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"The role of International Cooperation in strengthening national security in the fight against organized crime in Ecuador"

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DEDICATIONS

This degree work is dedicated to my family, to my parents Xavier and Jenny, and my sisters Karen and Gabriela, for being a fundamental support in my life.

Doménica Achig

I want to dedicate the present work to my family, in particular to my parents Viviana and Angel who always supported me unconditionally in order to become a professional; to my uncles Jessenia and Willian who are like parents to me and never hesitated to give me their love and support to move on and never give up.

Fernanda Rodríguez

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RESUMEN

Dentro del presente trabajo, se pretende analizar el rol de la cooperación internacional en la lucha contra el crimen organizado en el Ecuador, enfocándonos principalmente en tres factores que se vinculan estrechamente, como el narcotráfico, la trata de personas y la actual crisis carcelaria. La importancia de abordar este tema es aportar con información relevante que ayude a generar soluciones ante estos conflictos que afectan al desarrollo de la sociedad ecuatoriana. Este problema se torna importante ya que América Latina es una región bastante inmersa en el crimen organizado, y las estrategias utilizadas en la lucha contra estos fenómenos sociales han sido insuficientes para detener la transnacionalización de los mismos. Es por ello que, a partir de la recolección y análisis de información cualitativa, como material bibliográfico; se procederá a determinar si existe una estrategia matriz dentro de la cooperación internacional para garantizar la seguridad de los estados. Los resultados esperados serán evidenciar si las principales estrategias internacionales que se han implementado en la región de Latinoamérica, han sido eficaces para combatir con los fenómenos que amenazan a la seguridad en este caso de Ecuador.

Palabras claves: Cooperación Internacional, Cooperación Sur-Sur, Crimen Organizado, Narcotráfico, Seguridad, Acuerdos.

ABSTRACT

Within the present document, it is intended to analyze the role of international cooperation in the fight against organized crime in Ecuador, focusing mainly on three factors that are closely linked, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and the current prison crisis. The importance of addressing this issue is to provide relevant information that helps generate solutions to these conflicts that affect the development of Ecuadorian society. This problem becomes important since Latin America is a region quite immersed in organized crime, and the strategies used in the fight against these social phenomena have been insufficient to stop their transnationalization. For that reason, based on the collection and analysis of qualitative information, such as bibliographic material; it will proceed to determine if there is a matrix strategy within international cooperation to guarantee the security of the states. The expected results will show whether the main international strategies that have been implemented in the Latin American region have been effective in fighting the phenomena that threaten security in this case of Ecuador.

Keywords: International Cooperation, Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking, Security, Agreements.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, security indicators in the Latin American region have deteriorated. This is because the region is located in the main drug-producing and consuming area of the Americas. In this context, according to Niño (2012), there are different social phenomena that threaten the security of States as a result of the drug issue; organized crime is today one of the main threats to security and democratic governance in Latin America, for their capacity to generate violence and to corrupt and capture public institutions, particularly at those levels where they are weak (p.7).

The threats of organized crime in Latin America are not recent; although Ecuador does not have a leading role in this illegal chain, the country has played a strong secondary role (Sanabria, 2019). It has become an important country for the transit of illicit substances, generating at the same time problems such as prison crises, and human trafficking; where according to the DEA, there is a significant action of organized crime (Rivera, 2011). This role is also attributed to certain characteristics such as the country's proximity to the main drug producers, Colombia and Peru, and to other countries in the region that are also involved in the production, transport and marketing of narcotic drugs. This situation makes the region more vulnerable and exposes it to multiple phenomena linked to organized crime such as human trafficking, arms trafficking, and a topic that becomes important today in the country, the prison crisis (Herrera, 2018).

In this way, the strategies or mechanisms employed by States to confront this type of threat are found in International Cooperation, which is channeled through technical or financial assistance. International Cooperation is crucial in this context because the response of States cannot be only at the national level, but countries must significantly strengthen cooperation among themselves. The social and institutional impacts of these forms of organized crime require governmental responses and therefore interstate cooperation (Niño, 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to know the role of International Cooperation in strengthening security in the region, taking Ecuador as a case of study, and its relations with countries such as Colombia, Mexico, and the United States of America; in addition to the instruments signed to combat organized crime and, related

crimes. That is why the need of analyzing in depth this issue, from the collection and analysis of bibliographic material, to determine if the main international strategies that have been implemented in the Latin American region, have been effective in combating security threats in this case in Ecuador.

The following work is structured in three chapters that present the results of the research from the established objectives. It is organized as follows: the first chapter presents in a general way the security situation in Ecuador, developing the concepts on which the investigation focuses such as organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking of persons, and the prison crisis. The second chapter seeks to contextualize the reader on International Cooperation and the relationship with the concepts of security, starting with the background in general of International Cooperation, and in the Latin American region, the International Cooperation for Development, and the different concepts of security such as regional security, and national security.

Finally, the third chapter covers the analysis of the research of International Cooperation in Ecuador and its role in strengthening regional security, starting with important data on International Cooperation over the years in the country. In addition, there is a differentiation on the types of cooperation that can take place at both multilateral and bilateral levels. On the other hand, a comparison is made between the models of cooperation that Ecuador maintains with the United States, Colombia and Mexico; to then enter into the analysis on the different strategies that have been implemented or are still being carried out in the region and how they influence the country within the issue of security. At the end, the conclusions drawn from the objectives of the investigation.

CHAPTER 1. National security situation regarding organized crime in Ecuador

1.1 Organized Crime in Ecuador

Organized crime is a threat that has existed in the world since its origins, being one of the most common ways in which crime is expressed, affecting all countries in a negative way. Despite being a global phenomenon, there are regions where their presence is stronger, is the case in Latin America. According to The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Organized crime is " a structured group of three or more persons, which exists for a continuous period of time, and acts for the purpose of committing one or more crimes and, obtaining directly or indirectly a material or other benefit".

There are several elements that characterize this criminal activity: "a) it goes beyond government controls; b) it establishes special lines of operations based on a complex system of business type, well structured, for the commission of criminal acts; c) it pursues, through certain violent actions, the search for and the acquisition of economic and social power, not so much political; d) crime is ahead of what characterizes traditional and conventional common crime, and e) it can be noted that organized crime has a strong transnational dimension and a high capacity to adapt to the new context, as well as a strong specialization in specific areas, such as illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs, weapons, persons, as well as money laundering associated with previous crimes" (Solis Rojas, 2008 p 97-98).

The modus operandi of organized crime tends to grow, mutate, and constantly change, generally operating under a criminal modality focusing on the business sphere, as it seeks to manipulate the State and as a consequence have a greater reach with society. As is the case with foreign trade processes, clandestine organizations easily handle cross-border flows of money, people, arms, etc. During the last few years, there have been several studies; however, these value chains have not been fully deciphered (Rivera & Bravo, 2020).

The objective of this criminal activity is mainly economic, and to achieve it, is fundamental the use of violence and extortion; this represents a great danger for Latin America and society itself. Currently, due to globalization, organized crime has expanded to the most remote corners of the Earth, and by the transnationalization of it, the problems in the affected regions have increased significantly. Organized crime has shown that it can cross borders without any restrictions and create different types of threats, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, the prison crisis, among others; this represents a great challenge for States that are seeking solutions to have under control this problem.

The international community has been obliged to redouble its efforts to combat that struggle, but all the work seemed to be in vain thanks to the multiplier effect that globalization had on the world's political, environmental, and social agenda. There are several threats in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, some more accentuated than others, depending on the area. However, there is a pattern of criminality that is repeated in all and, it is organized crime and related crimes. This includes what is called "The Wars of Globalization" which according to Moses Naim are mainly the war on drugs; the war on human trafficking; the war on arms trafficking and the war on money laundering.

MERCOSUR	Andean Countries	Central America	Caribbean Region
Drug trafficking	**Drug trafficking**	**Drug trafficking**	**Drug trafficking**
Terrorism	Terrorism	Terrorism	Terrorism
Arms trafficking	Poverty and social deprivation	The environment and natural disasters	Poverty and social deprivation
Organized crime	Guerrillas and subversive groups	**Organized crime**	The environment and natural disasters
The environment and natural disasters	**Arms trafficking**	Poverty and social deprivation	**Arms trafficking**
Poverty and social deprivation	**Organized crime**	**Arms trafficking**	**Arms trafficking**
Guerrillas and subversive groups	The environment and natural disasters	Guerrillas and subversive groups	_____

Table 1 Prioritized threat perceptions by subregion

Source: Informe del Secretario General de FLACSO, El Crimen Organizado Internacional

Organized crime is the source of several conflicts that particularly affect the inhabitants of a state, businesses, and institutions, whether public or private. The consequences of this criminal activity can be reflected in human trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, prison crises, arms trafficking, etc.; and these can directly or indirectly affect health institutions, justice, economics, education, and more. This also has negative effects on businesses, as some of them are complicit in this illicit activity, so legitimate businesses are at a huge disadvantage by competing with unrealistic prices that are shown to be subsidized when they actually work together with organized crime organizations.

The purpose of this criminal activity is to provide illicit goods and services, or to provide lawful goods and services but in an illegal manner to consumers who demand them. Organized crime has a complex network of articulation and internal structure, and is characterized mainly by two things: being an activity that involves the use of force to achieve its objectives, and for using corruption as a primary tool to manipulate the State and achieve immunity from its acts. (Hernández, 2008). According to a report by CNN (2017), it is estimated that organized crime handles approximately 2.2 billion dollars annually, and this results in violence being used in between; thousands of officials fighting against this threat are killed every year, as well as the victims that this activity involves. In Ecuador, official data show that from 2019 to 2020 the number of violent deaths rose from 6.8 to 7.7 per 100,000 inhabitants, with a total of 1357 intentional crimes during the year (El Comercio, 2020).

Ecuador is a country that is in a geographically favorable position for organized crime by sharing a border with one of the countries that leads the production and distribution of drugs in the world, Colombia; and for having seaports and fluvial loans for illicit activities. One of the components that gave way to financial informality within the country was dollarization, a fact that occurred in 1999. This event brought with it uncontrollable flows of money circulating outside the public and private control bodies, which led to disengagement from them and an insertion of mafia economies whose objectives were to evade financial controls and the law in order to cover their criminal acts, using violence (Niño, 2011).

Another factor influencing the development of organized crime in Latin American countries such as Ecuador, in addition to unemployment, is the constant internal changes in the Government, the Armed Forces, and the Police; which leaves open the opportunity for infiltration of these mafias within the state system, and increases the possibility of evasion of controls, allowing the free action of their illegal acts. Several years ago, Latin America has become a potential market where organized crime operates, thanks to the growing domestic demand for narcotics. Being an area where the informal economy and lack of control are quite notorious, some high officials operate under the manipulation of the mafia making it easier the processes of transnationalization of crime through uncontrolled transactions.

According to Catalina Niño (2011), in recent years different strategies have been implemented to combat organized crime in South America. It should be emphasized that the activities and locations of organized crime are not static, that is, they change locations and modalities according to the country and the situations, therefore, such strategies have not been 100 percent efficient. Added to this is the fact that, in our country, regulatory actions and strategies against organized crime are rather slow and not very innovative, which becomes a limitation to tackle criminal actions and in turn facilitates the development of specialized criminal activity.

In terms of GDP, the number of funds that the State must use to fight organized crime is increasing, whether it is investing in intelligence, hiring personnel, carrying out operations, or simply appeasing its effects, by recovering victims or dismantling networks. Another factor that plays an important role is the corruption in which Latin America is mired, some public and private institutions are under the control of criminal gangs that use them as a cover for their illegitimate acts. This in turn produces a level of distrust on the part of citizens, reducing their support and collaboration, resulting in the delegitimization of control processes and proliferating immunity from criminal acts (Solis & Rojas, 2008).

Another phenomenon that has contributed to the transnationalization of organized crime in the world is access to the Internet and the famous "Dark Web". According to Fernandez (2021), the Dark web "is a portion of the Internet that intentionally hides search engines, with masked IP addresses and accessible only with a special web browser". This

is a known medium in which criminal gangs operate because it allows their users to operate under an anonymity status, which is convenient when carrying out illicit activities so it is quite used by terrorist organizations, traffickers of people, organs, weapons, species, hitmen, rapists, paedophiles and more. (García, 2017). In Latin America, the Dark Web is mostly used to find potential drug buyers and to provide human trafficking and cross-border trafficking services.

Organized crime is a criminal activity that has left several negative repercussions in the States, besides the costs generated by the fight against this phenomenon, the direct and indirect damages it causes to society are countless. To achieve results on this front, it is necessary that governments and intelligence agencies address this situation in an appropriate manner, using the operational technological means necessary to conduct investigations of the main red zones of criminal activity, and thus work through a transnational perspective, working together to develop sound national and international policies that can mitigate the effects of this activity.

1.1.1 Drug trafficking

Drug trafficking is one of the new unconventional threats that has been on the rise since the end of the Cold War. Both, State and non-State actors are involved in these threats, and it is also a transnational conflict, which means that requires responses that go beyond policies at the national level, but responses within the framework of cooperation (Espinosa, 2009). Drug trafficking becomes a problem that scales globally and this causes States to make forceful security decisions to confront it.

On this basis, the world is dealing with a transnational problem that transcends the borders of a country, in this case Ecuador. It is affecting various aspects of States and societies, such as economics, culture, health and security. That is why, it is really important to start with a clearer concept about drug trafficking to better understand this problem. According to the Center for Strategic Studies of the University of Armed Forces "ESPE" defines drug trafficking as, "a set of business activities, illegal, globalized, developed by multinational powers that direct the drug cycle from production to the distribution and laundering of profits in various markets and geographical areas controlled and protected by criminal gangs that use corruption, criminal violence and

intervention associated with subversive groups, to achieve their economic interests by threatening institutions, the integrity of the social collective to democracy and the stability of the State" (Algora and others 2016, p. 41).

