic and political determinations, circumscribing them in the social totality. Alarmist and sensationalist tones, puritanism, moralism, among others, generally linked to religious and/or salvationist discourses that contradict the very inseparability of being human-drugs, are important mechanisms and attributes for the emergence and maintenance of WOD and the logic of combating drugs (BUCHER; OLIVEIRA, 1994; FIORE, 2012), but they are not ends in themselves and do not self-produce.

It is not possible, therefore, to dissociate WOD in the present day from economic changes, neoliberal politics and the penal state, or from its roots in capitalist social formation - considering the particularities of Brazil and its engendering with colonisation and structural racism. We question, therefore, the analysis that blames corruption or ineffective state management for social ills and also question the neoliberal maxim of a *minimum state*, where minimisation refers to social rights and policies, and what gets maximised is the penal ambit and the logic of punishment, criminalisation and extermination in the management of the Social Question.

Final considerations

We find that WOD, whilst utilising ideologies, is equally ideological, making us believe that it aims to combat an evil (drugs) and simultaneously masking sociocultural, political and economic objectives. It is not, therefore, a failed project in the face of its supposed goal - to eliminate certain substances and their use and, despite research proving its venal character and demonstrating its deleterious consequences, or perhaps due to a lack of common sense amongst politicians and state actors, it remains in place. On the contrary, it is an effective project in what it proposes - stripped of its functions and determinations - as well as being a well-engineered rationale that is nourished by other factors derived from its own social dynamics, such as class antagonism and structural racism.

It is not because of WOD that we have become a socially unequal and racist country. But it contributes, by perpetuating and intensifying such conditions. Accordingly, we have a system that makes use of such substances ideologically, as one (more) of its supporting crutches; and that it does this deliberately, as smoke screens, so that structural societal problems are glorified and deepened.

For consistency, attempts to suppress the WOD must be sustained by the need for drug legalisation, based on the assumption that other wars are finite, and which, despite their different nomenclatures and ideological guises, have the same purpose: the maintenance of an unequal order at the expense of a significant part of the population. This makes us question the very order that produces such conflicts, while conforming and sustaining itself through them. Based on these reflections, we come to understand that an anti-prohibitionism that reveals this unjust sociability and contributes to its transformation, must, therefore, be anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal.

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Pedro Henrique Antunes da COSTA Participated in the entire process of the development, research and production of this article.

Graduate in Psychology at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (2013). Master (2014) and Doctor (2017) in Psychology at UFJF, in the area of Psychosocial Health Processes. Professor of the Department of Clinical Psychology at UnB. Researcher at the Reference Centre in Research, Intervention and Evaluation of Alcohol and other Drugs (CREPEIA-UFJF).

Kíssila Teixeira MENDES Participated in the entire process of the development, research and production of this article.

Batchelors in Social Sciences at UFJF (2017). Psychologist at the Machado Sobrinho Faculty (2015). Batchelors in Human Sciences at UFJF (2013). Exchange Student at the Universidade de Évora (2º/2014), in Portugal, where she studied for a licence in Sociology. Doctor of Psychology at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in the area of Psychosocial Health Processes. Master at the same Institution and in the same area (2018). Researcher at the Reference Centre in Research, Intervention and Evaluation of Alcohol and other Drugs (CREPEIA-UFJF), member of the Martín-Baró and Marcus Matraga Research Groups on Psychology in Rural Contexts.