By claiming we face a global threat, we talk about a series of criminal drug activities involving controlled substances, which do not respect borders or laws, and their main purpose is economic. Drug trafficking has immense destabilizing power over the states that are most mired in such illegitimate activities, demonstrating that its origin goes far beyond the lack of legal frameworks and border controls, but it is a problem that involves several actors, whether legitimate or illegitimate, which are constantly growing and adapted to the situations in which they are handled; thus, consolidating networks that include since the creation of criminal gangs, until the control of certain influential organizations that help to fulfill their objectives, which involve large economic rents in short terms.

Under the argument of Sanabria (2019, p. 24), there are five main actors that influence the global threat of drug trafficking, which are:

a) "State as an actor influencing the AGN

b) Main producers involved in AGN

c) Drug traffickers,

d) Organized crime,

e) Major consumers and their contribution to the growth of AGN".

About Latin America, it is necessary to mention the great impact that this region has on the drug trafficking business, being South America, the main producer of drugs in the world, specifically cocaine. The main explanation for this is that three of its members have a monopoly on coca production and its derivatives internationally. Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia produce approximately 1,000 tons of cocaine per year, of which 23 tons are exported to the European continent and the United States of America. (UNODC, 2008). This in turn has serious environmental impacts, since to grow one hectare of coca, it is necessary to cut down between two to four hectares of tropical forests, which means that to produce a kilo of cocaine, you must deforest between half and one hectare of forest (Comunidad Andina de Naciones, 2011).

In this context, for Ecuador, the relationship with drug trafficking is not new, however, it has been different but not alien to that of its border neighbors since although it does not have a leading role, it has had a secondary role as a transit country or transit (Rivera & Torres, 2011). As a country geographically located in an area of high illicit activity, Ecuador is subject to various illegal actions affecting the State and society. With the passage of time, Ecuador has consolidated as a country of drug trafficking but not as a major producer (UNODC, 2015). However, according to several specialists (Núñez, 2006; Bonilla, 1993; Moreano, 2005; Rivera, 2005), Ecuador has had four functions in this regard: first, the passage of the coca leaf from Bolivia and Peru, to Colombia, where it is synthesized. Second, Ecuador is the starting point of different drug trafficking routes to Europe and the United States. The other two functions are related with the smuggling of chemical precursors and the crime of money laundering (Núñez, 2006, p.44).

The following illustration, details the drug trafficking routes especially between Colombia and Ecuador. The starting points located in Cauca and Nariño in Colombia, as well as a recruitment zone for the transport of merchandise located in the Esmeraldas and Manabi Provinces in Ecuador can be identified. The main refueling areas, within the routes to countries such as Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico, are located in the sector of the Gorgona Islands and the Galapagos Islands (Sanabria, 2019).

The geographical location of Colombia and Peru, the main coca-producing countries, is evidently Ecuador's greatest vulnerability in terms of the growth of organized crime, especially drug trafficking. Other vulnerabilities in the country include internal corruption, a dollarized financial system, and an extensive road network that connects Colombia's processing zones with Ecuadorian ports and airports. There is a large state presence in Ecuador which is a compact territory, this represents a strength because it has helped prevent the expansion of coca crops; although it has not been possible to curb drug trafficking and other activities related to this activity (Espinosa, 2009).
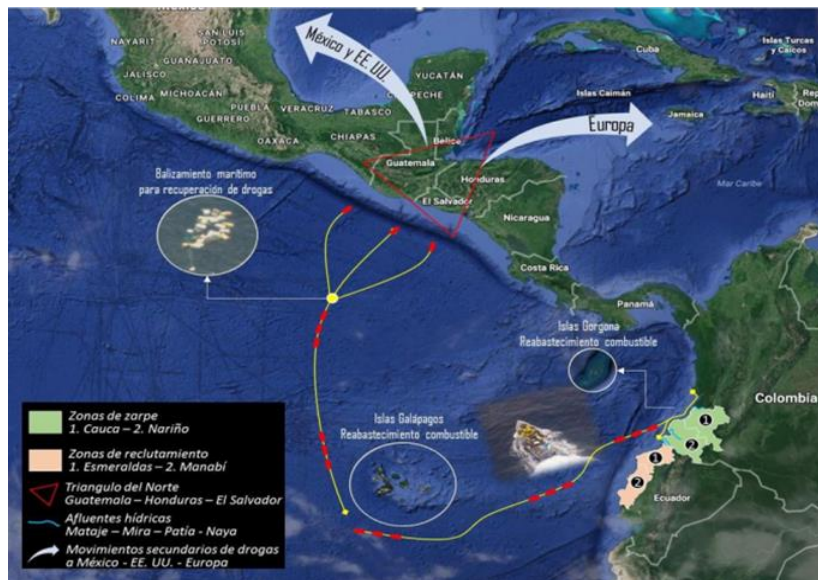
Figure 1 Drug Trafficking Routes

Source: SENAIN 2018

With this background about the proximity of Ecuador to the main drug producers, such as Colombia and Peru, and other countries in the region also involved in drug trafficking. It should be emphasized that there is an increase in demand for alkaloids specifically in North America and Europe, but their consumption has also increased significantly in Brazil. Hence, in recent years the government of Ecuador has been obliged to look for new strategies to combat this problem such as the strengthening of the competent institutions in this case that are the National Police and the Armed Forces (Herrera, 2018).

Historically, drug trafficking in Ecuador has largely developed in recent years, with cocaine trafficking possibly the most desirable in the country. Between 1993 and 2003, the flow of cocaine transported from Colombia through Ecuador reached approximately 80 tons per year, with a catch rate of 10%. The volume of cocaine channeled through Ecuador reached approximately 400 million dollars (wholesale price) in those years. Although Ecuador does not have as many drug crops as Peru or Bolivia, it can calmly reach its economy related to drug trafficking (Espinosa, 2009).

As stated above, drug trafficking in Ecuador leaves a legacy of corruption, mistrust among economic actors, influence of international mafias, violence, and on the northern border a culture of illegality and influence of the well-known Colombian guerrillas. In spite of the measures that have been taken, obeying the due legal instruments on which national security rests and in general. The procedures against drug trafficking

must be recognized that the country has not ceased to be seen as a stepping stone for traffickers. This is related to the fact that there is no effective and constant control at the borders, since it is not only the actions of the national authorities, but also involves the authorities of other countries because it is a transnational issue (Herrera, 2018). External and regional factors must also be taken into account, because Ecuador cannot control its northern border while Colombia continues to produce drugs and other countries continue to consume. What it can do is focus on taking steps to significantly stop and reduce this entire drug trafficking network.

The fight against drug trafficking is a situation that must encompass both internal and external factors. This is because Ecuador has not been capable to control its borders efficiently as long as drug production continues in the north and south, and as long as the other countries remain the main consumers. This implies the creation of legal frameworks by both the governments of the producer states and the consumer states. On the other hand, what can be done is to focus on taking both national and regional measures to significantly stop and reduce this entire drug network, which includes strengthening international relations through signatures and accessions to treaties that focus on this collective struggle, and strengthening state public institutions, thereby ensuring the security of states as a whole.

1.1.2 Trafficking in persons

Human trafficking is a criminal activity linked to organized crime that is present throughout the world. According to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, trafficking in persons is "the recruitment, transport, transfer, reception or reception of persons, using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud or deception, the abuse of power or a situation of vulnerability or the granting or receipt of payments or benefits in order to obtain the consent of a person having authority over another person for the purpose of exploitation" (p.1). While in some places the percentage of human trafficking is much higher than in others, this is a crime that affects the world at large. There are several governmental and non-governmental organizations whose objective is to win the fight against this crime, being UNHCR the main one, which works closely with different organizations, including UNODC, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNFPA, ILO and IOM (ACNUR 2021).

Trafficking in persons is an illegal business whereby a group of persons takes advantage of others without their consent, usually by introducing them into the criminal world and abusing them for monetary gain. According to the United Nations in its report on the (Conferencia Hemisférica sobre Migración Internacional, 2003, p. 45), "Trafficking in persons contains three separate elements: a) recruitment, transport, transfer, reception or reception of persons; b) the use of threat, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a situation of vulnerability or the granting or receipt of payments or benefits, in order to obtain the consent of one person having authority over another; c) its purpose is the exploitation; including at least exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or slavery-like practices, servitude or removal of organs".

According to INTERPOL (2021), there are different types of human trafficking such as:
- **Human trafficking for forced labour**, where they take advantage of people usually from developing countries, and are forced to work against their will, that is, it can be considered a type of slavery.
- **Human trafficking for forced criminal activities** occurs when victims are subjected to illegal or criminal work without their consent to generate their own profits.
- **Human trafficking for sexual exploitation** can be the main form of human trafficking where the majority of victims are women, these are transferred to other countries with lies about getting a better lifestyle; However, once in the destination the victims are treated inhumanely and under constant violence.
- **Human trafficking for the removal of organs** occurs in a panorama where they take advantage of the vulnerability of many families in search of an opportunity to save a loved one. There are long waiting lists for an organ transplants, and criminal organizations have taken this as a profit opportunity, where victims are kidnapped to extract their organs and thus meet the demand on the black market.

The high rate of migration in Latin America is one of the main factors influencing the development of this activity in the region. The massive migration of Venezuelans to different countries of North and South America, and the large wave of migration to the United States, increase the risk that these migrants will be victims of this activity because they are in a state of vulnerability. Another important factor is the high demand for labor

in industrialized countries, this gives way to the need to hire illegal personnel, which is exploited through long working hours and low wages, and at the same time produces a high demand in the human trafficking market, specifically for forced labour.

Another factor that has more influence on this problem is the use of social networks and globalization. While social media is a useful tool in today's world, it can also become a powerful weapon for organized crime, being used to reach victims, who could not be intercepted personally. Technology has played a rather large role in the expansion of this activity because it provides different digital channels that maintain the necessary anonymity for the recruitment of victims and thus facilitate work by leaving no traces.

In Latin America, there is a strong activity in this type of crime, for that reason, there is a great commitment to deal with this criminal activity. According to UNGIFT, approximately 4.1% of the profits generated by human trafficking come from Latin America, while 49% come from developed countries, which are the main consumers, Latin American citizens are the main victims. There is a big difference between human trafficking and human trafficking; human trafficking involves the paid illegal cross-border movement of individuals, whereas when it comes to human trafficking, the victims mostly remain within the country or region to which they belong. The region of the world with the highest number of people affected by human trafficking is Central America, where 75% have been located in the same area; while in South America this figure increases to 93%. (Urban, 2020).

In Ecuador, as in most Latin American countries, human trafficking represents a strong threat to the country's security. According to statistical data provided by the Fiscalía General del Estado, the crime news from 2015 to 2018 are as follows:
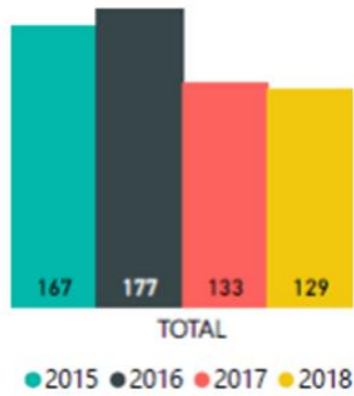
Figure 2 Trafficking in persons at the national level

Source: Dirección de Política Criminal, fiscalía general del Estado (FGE), 2019.

Likewise, the following figure shows the number of complaints made about disappearances due to trafficking in persons by the province in Ecuador:
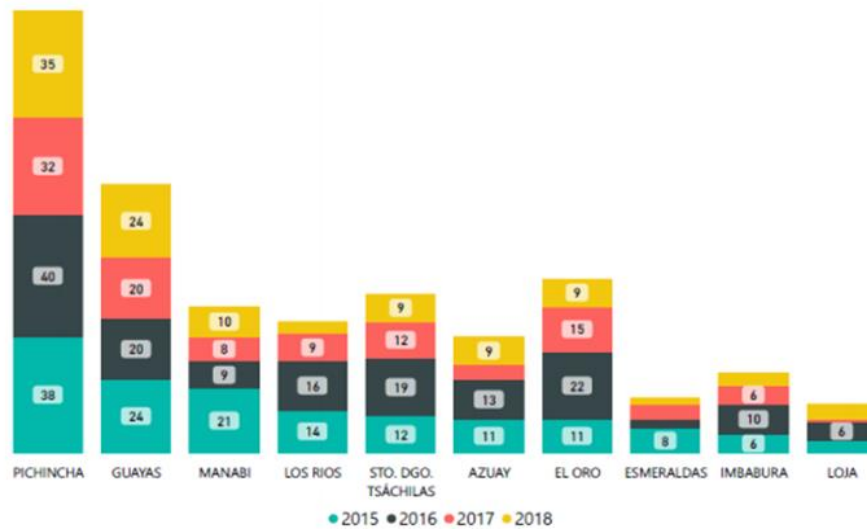
Figure 3 Provinces with the highest number of complaints

Sourse: Dirección de Política Criminal, FGE, 2019.

In 2019, the Ministry of Government presented the "Plan de Acción contra la Trata de personas en Ecuador 2019-2030" which emphasizes that Ecuador is a territory where the different trafficking routes originate, is also a country of transit and final destination of this activity, which has different purposes, as national as international. As part of the analysis of this plan of action, it is stated that 83.8% of the identified cases of trafficking in persons are for the purpose of sexual exploitation; 11% are for the purpose of labor exploitation, and the remaining cases are under different modalities. With regard to the fate of this illegal activity, it is explained that 8% corresponds to international trafficking,

where the victims are transferred mainly to Peru, followed by Colombia, Mexico and Paraguay.

According to statistics from the Dirección de Estudios de la Seguridad y Dirección de Prevención de la Trata de Personas del Ministerio del Interior de Ecuador (2019):

- "26% of complaints about human trafficking are made in Quito, followed by 10% in Manabi, and 8% in El Oro.
- The main provinces of origin of the victims are: Manabí 10%, Guayas 7%, and Los Ríos 7%.
- 84% of the victims are women and 16% are men.
- 2% are between 0 and 12 years of age; 25% between 13 and 17 years of age; 20% between 18 and 25 years of age; 7% between 26 and 35 years of age; 6% between 36 and 64 years of age; 1% over 65 years of age".

These data show that a large number of victims were captured by people from their social environment, whether they are family or friends, the main destinations are within the country, and the highest percentage of victims are female between the ages of 13 and 17.

Trafficking in persons is a rather serious crime that requires joint efforts by both the police, the armed forces, governments, social services and national and international organizations in order to deal with it. It is necessary to create legal frameworks to be able to correctly identify when and what kind of human trafficking case is involved, and thus create strong sanctions for people who are involved either directly or indirectly. On the other hand, it is quite essential to have the resources both to combat this criminal activity and to create institutions that are fully dedicated to the fight against this phenomenon and provide assistance to the victims of this crime (URBAN, 2020).

1.1.3 The prison crisis

One threat that has taken on importance in recent times is the prison crisis. Considering that illicit businesses are on fertile ground in our country, where they have

the capacity to corrupt public officials and institutions involved in the security of the country; makes these threats in relation to organized crime continue and at the same time there is a state weakening due to acts of corruption and the ineffectiveness of security and intelligence policies in the country. It can then be said that this becomes a limitation when dealing with these conflicts from criminal gangs that have both national and international connections (Rivera, 2011).

In Ecuador, there are 37 detention centers and 11 centers for juvenile offenders, but over the years the prison population increased to 38,693 in February 2021. Although there is the capacity to accommodate 29,897 persons deprived of their liberty, according to the latest records of February 2021, there is overcrowding of 8,796 persons, corresponding to 29.42%. In addition, it is established that more than half of the PPL already have a sentence, where the majority, that is, "27%, is detained for drug-related crimes (10,592); and 4%, for illicit association and organized crime (1,734)" (Ordóñez, 2021).

The crisis in the prison system in Ecuador is related to factors such as overpopulation, overcrowding, and violence within prisons. The prison population depends on penal and prison policies and, in the case of Ecuador, the axis that requires more attention is that of anti-drug policies since most of the people deprived of their liberty are in prisons for drug issues and other actions in relation to fights between criminal organizations (Nuñez, 2006). This penitentiary reality poses a different picture in which the answer is not the creation of more prisons but the way to implement policies that stop illicit activities that somehow incite crime and violence that consequently leads to these persons to be detained in penitentiaries.

It is important to emphasize that there is a close relationship between Ecuador's prison crisis and drug networks. Among these networks, as well as alliances, there are also disputes, which lead to a constant rivalry and struggle for power among criminal organizations. These conflicts incite manifestations of violence in order to control or prevent new organizations from taking the place of existing criminal organizations. A clear example of these rivalries arises in the border states, such as Ecuador and Colombia, which show the highest homicide rates, precisely "due to the lack of entry and exit points, drug traffickers are willing to fight to control them " (Wainwright, 2016, p.83). That is why, by combating drug trafficking, the influence of international cartels on local gangs

will be reduced, reducing the levels of violence and internal confrontation, both in the streets and in prisons.

On the other hand, overpopulation in prisons is a phenomenon that appears with the implementation of anti-drug policies of the 1990s, where Ecuador assumes the counter-narcotics strategy promoted by the United States (Nuñez, 2006). Thus, due to the efforts in the fight against these illicit organizations, more and more individuals enter the penitentiaries to pay for the crimes they commit since being involved in drug trafficking networks where they seek to gain power, and to achieve that they resort to extortive maneuvers or selective homicides.

In addition, another cause of overpopulation is due to prisoners without a sentence, this due to preventive detention, but it is also attributed great responsibility to the Penal Code and how it is used, since according to Servicio Nacional de Atención Integral a Personas Privadas de Libertad (SNAI), the prison population is 38,685 prisoners, of whom 40% are persons who have not yet been sentenced (Carrasco, 2021). For this reason, it is questioned how the processes of the prison population are being carried out since they correspond to a high percentage of that population.

The country's prisons are stretched to the limit because of this overpopulation, which in turn causes overcrowding within them. Overcrowding occurs when the space of a place is not enough for the number of people in that place. According to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or must be at least six square meters. If these conditions are not met, overcrowding is considered to exist (Montaño, 2021). This is what happens in Ecuador, there is a capacity to house a certain number of individuals; however, this has not been respected and therefore there is currently overcrowding of 8,796 people, which corresponds to 29.42% of the population.

At the same time, both the overcrowding and the lack of control in the prisons have given way to a power struggle and the growth of the various criminal networks, from which various violent acts are carried out among the same prisoners to activities outside the prisons. Therefore, gangs or gangs represent a great threat to security within the penitentiaries since they control certain crimes, specifically related to drug trafficking and extortion of other prisoners.

The prison crisis is an issue that has developed progressively, that is, it has been going on for years and continues to this day, and it is also the result of several factors, including those mentioned above, such as violence, overcrowding, and overpopulation. Although, when talking about the prison crisis in Ecuador, since 2018 it has positioned itself as a conflict of great relevance at the national level; however, since before 2017, problems began to arise that alerted the government to the need to take corrective measures within the penitentiary system, But it is obvious that what was expected was not done since today the conflicts within the prisons continue.

The problems that already existed were persisting, so in the period 2013-2019 there were several violent acts that promote the violation of the rights to life of persons deprived of their liberty, among which murders have been reported, suicides, crimes of torture, entry of firearms and short punctures, entry of narcotic substances and acts of corruption by personnel in charge of prison security (Vera, 2019). From 2019 to the last incidents of September 2021, there are more than 200 people killed by the clashes in the country's prisons. It is considered 2021 as the most violent year in prisons, with 121 deaths, since in 2019 alone there were 35 violent deaths, and the figure increased in 2020 to 51 (Basantes, 2021).

The current situation so far in 2021 has recorded several mutinies in the country's prisons. Among the most violent events were those that occurred on 28 February, which left 79 dead in four of the country's prisons. The largest number of victims were in the Turi prison in Cuenca, with thirty-four people dead; followed by the Detention Centre No. 4 in the province of Guayas, with thirty-one victims; then the Penitentiary of Litoral that had six dead, and finally the prison of Cotopaxi with eight. Subsequently, there have been more confrontations and violent acts among the prisoners, but also towards the prison officers. This is the case of a female officer, who has the rank of sergeant, who entered the maximum security wing of the prison to try to control the riot where she was trapped and was a victim of rape. The most recent events occurred in September 2021, where there was again a massacre in the Penitentiary of Litoral. Here several people lost their lives because of a clash between organized crime gangs. It is estimated that there are more than one hundred dead and dozens injured (Basantes, 2021).

These terrible events reflect the negligence of governments in dealing with the crisis that the penitentiary system is going through due to overcrowding, violent confrontations, precarious food conditions, health and hygiene, lack of trained personnel to meet the needs of prisoners, etc. These elements also contribute to the strengthening of the prison crisis within the country is due to the insistence of the inmates on their demands for better living conditions, but also with a hidden intention that is to create chaos to be able to carry out adjustments of accounts between gangs that relate to drug trafficking and organized crime. It is a complicated situation from which it is sought to leave but to achieve this, it is essential to request from International Cooperation of countries with well-organized prison systems, so follow their steps and apply them as far as possible looking for the best results for the country. These solutions should focus on overpopulation, overcrowding and violence, which as mentioned above are linked to various illicit activities such as drug trafficking and organized crime. (Montecé and Alcivar, 2020).

Moreover, the strengthening of the prison crisis within the country is attributed to the insistence of inmates on their demands for better living conditions, but also with a hidden intention that is to create chaos to be able to carry out adjustments of accounts between gangs that relate to drug trafficking and organized crime. It is a complicated situation from which it is sought to leave, but to achieve this it is essential to request from International Cooperation of countries with well-organized prison systems, so follow their steps and apply them as far as possible looking for the best results for the country. These solutions must focus on overpopulation, overcrowding, and violence, which as mentioned above are linked to various illicit activities such as drug trafficking and organized crime.

CHAPTER 2. International Cooperation for Regional Security

2.1 Background to International Cooperation

International Cooperation is a concept of utmost importance within the International System, to such an extent that over the years, it has managed to form a fully structured system in which different actors participate, whether they are institutions or

bodies that operate with different mechanisms in order to achieve their objective, which is to help countries or groups that need it.

Eventually, the definition of Cooperation has changed and taken on different meanings. According to Celorio and López de Munain (2006, p.76), the concept of Cooperation must have two important criteria, "the first is to treat it as a historical concept, since each society and each epoch has its own formulation of development that responds to convictions, expectations, and possibilities that predominate in them. And the second is that it is a category of the future, that is, when development priorities are set, it is ultimately affirming what is the vision of what we want to achieve in the future"

Although there is not a single concept of the word, certain implicit elements within the Cooperation can be highlighted. Which are:

- It meets the criterion of co-responsibility.
- It is based on the criterion of solidarity among peoples, respect for and protection of human rights, and the ceaseless search for better conditions and greater resources that provide man with a situation of well-being in accordance with his human dignity.
- It includes actions by both private and public actors.
- It must respond to priorities.
- There must be common goals and strategies.
- It seeks the existence of a clear and constant dialogue between the parties that allows for the harmonization of interests.

Ideally, it should not involve interference by the aid worker in the internal or external policy of the receiving country (Duarte Herrera & González Parias, 2015, p.2).

International Cooperation plays a very important role in international relations, as it is a means by which leading countries channel their influence and powers to strengthen their interests and, in turn, provide assistance to the countries that need it most. This aid is given in different areas, whether political, social or economic. The main purpose of International Cooperation is to improve the living conditions of the world's citizens,

through the creation of multilateral projects, focused on finding solutions to the various problems that countries face.

The beginning of International Cooperation comes just after the Second World War, with the famous Marshall Plan which was an initiative created by the United States to help Europe rise up after the devastation caused by the Second World War. However, there was already a history of aid between countries, with interests involved. As, for example, before World War II ended, the leaders of the two major blocs, Roosevelt and Churchill, created a declaration known as the Atlantic Charter, in which they embodied several principles that refer to international assistance, in order to achieve an improvement in the quality of life and development of the whole world, years later, some of these principles were incorporated into the charter of the United Nations (Santa Cruz, 1984).

In the following years, important events occurred that strengthened the development of International Cooperation, for example in 1943 the adoption of the General Security Declaration, which was approved by the leaders of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain; reference was made to the need to create an organization dedicated to safeguarding world peace. (Santa Cruz, 1984) Years later, in 1945, the United Nations and its declaration were created, and 26 countries, including eight from Latin America, were initially signed.

Latin America was another of the areas that was quite affected after the two world wars that it passed indirectly, by the fact that the trade routes, mainly with Europe were interrupted, and likewise, the slight industrialization it was going through. This resulted in a severe economic crisis, which warranted immediate action. This is why Latin American states saw a great opportunity for improvement when they signed up to the United Nations Declaration, hoping for the aid promised by the most developed countries.

At the conference of the United Nations Declaration, several topics were discussed and some favourable results were obtained for the Latin American region, in the field of International Cooperation, by raising and putting pressure on the United States of America, to intensify aid efforts in the light of the mainly latent social and economic problems in the region. In this way, the most important international aid agency in the

world is born, which is governed by different rules and regulations, in order to intervene and help the countries that need it most. (Santa Cruz, 1984). In the following years and in the wake of the destruction caused by the Second World War, various aid organizations began to be set up, such as the International Monetary Fund, whose main objective was to help the economic reconstruction of Europe, and developing countries. (Anguiano Roch, 2003).

Another important period for the development of international cooperation was the Cold War; an indirect conflict between two blocs (the United States and the Soviet Union) which began in 1947 and ended in 1991. Although this problem did not lead to an armed confrontation, it did lead to several violent acts in different parts of the world. During this period of war, there was an economic boom in certain regions, such as Europe and North America; however, others were less fortunate and suffered closely the ravages of war; these regions were Africa, Asia and Latin America. "From this confrontation, US legislation clearly linked cooperation actions with their interests and international security" (Román Sánchez, 2002), in other words, International Assistance was conditional because it was given to countries strategically located and contributing in some way to the fight against the USSR. Thus, the United States of America became one of the most important actors within International Cooperation, developing various aid programs in certain parts of the world that presented drawbacks, which in a certain way affected the national interests of the USA.

A decade before the end of the Cold War, Latin America suffers an economic collapse as a result of the high external debt, endangering the entire International System; and it is here that International Cooperation focuses specifically on the economic sphere. Different cooperation policies are created in order to increase trade in the affected countries and generate a higher global economic flow. However, the end of the Cold War meant a change in the world order, and therefore in International Cooperation and its way of operating.

The fall of the USSR, meant a new world order, and brought with it the creation of new policies and strategies of cooperation that not only focused on the economic, if they did not have a more general vision of world development. According to Dubois & Yoldi, (2001, p.17), "This new international order that International Cooperation faced,

significantly transformed policies for assistance to developing countries, since these were under two axes:

1) The cooperation policies of the USA, through its bilateral policy and its influence on multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and

2) The cooperation policies of the countries of the European Union, which are also established bilaterally, but embodying their initiatives in the cooperation policies promoted multilaterally through the Community bodies".

In this way, the economy of the Soviet bloc was eliminated, that is, interventionism went away and the neoliberal market implemented by the United States came to govern the world. Developing countries had to adjust to the new rules, and if assistance was needed, to follow a series of requirements imposed by the new world leader, such as structural adjustment plans, privatization of state-owned enterprises and the liberalization of markets, accompanied by foreign investment (Boni Aristizábal, 2010). In short, it means that states should implement policies that would allow for and facilitate foreign investment through the establishment of domestic firms from developed countries, to obtain some kind of international assistance if necessary.

In the 1980s, as a result of the changes in geopolitical interests that the world was experiencing, Latin America entered a rather severe economic crisis and, with this, a significant reduction in the economic aid it was receiving, However, in the 1990s, this crisis became even more acute and led to an increase in economic funds for development assistance.

An important event within International Cooperation in Latin America was the creation of "Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio". This would involve different types of international aid to promote the development of various sectors in the states, whether economic, social, environmental, etc. In turn, bodies were created to verify compliance with these objectives, in order to ensure and monitor the effectiveness of the plan created by the United Nations. The priority of aid was determined according to the per capita income of each state, classifying them in low-income, low-middle, medium-high, and high-income countries. Due to the fact that lower-income countries are regarded as priorities, they are the main recipients of funds.

In the ranking of Latin American countries, during the period 2012 - 2014, Haiti was the only country that was considered a low-income country. Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua as low-middle-income countries, and Venezuela, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Belize, Colombia, and Brazil as upper-middle-income countries. In the high-income classification for the period 2012-2014, only the countries of Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay were included in the list of countries receiving development aid (Diálogo de Coyuntura de RedEAmérica. Septiembre de 2016, p. 4).

International Cooperation plays a very important role in today's world, not just as a means for states to relate to each other, but also by involving various actors in the System and encouraging them to create plans and projects that help the least developed countries in various areas, whether internal or external. Latin America is a region facing various economic and social problems, and one of the consequences of these phenomena is a low GDP per capita; however, not so low as to be considered a priority to receive sufficient international aid. However, International Cooperation has been a phenomenon that has had a positive impact throughout the world. Although it had undergone several changes as a result of the events that had taken place over time, its primary objective had always been to provide assistance to countries most in need and thereby improve the quality of life of their citizens.

2.2 International cooperation for development

International Cooperation for development is a set of activities, within the framework of programmes and plans, aimed at providing development tools and opportunities to persons, groups and territories in poverty. International Cooperation is seen as an instrument of joint cooperation between the different governments, which are supported by several international organizations, public and private sector, and civil society, always with a common purpose, which is to promote action, contribute to sustainable development and raise the standard of living of the world's population through the transfer, reception and exchange of information, knowledge, technology, experience, and resources (Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, 2018).

There are some main features of International Cooperation for Development, which are:

Origen/tipo	Tipos de cooperación y actores implicados	Características de los fondos	Nivel de concesionalidad	Naturaleza de la cooperación
Pública: administraciones nacionales, regionales y locales de países donantes. *Privada*: recursos propios de particulares, empresas o asociaciones, etc.	*Multilateral*: agencias, instituciones u organizaciones gubernamentales autónomas. *Bilateral*: administraciones públicas u organizaciones de desarrollo sin carácter oficial. *Descentralizada*: administraciones regionales y locales públicas. *No gubernamental*: organizaciones no gubernamentales de desarrollo. *Empresarial*: empresas que brindan asistencia técnica y transferencia de tecnología.	*Reembolsable*, la cooperación debe ser devuelta en forma de dinero o en especie. *No reembolsable*, la cooperación se hace a fondo perdido.	*Ayuda ligada*. Condiciona al receptor a la compra exclusiva de bienes y servicios del país donante. *Ayuda no ligada*. No condiciona al receptor a la compra exclusiva de bienes y servicios del país donante.	*Financiera*: transferencia real de los fondos al receptor. *No financiera*: transferencia de conocimientos, tecnología, materiales, intercambios culturales, deportivos, etc.

Table 2 Characteristics of International Cooperation

Source: Duarte Herrera, L.K. & González Parias, C. H. (2014)

And different types of International Cooperation for development, such as:

Técnica	Técnica entre países en desarrollo	Financiero-económica	Educativo-cultural
Es una de las primeras modalidades de cooperación internacional, articuladora del tradicional esquema Norte-Sur. Se destina hacia países en desarrollo por medio de transferencias de tecnologías, conocimientos, experiencias y habilidades. Se destacan: formación de recursos humanos, cursos cortos de capacitación, asesorías, desarrollo de proyectos piloto, envío de expertos, intercambio de experiencias, estancias y pasantías e investigaciones conjuntas.	Surge como respuesta a "el desaliento" de la cooperación tradicional". Se conoce también como cooperación horizontal o Sur-Sur. Este tipo de cooperación se realiza entre países de similar o menor nivel de desarrollo económico. La forma de funcionamiento consiste en que un país solicita asistencia y ofrece al mismo tiempo proyectos en las capacidades donde es más competitivo.	Sucede cuando se otorgan créditos, especialmente blandos, para apoyar la realización de proyectos de larga duración, dirigidos hacia la consecución del desarrollo del país receptor. Las fuentes más usuales dentro de este tipo de cooperación internacional son los organismos financieros multilaterales (Banco Mundial, Banco Interamericano de desarrollo) y países desarrollados, como Japón, Alemania, los Estados Unidos, Francia, España y Gran Bretaña.	Conocimientos educativos y culturales que intercambian los diferentes países y organismos internacionales, a través de cursos y actos internacionales sobre materias específicas. Posgrados, congresos, conferencias y demás actos internacionales.

Table 3 Types of International Cooperation

Source: Duarte Herrera, L. K. & González Parias, C. H. (2015)

The introduction of the concept of "development" within International Cooperation has been thanks to several events produced from the end of the Second World War to the present; Román Sánchez (2002) explains that this relationship occurs for different reasons, among them are:

- The emergence of the Cold War, where the two superpowers, USA and the USSR sought to control development processes in the countries of the South that were under their orbit.
- The rapid recovery of the countries devastated by the Second World War, specifically Germany, France, Great Britain and Japan.
- The emergence of new independent countries, thanks to the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa that wanted to achieve development as a form of national reaffirmation.
- The great impact during the crisis of 1929 with the application of the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes, thus setting the idea that developing countries could imitate such practices.

In other words, the countries of the South needed to implement the same policies that had been employed in the countries of the North, if they were to achieve development. As a result, a number of theories arise about the way forward for developing countries. Thus, at this stage the concept of "development" highlights the economic features, that is, that a State acquires the status of developed, when its economic indicators, especially GDP and GDP per capita, grow steadily (Román Sánchez, 2002).

Parallel to this, is the Theory of independence, which was born in Latin America in the 60s and 70s, in order to explain the situation of Latin American socioeconomic stagnation based on external factors that are the result of the international economic system. This trend suggests that there is an unequal power relationship not only at the economic level, but also at the political and social level, which brings disadvantages for the non-developed countries, because they receive "a subordination role of production of raw materials with low added value, while fundamental decisions are made in central countries, with production of high added value" (Moré Olivares, 2018, p.132).

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The theory of dependence has a conception that international trade weakens underdeveloped countries by increasing poverty, through various mechanisms. In Mexico, several intellectuals have investigated this issue in depth, such as Ceceña Gámez, Fernando Carmona, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Horacio Flores de la Peña and Pablo González Casanova. According to the authors mentioned, the dependency theory supports the following premises:
- "Underdevelopment is directly related to the expansion of industrialized countries.
- Development and underdevelopment are two different aspects of the same process.
- Underdevelopment is neither a stage nor a precondition for development.
- Dependence is not limited to relations between countries, but also creates internal structures in societies" (Moré Olivares, 2018, p.133).

In this sense, it can be understood a little more about the system in which we live, as the author André Gunder Frank explains, "the relations of dependence in the global market were reflected in the relations of structural dependence within States and between communities". This at the same time supports the hypothesis that poverty is the result of

the particular circumstances of the social structure, the labor market, the condition of exploitation of the labor force, and the concentration of income (Spicker et al., 2021, p. 280). At the same time, Frank thought that the existence of unequal power relations would give way to subordination not only in economic, but in various political, cultural, media, educational and even sporting aspects. In this way, the non-developed countries of the South provide their natural resources to the rich nations, as well as their cheap labor and an ideal destination, perfect for obsolete technology, such scenarios allow them to maintain the high standard of living to which they are accustomed (Moré Olivares, 2018, p.135). Concluding that the existence of these unequal relations determines trade agreements and the expanded development of dependency among States.

Thanks to all these ideologies, it introduces the concept of development, social aspects such as the well-being of people, the redistribution of income and the satisfaction of basic needs. So, International Development Cooperation is "the set of actions designed and executed by public and private actors from different countries, which seek to promote a more just and balanced progress in the world, with the aim of building a safer and more peaceful planet" (Gómez-Galán & Sanahuja, 2001, p. 17). Through this, the aim is to improve the living conditions in particular of people living in countries of the South, through a series of economic, social and political changes, promoting respect for human rights, the consolidation of democracy, and attitudes in favor of peace and solidarity. Cooperation also takes place through the joint work of a wide network of national and international organizations, some public and others of a private nature, that is, they are born of the "civil society" itself. This large institutional network encompasses what is known as the International Development Cooperation system (Román Sánchez, 2002, p.24).

Initially, International Cooperation was more concerned with the beneficiaries' own interests; however, over time, its concept has evolved, and has been established, that its main purpose is human well-being and development, taking into account that this refers, according to Román Sánchez (2002), to the process of expanding opportunities for people. On September 8, 2000, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the heads of state and government created the so-called "Declaración del Milenio" which is a document, which set out the commitments that countries must fulfil in terms of common responsibility, such as solidarity, freedom, respect for nature, equality, etc., and from

these, the famous millennium goals were created. These objectives are mainly aimed at eradicating poverty and thereby improving the quality of life of the world's citizens (Boni Aristizábal, 2010).

According to the Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (2018), there are different types of International Cooperation for Development, which are:

- "**Bilateral cooperation:** Cooperation that takes place between two countries and is based on a normative framework (usually a basic cooperation agreement).
- **Multilateral cooperation:** It refers to cooperation actions that are developed between countries and international and/or regional organizations; and that are supported by an international legal instrument, convention, or agreement.
- **Regional cooperation:** Cooperation actions aimed at a certain geographical area, through which several countries benefit.
- **Triangular cooperation:** cooperation whose approach is characterized by joint action with a traditional bilateral or multilateral partner in favor of a third country of lower or similar development".
- **South-South Cooperation**: According to the Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (SELA), South-South Cooperation (SSC) occurs among countries located in the global south that experience similar problems, and its main objective is to solve these difficulties through the implementation of joint strategies. This type of cooperation stimulates the development of the countries participating in it, through trade, investment, inclusion, among other mechanisms.

Currently, International Cooperation for development is one of the most important mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge either through technical or financial assistance; however, due to the current process of globalization, new actors appear in the panorama, such as transnational corporations. "This process of globalization has changed International Cooperation in two directions, first with a greater appearance of non-State entities, which increasingly exert more weight in this context, and secondly, it is the gradual adoption of the role that International Cooperation can play in promoting economic and social progress, and the provision of global public goods such as a

pollution-free environment, global macroeconomic stability, peace, etc." (Sanahuja, 2001, p 21).

2.3 Conceptual approach to security

To begin with this section, it is necessary to understand the evolution of the concept of this term. Starting with Bárcena (2000) where he explains that, the concept of security arises in political philosophy following the work of Thomas Hobbes. This concept is identified as fundamental in the study of International Relations, particularly in the area of strategic studies, where several specialists point out that, according to classical conceptions, international security is related to "the use of force: how to identify, prevent, resist, or use or threaten to use it. Therefore, it involves the fundamental conflicts of war and peace and is directly linked to the existence of the State" (p.12).

Over time, however, there has been a reconceptualization of what security is. Since extraordinary situations have had to analyze from another perspective what it represents and everything that encompasses security since it is not a purely domestic issue, but involves the rest of the international community. Thus, Lawrence Freedman points out that, although until the Second World War, the study of war was in charge of the military and the study of peace in charge of lawyers; he also states that thanks to the collaboration between academics, During and after the Cold War, there was a broader study of strategic studies and the creation and definition of policies that sought to shape a "security order" (Bárcena, 2000, p.12).

This new perspective on security is known as human security, which appears as a response to the growing uncertainty of security, leaving behind this traditional vision that encompassed purely military aspects, and that they have not responded adequately to threats that become relevant to people today. In 1994, through a Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)[1], the concept of human security was introduced, it focuses on the human being and concerns itself with the way people live in a society. Here it is recognized that human security is a subject of global unrest, and therefore involves people from all over the world, whether from developed countries or not. According to Martens, (2014, p. 26), there are many threats that are common to all

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[1] UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (1994). Human Development Report 1994: New dimensions of human security, p. 26.

people such as unemployment, drugs, crime, pollution, and human rights violations and their intensity vary from place to place, but this shows that threats to national and international security are real and growing.

According to the UNDP report, the list of threats to human security can be reduced to seven main categories[2]:

- Economic security
- Food security
- Health safety
- Environmental safety
- Personal security
- Community safety
- Political security

Together, human security has two main aspects. First, it means security against chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression. And secondly, protection from unexpected variations and from daily life, whether within the home, work environment, or in the community. These threats exist at all levels of income and development in a state[3]. Therefore, the issue of human security becomes increasingly important since according to McDonald (2002), an implicit assumption of human security is that the exposure of issues such as human rights, economic inequality, and environmental change in the field of security, will allow greater attention to these issues and therefore maximize the potential for these issues to be addressed meaningfully and thus translated into policies for each State (p. 279).

In short, human security goes beyond combating threats or dangers but refers to: "the protection and safeguarding of the right to life and personal integrity, and the purpose of humanizing existing security, through the integration of values and rights and human capacities into all international, national and local security systems" (Kapuy, 2004; cited in Fernández, 2005, p.23). It can be considered a great step forward to reach this point, since leaving aside a traditional perspective to take into account, in this case, new threats or risks that affect people directly and indirectly, It is a great step to make these issues

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[2] PNUD, *op. cit.,* 1994, p.28.
[3] PNUD, *op.cit.,* 1994, p.26.

more relevant in the agendas of each State and to take the corresponding measures not only of protection but of prevention, so as to ensure the optimal development of society. Referring to what is mentioned in the UNDP Report (1994), where it is stated that at present "human security is not a concern for weapons: it is a concern for life and human dignity" (p.25).

During the disarmament of the core components in the traditional conception of security. It also revealed processes and conjunctures within the global dynamic that helped to develop a concept more focused on people and their communities than in the State and also focused more on development than on arms (PNUD, 1994). According to Zavaleta (2015), the international visibility of the conflicts that occurred in different territories, specifically in the least developed ones; the increase in civilian casualties compared to the number of military victims; the proliferation of non-state actors interested in multiple issues, and the growing manifestation of the negative consequences of the implementation of neoliberal policies and political, social and economic crises in the poorest regions of the world; together contributed to the recognition of new threats or risks in the international security agenda, that is, it is no longer only military matters (p.69).

Thus, "poverty, hunger, marginalization, social exclusion, environmental degradation, etc., would be considered, albeit with resistance, as strong threats to people's security; threats that until then had not been considered as priorities in matters of state security" (Zavaleta, 2015, p.69). These non-traditional threats represent a great challenge since the origin or source from which they come is very uncertain, that is to say, the threats can come from different themes or spaces, thus threatening the security of both state and non-state actors. Together, these threats cannot be handled solely by traditional defense policies, that is, by resorting to military resources, but new ways of confronting them must be sought since in most cases the use of force has not had successful results, taking into account that these new threats present characteristics contrary to the traditional ones. In short, to address this issue it is suggested to expand the subjects subject to security and stop believing that the State is the only actor when it comes to security (Cujabante, 2009, p.101).

Another reason for the expansion of the concept and national security agendas according to Cajubante (2009), corresponds to the "economic backwardness" of the

different countries of the Americas, as these "new threats" that States currently face have their origin in the economic sphere, which means that the threats do not come from an external element, but are the result of internal factors caused by disparities in levels of development, which demonstrates the need to incorporate economic and social aspects when establishing a security concept (p.102).

For his part, Yépez (2004) states that at present, security becomes an important issue on the agenda of each country as it is considered one of the main priorities of governments and societies to achieve its development and consolidation, where the State becomes the political juridical organization of society, which aims to seek the common good of citizens so that it is responsible for guaranteeing security through a set of policies and actions.

In other words, security implies a condition or situation that describes a situation of absence of threats or risks to a given social and natural environment, and the insecurity of a State should be understood as the series of risks that affect society and its institutions, in such a way that the availability of means to face them, varies according to their degree of strength or weakness (Arévalo, 2002; cited in White Gómez, 2004, p.18).

In short, it has been a great step forward in response to the challenge to security, since addressing issues beyond the traditional is important to preserve and protect the integrity of States and their citizens. That is why, Orozco (2005) affirms that the security of the people and the security of the planet should be objectives of a global security policy, together with the security of States. Global security refers, then, to a system that seeks to manage global public affairs, and that takes into account collective security that promotes practices towards development through cooperation among States (p.174).

2.3.1 Regional security

The situation of insecurity in Latin America today is the result of extreme violence (the product of organized crime in which the region is mired), and ineffective policies created by the respective governments of the area. This has resulted in incalculable loss of life and excessive economic cost to the government of most Latin American countries, which have been intended to mitigate or greatly limit the negative consequences that organized crime generates in each territory; however, this fight goes beyond the particular action. When talking about a transnational phenomenon, it is necessary to have a broader perspective of the problem, and in turn, to seek solutions together with the rest of the countries of the region.

Regional security can be defined as the prevention of dangers and threats of a region or a group of states, through the creation of common strategies, to safeguard the security of those involved. According to Aguilera Peralta (2014), it can be said that the Member States act jointly in the face of a danger that the region has in common, and this is achieved through the creation of laws and doctrines that are studied previously and it is expected that they will operate not only in a country, if not in the whole region. This concept resembles in some respects the definition of cooperative security, however, they differ in that, cooperative security, limits the particular use of military forces in own and foreign territories. (Aguilera Peralta, 2004).

Another definition that is found within regional security is the so-called hemispheric security; the same one that emerged in the "Declaración sobre Seguridad en las Américas" in 2003, which explains that this concept is multifaceted, that is, it encompasses several axes, such as the internal threats of each nation, and the common threats of the region. In this context, it is explained that the needs of each state are the main priority of the same; however, one must be willing to work for the peace, integral development and social justice of the other member countries, always based on democratic principles, respect for human rights, cooperation and, above all, respect for national sovereignty (Cerón, 2011).

Having said that, it can be said that the main objective of regional security is "to establish security agreements aimed at guaranteeing zones of peace and cooperation,

which take into account asymmetries, the diversity of interests and the national contexts of the security and defense agendas, and which, finally, determine the breakdown of hemispheric security in subregional scenarios: Andean Area, Central America, Caribbean and Southern Cone" (Celi, 2005, p12). Always bearing in mind that, within this doctrine, there is a unification of interests before a common enemy, where transparency of information between countries is necessary to develop effective strategies.

Focusing on Latin America, there are several factors that member countries have in common. As for latent threats, organized crime can be highlighted as the main problem surrounding the region, having a fairly strong participation in most Latin American countries. The consolidation of territories not controlled by law symbolizes a great problem for the governments and directly affects the democracy of the same, this added to the little credibility of the judicial system, making that the region can not fight against these phenomena, and if not, it is increasingly mired in violence. The need to create diverse and combined policies to achieve effective changes arises from the great complexity of organized crime. These phenomena need different approaches to attack their different sides, and in this way solutions can be created that last over time, and mainly, resist the modifications of the methods of action of the criminals.

According to the Institute of Urban Studies of Colombia (2020), Latin America, although home to only 8% of the world's population, registers 33% of criminal cases on the planet. This is due to the imminent cases of violence generated by organized crime and its derivatives. According to the Igarapé Institute in its report Citizen security in Latin America: Facts and Figures 2020, in 2016, seventeen of the twenty countries with the most cases of violence in the world were in Latin America, reaching a regional homicide rate of 21,5%, while globally, it was 7%.

In Latin America, justice is based on detecting a crime, finding the culprit, and through legal mechanisms, establishing its legal responsibility. In general, the bodies responsible for monitoring are the police and the judicial system. The former has the right to use the power of the State as one of its main tools for controlling crime. In addition, the judicial system is responsible for determining the criminal responsibility of the accused and imposing the corresponding sanctions. Together, the prison system is responsible for ensuring that penalties are enforced and for establishing the necessary

procedures to ensure that offenders are recovered and reintegrated into society (Dammert & Paulsen, 2005).

Currently, there are various strategies in place to combat crime and violence, such as the implementation of preventive policies. Preventive policies are not only implemented by criminal justice system agencies. Instead, they look for factors that may incite people to use violence or crime and establish mechanisms to reduce its intensity. In this task, these policies involve new participants and create new scenarios for action, such as the promotion of sport, the increase of educational coverage for deserters, lighting in certain sectors and even housing design policies. These policies are designed to attack the problem from its origin, but not once it is already present (Dammert & Paulsen, 2005).

Another clearly visible strategy is the militarization of the territories. Latin America has a long history of using military force to deal with the internal conflicts it has long faced. Although the region is no longer governed by a military dictatorship, and all countries in the region (except one country) have democratically elected leaders, some governments have resorted to their armed forces to deal with internal problems. This is mainly due to two factors: the threat of drug trafficking, and ineffective public security policies, this also includes the inability of agencies to comply with the law. On the one hand, one of the main factors influencing the intervention of the Armed Forces in internal security matters of each country in the region is the pressure that the USA exerts in terms of anti-drug policies. On the other hand, the Latin American region is mired in different social and economic problems, such as poverty and inequality; this is a key factor in the development of crime and must be resolved through economic policies and reforms that resolve this social conflict (Chillier & Freeman, 2005).

Due to the lack of a democratic and efficient public security policy that can meet the needs of solving these problems, many governments have opted for the intervention of the armed forces. This is an illusory solution that is not only destined to fail but also has several negative effects on the strengthening of the democratic system in the region. On the other hand, the anti-narcotics policy adopted by the United States can be evidenced in different Latin American countries, a clear example is Bolivia, where the armed forces are increasingly involved in internal affairs and are more involved in the fight against organized crime. The US has been the mentor of this modality, and has been the main

sponsor of equipment and training for the armies of certain countries in the region (Chillier & Freeman, 2005).

Unfortunately, today we can say that the interest in preventing violence and crime is more fallacious than factual. This is confirmed with regard to public investment priorities, budgetary discussions, and the shortage of human resources devoted to these operations. Another quite significant problem in Latin America is the lack of commitment to certain development projects and initiatives, followed by the short duration and disappearance of the political scene of the same, without having even fulfilled its objective. Despite this, the different experiences of community prevention practiced in Latin America seem to have a significant impact on the feeling of security and in some cases on police confidence and credibility (Dammert & Paulsen, 2005).

Therefore, for the creation of strategies, whether individual or collective, it is necessary the cooperation of the countries that are part of the region, to jointly analyze traditional security issues and the new threats that are latent in the region and increase over the years. With the aforementioned definitions, it can be said that what regional security seeks is to safeguard and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of a geographically grouped region, in terms of security and defense, developing new strategies that seek to solve the current problems of each country and of the region in general.

2.3.2 National security

National Security is linked to the defense of the State, focusing mainly on the protection of its elements such as the territory, the population, and the government. At the same time, this concept is traditionally based on the principles established by the Doctrine of National Security (DSN). This doctrine was the set of ideas applied during the Cold War by the United States and transferred to the Latin American states that presented the armed forces as the only institution charged with maintaining the structures of the State; in other words, the DSN explained the importance of the "occupation" of state institutions by the military (Leal, 2003, p.74).

In the 1980s, as Leal (2003) explains, a new stage began in Latin America, where US governments considered military regimes in the region insignificant and the use of

war as a means of conflict resolution. Also, faced with a crisis of the Latin American economic development model and the end of the military tutelage of the United States during the 1980s, the demilitarization phase of the governments was simpler. Thus, the so-called process of redemocratization in the Latin American region is given way, exposing to the public eye the abuses committed by the military, specifically on issues of human rights violations. For this and more the government practices derived from the Doctrine of National Security were put to an end and its ideology weakened to the point of leaving it without any validity (p.86).

In this way, the concept of national security has been taking shape since at first national security is defined as "the capacity that a country has through its political institutions to protect internal values against external threats" (Bertkowitz & Bock, 1965; cited in Lucio Vásquez, 2020, p.175). However, this defiance that is used to justify the intervention of the armed forces and achieve such security has been strongly criticized since this conception only referred to the security of the State, but not to the security of citizens; so other sources of insecurity were not considered as, both global and internal, economic or environmental (Font & Ortega, 2012, p.161).

From these criticisms, Font and Ortega (2012) affirm that national security takes a new multidimensional perspective in which it is borne in mind that there are other threats, not only military but also of another type, whether economic, political or environmental, etc.; and that they transcend borders and are global. So, living in an interdependent world, the strategies to be taken to address these threats cannot be strictly military, but "civil, diplomatic, police and other policies must be applied" (p.162). These discussions helped lay the groundwork for new concepts, such as human security and citizen security, where security no longer focuses on the State as such, but places an emphasis on prioritizing the well-being of individuals.

Although the concept of national security is still handled by States, it has had some significant changes within the elements to be protected, In other words, in the years of the Cold War the protection of the State as such was sought and any person or group of people who, in some way, were seeking structural changes were considered an enemy. At present, the State must still be protected, with whatever objective, through its institutions, but guaranteeing the security and full development of the human being (Sandoval

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Palacios, 2000). It can be seen, however, that as a concept it is limited in several respects to protecting the State over the collective well-being of individuals, which in many cases means resorting to extreme defense and thus inevitably harming the population.

In the context of Ecuador, the issue of security is addressed in several instruments. In order to improve public institutions, especially those called to protect society from all kinds of threats and dangers, the Plan Nacional de Seguridad Integral 2019-2030 is established; it has been updated in order to integrate and articulate public policy instruments such as: Agenda de Coordinación Intersectorial, Libro Blanco, Plan de Seguridad Integral Fronteriza para la Frontera Norte, Plan Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia Pacífica, Plan Nacional de Respuesta ante Desastres, among others. These have been developed with the purpose of creating the appropriate conditions that allow the State to make advance decisions in the different situations that may arise, guaranteeing security and building a better State free of threats or risks (Plan Nacional de Seguridad Integral, 2019, p.23).

According to the Plan Nacional de Seguridad (2019), an expanded security concept is presented, characterized by its multidimensional nature, that is, it includes traditional threats, new threats, concerns, and other challenges to State security. Hence, several stressors have been implemented taking into account that the Ecuadorian State, in its sovereign right, can recognize its own needs and prioritize them to "to create strategies, plans and actions to deal with threats, in accordance with the legal system, with respect for international law and contribute to the consolidation of peace, integral development, and social justice, based on: democratic principles, defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation and respect for national sovereignty" (p.37).

In this sense, it is worth mentioning the existence of the Integrated Security Service ECU 911, as part of a national citizen security project. It was established by Decreto Ejecutivo 988 in December 2011, this service has a technological platform and operational management protocols, for receiving calls and responding to emergencies, which collaborates with the country's judicial system, through the use of facilities, and access of technical personnel of the Ministerio de Justicia Derechos Humanos y Cultos (MJDHC) for the monitoring of the Electronic Surveillance System (Servicio Integrado

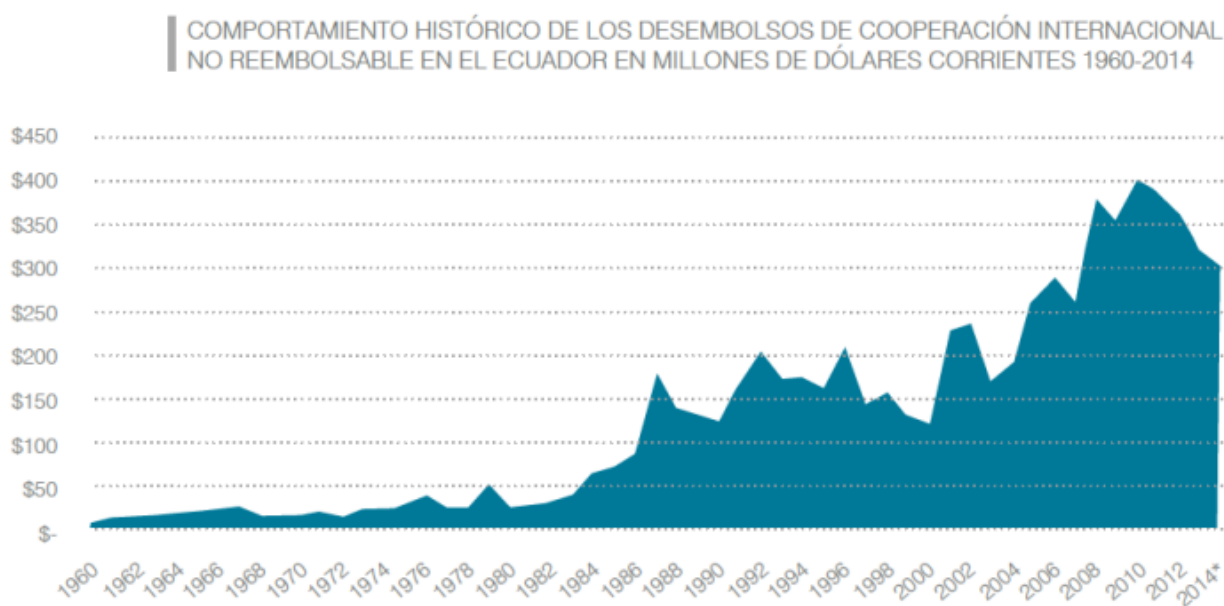de Seguridad ECU 911 frente al monitoreo de grilletes – Servicio Integrado de Seguridad ECU 911, 2016).

Furthermore, its purpose is to provide immediate and comprehensive attention to emergencies in Ecuadorian territory in cooperation with articulated response agencies, in cases of accidents, disasters, and emergencies by mobilizing available resources to provide rapid attention to citizens such as: the National Police, Armed Forces, Fire Department, National Transit Commission, Ministry of Public Health, Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security, National Risk and Emergency Management Service, Ecuadorian Red Cross and other local agencies in charge of emergency care (Servicio Integrado de Seguridad ECU 911, 2016).

That being the case, the issue of security must be addressed by the international community, since it is a question of seeking measures that guarantee conditions of tranquillity in order to live in peace and to achieve this, national defense policies must be developed. In the case of Ecuador, security is present through multiple instruments and actions; however, there is still a long way to go since the threats persist, and as long as they continue to exist new measures will be required to combat them, taking into account that it is no longer just a matter of national security but goes further, prevailing the well-being of the people and guaranteeing their rights.

CHAPTER 3. Analysis of International Cooperation in the Strengthening of Security between Ecuador and other actors of International Law

3.1 Background of International Cooperation in Ecuador

According to the Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional, international assistance in Ecuador originated in the 1960s, and the first manifestations of such cooperation were through plans and strategies focused on economic improvement, and the country's political and social. During the 60s and 70s, Ecuador, like the rest of the Latin American countries, received stable international aid for the development of projects that contribute to the improvement of the region, however, in the 80s (financial crisis in Latin America,) and the year 2000 (financial crisis in Ecuador) international cooperation increased significantly, especially disbursements of resources for non-reimbursable international cooperation. (Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional, 2014).

COMPORTAMIENTO HISTÓRICO DE LOS DESEMBOLSOS DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL NO REEMBOLSABLE EN EL ECUADOR EN MILLONES DE DÓLARES CORRIENTES 1960-2014

Figure 4 International Non-Refundable Cooperation Disbursements in Ecuador

Source: SETECI 2014

In recent decades, Ecuador's international cooperation has gone through three stages. The first stage may be between the 1970s and 1990s when the institutions of international cooperation projects were anchored to the central government. In the second phase, which goes hand in hand with the 1998 political constitution, international

cooperation is in line with the trend of national decentralization policies, prioritizing support for the decentralization process and relations with municipal governments and agencies. The third stage is the one that has been implemented since 2009 and specified in the 2008 constitution. It specifies the central position of the National Development Planning Agency (SENPLADES) and therefore tends to link international cooperation actions with national development plans. (Espinosa 2009)

Since the beginning of International Cooperation, Ecuador has been focused on achieving a restructuring of the system, which is adapted to the needs that the country is constantly going through. To achieve this objective, it was essential to begin a change and internal visualization, considering the role played by the Cooperation in Ecuador. This transformation began in 2007, starting with the recovery of the internal planning of cooperation. In the same year two important organizations were created, the Ecuadorian System of International Cooperation (SECI) and the Ecuadorian Agenda for International Cooperation (AGECI). (Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional, 2015).

A year later, through the new constitution, Ecuador recognized the principles of "sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States". This gave way to better use of resources based on their own needs, and this is how the first National Plan for Good Living was created, which was regulated and controlled by the state. The obligations of the Ecuadorian Institute for International Cooperation (INECI) were also transferred to the AGECI, increasing its responsibilities in terms of international assistance management actions (Technical Secretariat of International Cooperation, 2015) On the other hand, SECI was created as an instrument responsible for the implementation of programs and projects financed by non-refundable international cooperation. (Agencia Ecuatoriana de Cooperación Internacional, AGECI, 2007, citado en Hernández 2016)

In 2009 the AGECI was modified and the SETECI was created, which is positioned as the new regulatory body as "the public policy of cooperation, transformative, innovative, generating models and management policies, the benchmark of good practices at the national, regional and international levels, by the philosophy of Good Living" (Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation 2015, cited in Hernández 2016, p.11) The SETECI, is a public body, which is under the command of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, has its individual financial, technical and

administrative management. Within this entity, the International Cooperation Agenda was created, to identify the preferential interests of the country in terms of cooperation. Within the Paris Declaration, five principles were established, which the countries that ratified should be governed by when they were cooperating or accepting. These five principles are:

- "Alignment: This principle is based on the criterion of unconditional cooperation, and is based on the empowerment of local and national institutions
- Appropriation: the National Plan for Good Living states: "the freedom, sovereignty, and self-determination of nation-states will create a new international order to promote the construction of a multipolar world, peaceful relations among peoples and the general welfare of humanity"
- Harmonization: it is based on the strengthening of institutional capacities, to reduce the fragmentation of International Cooperation, strengthening the co-responsibility, specialization, and added value of the collaborators
- Results-oriented management: relates to "Resolution No. 009-CNC-2011 of the National Competencies Council", and its objective is the management of resources and in turn improve decision-making aimed at positive results
- Mutual responsibility: it is based on the concepts of transparency, co-responsibility, accountability and shared responsibilities" (Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional 2015, citado en Hernández 2016, p.13)

On the other hand, the National Agenda for International Cooperation of Ecuador mentions seven basic principles to which Ecuadorian International Cooperation is governed, which are:

- Good Living: this principle establishes initiatives that contain various elements of Good Living, its principles, and guidelines.
- Ethical exchange: we emphasize equitable, fair, and unconditional exchange in the area of knowledge and experience, which seek mutual learning.
- Sovereignty: respect for the sovereignty of the peoples, non-interference in internal issues of the partner countries.
- Complementarity: the NRC should complement national efforts in terms of Good Living.

- Transparency: public access to information on International Non-Refundable Cooperation and accountability by authorities, cooperators, and public institutions
- Effective prioritization and quality: it must be given through the establishment of technical criteria that guarantee mutual initiatives.
- Effectiveness: this principle groups the five principles of the Paris Declaration, focused on the National Reality (Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional, 2015)

Ecuador's public policy for international cooperation focuses on orienting cooperation towards the country's priorities, striving to show its national potential in the region and the world. One of the guiding principles of Ecuador's public policy on international cooperation is to promote Ecuadorian technical cooperation and talent. Ecuador is committed to the implementation of technical assistance and the development of knowledge and human resources in various strategic sectors of the country. Prioritizing these interests in the sense of cooperation and development of the country. These elements are reflected in the "Plan Nacional de Buen Vivir" y la "Agenda Nacional de Cooperación Internacional".

Similarly, the Agenda Nacional de Cooperación Internacional, in chapter 3 of its "Strategy to Change the Priorities of International Cooperation" aims "increase international cooperation resources for national priorities to 60%: science and technology". The data provided by the Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation show that the national agenda for international cooperation establishes, in its objective 4, goals, policies, and priority guidelines for strengthening the capacities and potential of citizens, encouraging the mutual and beneficial interaction of education in the productive, technological and scientific research sectors. (Hernández, 2016)

The main objective of the above-mentioned plan is to promote international cooperation through development, innovation, and technology transfer; strengthen the capacity to assimilate knowledge; and promote technological and technical training in priority sectors and services aimed at the transformation of the production matrix, all of this, to promote products with added value and quality, focusing primarily on priority sectors or areas of greatest need.

After going through different stages of international cooperation, Ecuador is moving towards a new era, in which it is less and less dependent on international aid, in this era cooperation is not only about economic aid, but it is also dedicated to the exchange and transfer of knowledge and talents, which help progress from a solid base, that is to say, focusing on citizens and on what they could contribute.

3.2 The role of International Cooperation in strengthening national security in Ecuador

The role of International Cooperation has become a very important aspect of the security agenda of the Ecuadorian State; therefore, International Cooperation is a fundamental element within national public policy, so that its resources are part of the public investment for Buen Vivir and is one of the fundamental mechanisms for the diversification of international relations of Ecuador (*Informe de Cooperación Internacional 2011-2014*, 2015, p.13). Although initially, the International Cooperation in the country focused its attention on traditional issues, these have been added new modalities and strategies that seek to prevent and solve the threats that arise day by day such as organized crime, and drug trafficking, among others.

According to the Plan Nacional de Seguridad Integral 2019-2030 (2019), because the threats that challenge security are diverse in nature, a concept of multidimensional security is proposed that aims to safeguard the security of people, seeking the strengthening of cooperation in various aspects and also seeking the development of regional policies that are useful in confronting several threats, this is to be achieved through the formulation and implementation of strategies and resolutions of the OAS, among others related to the security of the region.

Today, security is a fairly broad and changing concept because of situations in the international environment. That is why Ecuador has focused on creating a framework that includes some key aspects of security, such as:

- "That the Ecuadorian State, in its sovereign right, identify its national security priorities and define strategies, plans, and actions to deal with threats, by the legal system, respect for international law, and contribute to the consolidation of peace,

integral development, and social justice, based on: democratic principles, defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation and respect for national sovereignty.

- Emphasize that international disputes enhance peaceful means so that neither international peace and security nor justice are endangered.

- Affirm that addressing threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security are cross-cutting problems that require multiple responses from different national organizations and, in some cases, partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society, all acting appropriately following democratic norms and principles and the constitutional norms of each State. And considering that many of the threats, concerns and other security challenges are transnational in nature and require adequate cooperation, inter-state, hemispheric, and global.

- Seek positive, constructive and integral relations with other States, promoting a strategy of commitments, diplomatic activities and development to facilitate efforts that promote the desired well-being" (Plan Nacional de Seguridad Integral 2019-2030, 2019, p.37-38).

Thus, the scope of security today involves dealing with transnational criminal threats. Given these concerns, especially by the Organization of American States (OAS), this approach to multidimensional security is born as a hemispheric response to new threats. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the member countries, meeting in Bridgetown, Jamaica, on the occasion of the thirty-second regular session of the General Assembly in June 2002, acknowledged that:

Many of the new threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security are transnational in nature and therefore require adequate hemispheric cooperation; these new threats, concerns, and other challenges are cross-cutting problems that require multi-faceted responses from different organizations; that new threats, Concerns and other challenges to hemispheric security may require a range of different approaches; and that the process of assessing new aspects of hemispheric security must take into account regional differences and characteristics.

Jointly, cooperation within the region in the area of security includes several aspects, including political, economic, social, health, and environmental, agreeing to

deepen cooperation and include the multidimensional approach in a Special Conference on Security. Based on this decision, on October 28, 2003, in Mexico City, the Third Plenary Session of the OAS adopted the "Declaration on Security in the Americas", which highlights the multidimensional scope of the new concept of security in the hemisphere, the same that considers traditional threats, new threats, other concerns, and challenges, according to the priorities of each State. In this way, it contributes to the consolidation of peace, integral development, and social justice.

Common values and approaches include the sovereign right of each State to identify its national security priorities and to define its strategies, plans, and actions, by its legal system, with full respect for international law and the norms and principles of the OAS Charter and the Charter of the United Nations. Security relates to the protection of the human person, full respect for his dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, the promotion of development, social inclusion, education, and the fight against poverty, disease, and hunger (Moncayo Gallegos, 2020, p.71).

In this context, the idea of cooperation between States becomes stronger, since it is a mechanism that shows that security involves the effort of various national and international structures to combat threats, which compromise global security. To face the challenges that arise, there are many initiatives resulting from the diplomacy of summits and other meetings between the representatives of each State, This is important since several instruments are born from here that allow more effective cooperation based on the political will of each State (Rojas Aravena, 1999, p.25).

On the other hand, the role of international organizations is also indispensable due to the growing relationship between States that promote cooperation processes to increase their negotiating spaces and hemispheric influence (Rivera Vélez, 2008, p.27). In the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, in the area of regional and bilateral cooperation, important cooperation initiatives are noted; however, the most important institution for hemispheric coordination in the different areas and issues of security is the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA)[4]. Noting that in addressing the issue of

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[4] Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA), is an international organization of regional and continental scope with the objective of being a political forum for dialogue, policy analysis, and decision-making in matters of the Hemisphere.

security, the organization is based on certain principles, especially those relating to the achievement of an order of peace and justice, which strengthen cooperation and compliance with the obligations arising from ratified treaties, those who provide peaceful solutions to disputes, and fight for the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the members, all with the condition and within the framework of the democratic system (Palma, 2002, p.114).

At the same time, two organizations in the Andean Region adopted within their objectives the issue of security; these are the Comunidad Andina de Naciones (CAN) and the Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica (OTCA). Since 2000, several presidential and ministerial summits have been held to seek solutions and address security problems. In 2002, the Carta Andina para la Paz y Seguridad was established. This is a commitment among the Andean Community that emphasizes a zone of peace in the Region. Subsequently, in 2004, three documents were developed where the dialogues focused on analyzing and designing a security policy for the Region in general (UMNG, 2007).

Along the same lines, the Grupo de Río had a long existence and, together with the Cumbre de América Latina y el Caribe para la Integración y el Desarrollo (CALC), gave way to the Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC)[5], which deals with both political and development issues in a comprehensive manner (Rojas Aravena, 2012, p.23). The Declaration on Security in the Americas, another essential instrument within the security landscape in the region, was the result of the Special Conference on Security held in 2003, this document expresses the political will and commitment of the countries of the region to work together, based on principles, shared values and common approaches, towards a more secure and stable hemisphere (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, s.f.).

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[5] Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC) is an intergovernmental mechanism for dialogue and political coordination.

3.2.1 Multilateral Cooperation

In the 1970s, this problem attracted world attention, thanks to the fact that the US government identified it as a difficulty that must be faced immediately. With the establishment of international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 1997, international methods of combating organized crime have been strengthened, thereby curbing the use, production, trafficking, and trafficking of illicit substances. Through international assistance, the aim is to strengthen national drug control policies, provided that they contribute to the development and implementation of plans to help eliminate and prevent crime. (ONUV, 2016)

Ecuador was originally classified as a "drug transit country" because it is located between the borders of Peru and Colombia, however, this has changed in recent years to the point that today, Ecuador is considered a producer of these substances, but in low amounts compared to your neighbors. The state argues that the increase in illicit substances seized in the country demonstrates the good work being done by state and intelligence agencies. (García, 2018) The number of tons of drugs seized by the National Police, between 2005 and 2013 reached about 382 tons of drugs (Diario Expreso, 2014), in 2014 this seizure reached 59.75 tons (ANDES, 2015) and in 2015 reached the amount of 79,2 tons (El Comercio, 2016).
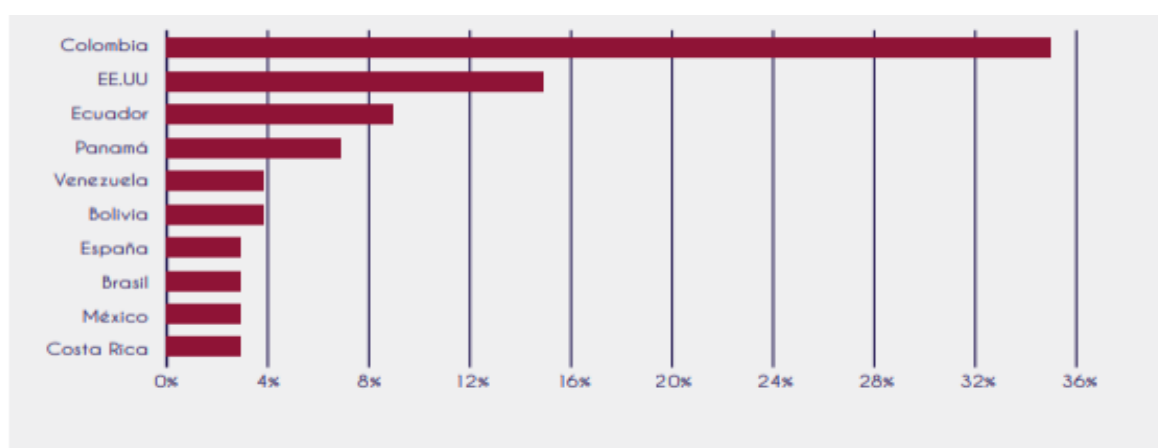
Figure 5 Top 10 countries with most cocaine seizures/ Percentage of the global total by 2015

Source: UNODC, 2015. Published in Boletín Democracia, Seguridad y Defensa, PUCE, N. 66.

The Palermo Convention signed by the United Nations in December 2000 is an important event in the international fight against transnational organized crime. The adoption of the Convention demonstrated the political will to solve global problems

through an international response. The treaty reaffirms that if crimes cross borders, prosecutions must proceed in the same way, because if the rule of law is undermined in many countries, those who defend it cannot be limited to the use of local media. The full text of the Convention stipulates that States parties should strive to establish and promote cooperation among judicial, law enforcement, and financial regulatory authorities at the global level, regional, subregional, and bilateral measures to combat the various forms of transnational organized crime under consideration. (Niño, 2011)

Through the former Ecuadorian Institute for International Cooperation (INECI) and the current Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation (SETECI), the Ecuadorian government manages its cooperation alliances, showing the funds and donations received from abroad for the fight against organized crime. (Aguirre, 2011). In 2005, Ecuador received a total of US\$ 594.75 million in international cooperation grants, of which 61.23% were foreign loans and the rest were non-refundable funds. In 2005, the main donor countries were the United States, Japan, Germany, Belgium, and the European Union (EU), while the international agencies were the United Nations, the World Bank (WB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Garcia 2013)

Between 2006 and 2007, UNODC launched a comprehensive drug prevention project in the urban communities of Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca with a budget of US\$200,000. Five hundred people were trained to prevent drug use (Salazar, 2009). The training program lasted until 2012, involving 5,000 community leaders in preventive actions. Another plan that was also implemented to combat drug trafficking was "drug prevention in 79 social rehabilitation centers for women in Quito, Guayaquil, Esmeraldas, and the Virgilio Guerrero Juvenile Center in Quito".

International Cooperation was not a regulated activity in Ecuador until 2009 when the decree of the 2008 Constitution, gave priority to the Secretaría de Planificación Nacional de Desarrollo (SENPLADES), and international cooperation activities are coordinated with the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo. Accordingly, the Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional (SETECI) is formalized and constituted as a public body charged with the creation of policies for International Non-Refundable Cooperation, overseeing the institutions that are part of the Sistema Ecuatoriano de Cooperación Internacional (SECI) (García 2013)

According to a report by the SETECI, in 2010 and 2011, cooperation in projects to combat organized crime, specifically anti-drugs, reached USD 372.73 million, being that the bilateral participation totaled 40.3% of the donated amount of the project (SETECI, 2010). A total of 30 countries and 31 multilateral organizations participated, led by the European Union, Spain, the United States, and the United Nations. During this period, internal and external security were also cataloged as new intervention variables, with a budget of US$166,300.79 (SETECI, 2010). The recent report on non-reimbursable international cooperation covers the period from 2011 to 2014 and indicates that a budget of 386.44 million was reached in 2011, 36179 million in 2012, 3205.2 million in 2013, and the approximate US $323.18 million in 2014 (SETECI, 2011-2014). In the area of security, in addition to other variables such as justice, planning, and monitoring, these budgets reached 3 percent (SETECI, 2011-2014).

The United States Department of State owns an anti-narcotics agency called the BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS (INL), which works through criminal intelligence by implementing different strategies to dismantle criminal gangs and seize narcotics, the agency makes an annual report on the situation of countries concerning organized crime. In the last report, the INL states that Ecuador is one of the countries most involved in the transit of illegal substances, making it more vulnerable to being a victim of transnational organized crime, and this is mostly due to the little control that exists by public institutions and border control (INL, 2015).

The report certifies that the Ecuadorian government has sought to reduce the demand for drugs and has considered their use as a public health problem; however, the lack of treatment for drug users has always been defective and insufficient. Until 2014, the state received technical, logistical, and operational assistance from the bureau, but due to political decisions taken by Ecuador, it closed its offices so that the government can continue operating independently. An increasingly important development is that bilateral aid has been achieved between neighboring countries to safeguard maritime and land borders. The countries adjacent to Ecuador propose to buy equipment to control these criminal organizations, increase military and police capabilities, increase investigations and strengthen the judicial system to prosecute those involved in transnational crimes (INL, 2015).

Recently Ecuador is working together with a cooperation project of the European Union, which is coordinated by two institutions experts in managing cooperation projects: FIIAPP (Spain) and Expertise France (France), and two European partners: IILA (Italy) and Camôes, this project is called The PACT. On May 31, 2021, a delegation of this project traveled to Ecuador and remained until June 4 looking for solutions and strategies that could be implemented in the country to deal with organized crime (PAcCTO, 2021).

A clear example of this work is the team of professionals specialized in different disciplines dedicated to the anti-money laundering of assets promoted by EL PacCTO, which has already begun work in the country. The participating institutions of the EME (UAFE, Attorney General's Office, National Police, and Ministry of the Interior) took advantage of the visits of the members of the program in the presence of its general director, Leopoldo Quirós, at the headquarters of the Economic and Financial Analysis Unit, to celebrate his first official meeting. Mr. Quirós stressed the importance of the EU's fight against money laundering and other crimes. Leopoldo points out that this is a strategy of ongoing formation which is of utmost importance for Ecuador and the region. The technical assistance shows coordination between institutions fighting against organized crime and its derivatives (El PAcCTO, 2021).

The main objective of this project is to inform the new authorities about the plan and set new work goals for the coming months. It is also important to highlight Ecuador's commitment to combat the infiltration of organized crime inside prisons. As a result of this interest, EL PACTO and Ecuadorian organizations will work to design a comprehensive system for coordinating prison affairs. At the same time, the program will create new activities to strengthen the new structure, together with the Integral National Service for Adults Deprived of Liberty and Services for Juvenile Delinquency (PAcCTO, 2021).

3.2.2 Bilateral Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation is one in which two actors participate, usually a model of aid that comes from one government to another where the relationship established is between a developing country and a donor country; that is, it occurs between governments either

directly or through cooperation agencies, agreements, agreements or other instruments (UNIR Revista, s.f.). This, like Multilateral cooperation, can be repayable and non-reimbursable; repayable cooperation means that the donor country grants concessional loans to the recipient country, in other words, it is a debt to be settled. While bilateral cooperation of a non-refundable type is about donations either in monetary or technical terms, because it can be through technical assistance, consultancies, etc., and therefore the recipient does not contract any debt (Román Sánchez, 2002.)

According to the information collected by the SETECI, between 2000 and 2009, this type of cooperation registered an average annual growth of 9%. However, bilateral cooperation, in turn, can take place under different modalities:

"North-South cooperation (from industrialized countries to developing countries), South-South cooperation (from developing countries to each other), South-South cooperation north (the one carried out from the developing countries to the industrialized countries and which is currently in an important period of consolidation) and Triangular Cooperation (carried out by consortia between industrialized and developing countries aimed at another developing country)" (Monje, 2014, p.9).

Currently, it can be seen that both South-South, and Triangular cooperation have been promoted more strongly both from industrialized countries and from those considered developing countries

In this research project, it is also important to emphasize South-South Cooperation (SSC) due to all the events between Ecuador and its neighboring countries such as Colombia and Peru. South-South Cooperation is an expression born of solidarity among developing countries, initially known as Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), it has evolved to the point of re-emerging more strongly than before, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, 2019, p.17). According to the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South-South cooperation refers to the "exchange of knowledge and resources in multiple aspects, political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technological, involving two or more developing countries

and which may take the form of bilateral, regional, subregional or interregional cooperation. Likewise, developing countries share knowledge, skills, experiences, and resources to achieve their development goals through concerted efforts" (SELA, s.f.).

Since the 21st century the issue of South-South cooperation has been growing positively, so the 1st South Summit, in Havana (2000), within the framework of the G-77 + China, addresses the issue and states that "the countries of the South have not been able to share in the benefits of globalization on an equal footing with the developed countries" in a context of "deepening asymmetries and imbalances in international economic relations". In the final declaration, the role of the SSC as an "effective tool [...] to promote development through the mobilization and distribution of resources and expertise in our countries" was highlighted (UN, 2000). On the other hand, one of the most important events led by the United Nations was the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation in December 2009 in Nairobi, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the PABA[6]. This meeting demonstrated the strengthening that SSC has had at the international level, as it gave an important political impetus to SSC on the reaffirmation of the traditional principles of SSC, and in response to the call for a greater effort to meet the expectations of the Member States (Ayllón, 2013, p. 40).

Jointly, by 2014, the United Nations General Assembly recognizes the importance of SSC, stating that it is "an expression of solidarity among the peoples and countries of the South, contributing to their national well-being, national and collective self-reliance and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals" (United Nations, 2015, p.2). At the same time, within the Policies and Strategies of International Non-Refundable Cooperation 2017-2021, South-South Cooperation has a strategic role for Ecuador, as it allows for the learning and exchange of knowledge and experiences with other countries with which it shares similar challenges or threats to development, as well as becoming a fundamental tool to promote and strengthen regional integration (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana, 2019, p.18).

Ecuador considers that this type of cooperation is an opportunity to significantly increase South-South ties and strengthen the pluralization of foreign relations (PNBV

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[6] Plan de Acción de Buenos Aires (PABA), is the document that 40 years ago laid the foundation for what is now known as South-South Cooperation, a horizontal and mutually beneficial collaboration.

2013-2017). Thus, Latin American countries will manage their South-South Cooperation towards close countries with common interests. For example, Colombia concentrates its SSC actions in bordering countries and in the Caribbean Basin, which has allowed several dialogues between Colombia and Ecuador on the issue of national security and defense due to the historical context between both countries regarding organized crime and joint threats. Each country has its SSC strategies based on its political positions and foundations, therefore the coordination and responsibility both political, technical, and management of the same will respond to different administrative structures depending on each State. In the case of Ecuador, the SSC is under the administration of the Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation (SETECI) attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (Ayllón, 2013, p.71)

While there are some countries more active than others, all can contribute something different to help another country face the different challenges it is living; as indicated by the "G-77, South-South Technical Cooperation is not constrained by countries' economic wealth, as all developing countries have a diverse and varied degree of capacities and experiences that can be shared with other countries" (Alop, 2010, p. 24). As Ayllón (2013) mentions, it is evident the existence of a sectoral specialization of the CSS in Latin America in areas such as technical assistance, technological domain, and managerial capacities. As with Colombia, which proposes a CSS sharing its experiences in security, refugees and displaced persons, agriculture, social minorities, urban mobility, and eradication of illicit crops. While, Ecuador concentrates its cooperation in the economic sector, particularly by sharing experiences in the tourism sector of protected national parks and exchanging financial sector information with countries such as El Salvador, with whom he shares the fact of running a dollarized economy, as well as projects in development planning and assistance to people with some kind of disability (p.75).

As for the experience of Ecuador, it can be seen that it has been responsible for building its model of cooperation. Ayllón (2013) states that with the arrival to power in 2007 of Rafael Correa Delgado, a new dynamic in the political, economic, and social reality of the country originated, as there were important transformations in the Ecuadorian legal system, starting with the adoption in a referendum of a new Constitution, in addition to changes in public policy planning, focused mainly on

recovering the regulatory capacity of the State through sovereign management of national resources and the elaboration of National Plans for Good Living. (PNBV)

At the same time, foreign policy took a radical turn due to several decisions taken by the current government such as the non-renewal of the agreement to install and operate the US military base in Manta, the rejection of the free trade initiatives promoted by Washington, and the consequent entry into ALBA, as well as an in-depth study on the International Cooperation, received by the country, among others. According to this, Ecuadorian foreign policy focused on strengthening the South-South axis in its international relations; despite the modest resources that Ecuador possesses and the long road ahead, there is a strong political will to share their experiences and knowledge with other Latin American countries (p.78). All this has a purpose and is to modify the conditions to ensure "the construction of symmetrical relations between equals that facilitate the endogenous economy for good living and the generation of one's thinking" (SENPLADES, 2013, p. 244).

According to the actions of the SSC carried out and received, Ecuador has had a greater reception in the last decade, from 2007 to 2015, the country participated in a total of 826 bilateral SSC projects and actions in which it had a double role, both as a cooperation provider and as a receiver; although most of the time its profile in the SSC has been as a receiving partner, being 612 received experiences versus 214 offered experiences. Similarly, the analyzed data show that there is a more balanced relationship where the cooperation offered by the country has been growing over the years, showing that the cooperation policy is increasingly organized and articulated (Viola & Paéz, 2019, p. 110).

Histórico de la CSS

Año	Recibidas	Ofrecidas
2007	93	1
2008	74	1
2009	59	24
2010	68	16
2011	49	20
2012	86	26
2013	80	53
2014	59	37
2015	44	36
Total	612	214

Table 4 South-south Cooperation Projects

Source: La Cooperación Su-Sur de Ecuador (Viola & Páez, 2019, p.110)

Currently, Ecuador manages technical cooperation through exchanges of experts, consultancy, cooperation in kind, technology transfer, services, sending volunteers, courses, workshops, internships, exchange of information, among the main, through a step-by-step process such as planning, negotiation, implementation and registration of projects and actions (Unit for Cooperation with the Americas | Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation, 2011). This type of cooperation, combined with financial assistance, has been fundamental in the area of national security and defense between Ecuador and its neighboring countries, manifesting itself in instruments such as conventions, actions, including experiences such as the Binational Action Programme under the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON), which is carried out between the Ministries of Defence of the two countries, to strengthen cooperation on border security. Also noteworthy is Colombia's Border Plan, which since 2003 has sought to improve the state's presence in this area of conflict, and implemented some projects with the joint assistance of Ecuador (Ganuza, 2015, p.15).

A similar situation occurs with Peru, which shares threats related to drug trafficking, the responses to be taken must be at the international level, in this context the CSS has been present on several occasions, as happened recently in May 2021 when the Ministers of the Interior of Ecuador and Peru, met with the commanders of the police respectively, to sign the memorandum of cooperation, for the foundation of an alliance between the specialized units RAMPOL Peru - Ecuador, and the top police officers. This

is to establish a mechanism for exchanging information and intelligence, coordinating joint operations and investigations, reaffirming its commitment to prevent and combat transnational organized crime, in addition to strengthening these areas of cooperation, protected by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime or the Palermo Convention (Ministerio de Gobierno, 2021).

3.2.2.1 Relations Ecuador - United States

In the area of cooperation, Ecuador has received support from the United States, not only economically and logistically, but also through trade incentives through Andean tariff preferences such as the Drug Control Act (ATPDEA). This law allowed Ecuadorian products to enter United States territory, on the condition that the country fights drug trafficking. Through the former Ecuadorian Institute of International Cooperation (INECI) and the current Technological Secretariat of International Cooperation (SETECI), the Ecuadorian state manages funds and donations received from abroad for drug control. (Aguirre, 2011)

In 1998, the then President of Ecuador, Jamil Mahuad (exiled in the United States since the overthrow in 2000), handed over control of the military airbase of the Ecuadorian Air Force Eloy Alfaro, located in Manta to the United States. After a while, the soldiers of that country settled in the so-called Manta base for a period of 10 years. The main objective of the base was to combat drug trafficking and detect possible pirate ships transporting drugs to other South American countries. (El Comercio, 2009)

To carry out its mission efficiently, the North American government made significant physical adjustments to the base, expanded the runway to receive military transport aircraft, and installed advanced electronic devices. The stay of the American military in Manabi resulted in a series of economic, social, and affective relations with the community. However, their presence also generated resentment in the left-wing social sector, which took this as a violation of national sovereignty. In 2008, the Constituent Assembly legalized the prohibition of the permanence of foreign troops in Ecuadorian territory, after which the Ecuadorian and American governments agreed to close the deal and withdraw the troops (El Comercio, 2009).

Currently, as part of their support in the fight against organized crime, The United States has provided Ecuador with various tools to train criminal justice system personnel and provide tools to facilitate and technically guide the complex investigation of this issue. In addition, the Drug Control Enforcement Authority (INL) handed over 2021 the remodeled office to the Office of the Attorney General of the Special National Investigative Unit (UNIDOT) for the fight against cross-border organized crime (Embajada y Consulado de EEUU en Ecuador, 2021).

The United States of America has worked with several Ecuadorian institutions to jointly combat cross-border organized crime. This problem is the greatest threat to both societies, as it threatens the rule of law, peace, and security in the region. At present, all prosecutors' offices have better facilities for prosecutors and their respective work teams, as well as suitable places for the storage of tax files. In addition, a room was built for the defenders to review the proceedings transparently and comfortably. Likewise, with the support of experts in international criminal justice and criminal law, it was possible to develop a toolbox composed of 10 manuals and guides: in which we talk about a contextual analysis to confront macro crime, corruption, and strategic development of the incident investigation. In November 2019, the United States launched a project to develop Ecuador's judicial capacity to combat cross-border crime and drug trafficking. The project provides prosecutors, judges, and police with technical tools to understand the phenomenon of organized crime and skills to successfully investigate and prosecute cases of money laundering, drug trafficking, or related crimes such as crime and corruption (Embajada y Consulado de EEUU en Ecuador, 2021).

On the other hand, in 2021, the US government. allocated US$5.8 million to a cooperation program to combat drug trafficking and organized and cross-border crime in Ecuador. That $5.8 million was approved by the US Congress on July 14. The contribution is due to the Cooperation Agreement signed in September 2002 by both nations. The current president of Ecuador, Guillermo Lasso, affirms that the recent signing of several agreements between Ecuador and the United States underscores the will of the two countries to combat illegal drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime (El Comercio, 2021).

3.2.2.2 Relations Ecuador - Colombia

The ongoing conflict in Colombia puts neighboring countries on constant alert as a transnational threat where the effects also extend to other territories, mainly in terms of instability and national and regional insecurity. As Tickner & Mason (2002) point out, in the middle of the year 2000 steps were taken with the assistance of the United States on the aid package to Colombia to intensify on a large scale the militarization of borders with neighboring countries such as Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador. The objective was to address threats triggered by the presence of guerrillas, drug cultivation, and human trafficking; currently, these activities are still present, and not only that but because of these the tension in the border area has been further accentuated particularly between Ecuador and Colombia (p.140).

Given the existence of a common border due to its permanent mutual confluence of inhabitants in areas such as trade, education, daily activities, etc., both Ecuador and Colombia are thus involved in a binational problem, and consequently, South-South CooperationSur fits perfectly in this situation. The relations established between the two countries linked to security have developed markedly since 2010, due to the rise to power of Juan Manuel Santos in the same year, because since that time more conciliatory and less confrontational negotiations have been carried out so much so, that the dialogue with Ecuador has been deepened "specifically on military industry issues, institutional strengthening and information exchange with the implementation of the Binational Border Security Plans (PBSF)" (Ganuza, 2015, p.16).

Ecuador and Colombia share an interest in strengthening bilateral integration and participating in various bilateral and multilateral agreements and agreements. Within the framework of cooperation, as mentioned above, the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON), was created to monitor compliance with military and police commitments on border security, and to prepare for events affecting the security and stability of States. As the main confidence-building measure, COMBIFRON created the Security Card for Military and Border Police Units of the Republics of Ecuador and Colombia in 2006, This document establishes safety procedures to identify and control air traffic, as well as international procedures for the surrender of persons accused of a

crime. In addition, three sub commissions linked to the fight against transnational crime and subversive groups, arms and ammunition smuggling, and training and cooperation between the two countries were created (Bermeo & Pabón, 2008, p. 14).

At the same time, in the framework of COMBIFRON's relations, 18 regular meetings and 8 extraordinary meetings were held until 2007, to assess developments at the border (). However, as Fuentes (2010) explains after a series of incidents occurred in Ecuadorian territory due to the bombing by the Colombian Armed Forces of a clandestine FARC camp in March 2008, better known as Operation Phoenix increased tensions between countries and as a result, Ecuador decides to break diplomatic relations. This decision is based on the fact that this constitutes a violation of the sovereignty and integrity of the country because according to the context of international relations, the territory of a state is inviolable and therefore military occupation by another state is not allowed.

With this happening, the application of COMBIFRON was suspended but it was agreed that the Safety Card should remain in force, so that later, as the restructuring of bilateral relations in 2009 takes place, COMBIFRON will be reactivated. Later in 2010, in the framework of the Summit of Unity of Latin America and the Caribbean, in Mexico, the Presidents of Ecuador and Colombia meet for the first time after the breakdown of diplomatic relations, to discuss aspects of the bilateral agenda. As a result, it is decided to join forces to prevent, control, and punish the actions derived from organized crime, and to find effective solutions to these problems that lurk in the border region (Bermeo & Pabón, 2008, p. 23).

Based on the political will of States, it has been possible to hold several meetings that have made it possible to create spaces for dealing with these issues. Mention may be made of the Binational Border Commissions (COMBIFRON), High Military Command Rounds, Regional Border Command Meetings, 2+2 Mechanisms, security and defense axes of the binational Cabinets, and other existing mechanisms with the countries with which borders are shared (Foreign Ministry of Colombia, s.f.). All these mechanisms allow for the exchange of information, and/or the creation of strategies to optimize operations against threats between the two countries.

Taking into account the progress in the bilateral relations of both countries, it has been possible to elaborate the Binational Plan of Border Integration whose objective is to propose guidelines to generate policies and allow to achieve the Good Living and Prosperity of its populations (Senplades, 2014). Within the policies established by the Binational Plan for Border Integration 2014-2022 (p. 62), the "Combat hydrocarbon smuggling, illegal trade, drug trafficking, illegal mining, land trafficking, illegal fishing activities, and organized transnational crime by strengthening binational co-responsibility" Thus, it is undoubtedly one of the most important instruments in the area to coordinate and implement policies taking into consideration the mutual benefit of its citizens.

In the framework of the foregoing, following cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia, the main agreements signed are:

- "Joint Statement by the Presidents of Ecuador and Colombia, (2011)
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Ecuador and the Republic of Colombia restructuring the Commission on Neighborhood and Integration between the two countries (2011)
- Binational Action Program to Strengthen Border Security between the Ministries of Defense of Ecuador and Colombia (2011)
- Reform of the Convention on the Transit of Persons, Vehicles, River Vessels and Aircraft signed in Esmeraldas, Ecuador (2012).
- Constitutive and organizational activities of the Border Development and Social Security Fund, signed in Manta (2013).
- Convention on Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Prevention of Cross-Border Crime, signed by the Deputy Minister of the Interior of Ecuador and the Deputy (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, s.f.).
- Binational Agreement to Promote and Facilitate the Transport and Export of Hydrocarbons" (2013) (Ganuza, 2015, p.16) (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, s.f.).

In the same way, other agreements were signed by the Colombo-Ecuadorian Joint Permanent Border Commission and the Binational Technical Commission of the Boca del Río Mataje, to delimit the geographical charts of the river on the Pacific Ocean and

recognize the Colombian navigability on this territory, to preserve a peaceful coexistence between the border populations. The Binational Border Care Centers (CEBAF) in San Miguel, Sucumbíos and Rumichaca (Ganuza, 2015, 17) have also been implemented. Thus, the authorities of both countries can exercise greater control and surveillance over the activities of this border crossing, with a specific focus on bilateral relations.

Currently, cooperation between both countries has had good results, because according to the Ministry of Government (2019), both countries continue with the predisposition to establish dialogues, In this context, the National Police and the Military Forces of Ecuador and Colombia strengthened the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement in the prevention of cross-border crimes. By subscribing to it, undertake to combine efforts to improve mechanisms for the exchange of confidential information and intelligence to prevent all types of criminal acts; planning support days for the development of bi-national civic actions; increasing technological and industrial programs linked to security issues; strengthen the activities of the armed forces and police in aspects of border security by air, sea, and land; and finally, strengthen cooperation and inter-institutional exchange of personnel, training and vocational training centers in both States.

The relationship between Colombia and Ecuador has been promoted at the highest level through the Presidential Meeting and Binational Cabinet, an annual plan that was established in the Quito Presidential Declaration of 2011, where presidents together with a part of their respective ministerial cabinets hold annual meetings to agree with commitments in different axes. The Binational Cabinet provides a space for the coordination of public policies and the development of plans or projects for the benefit of the population of the two countries. The meetings have been constant every year until 2021 and have made it easier to carry out bilateral initiatives such as "the construction and enabling of the new border crossing at Mataje, the structuring of the Binational Fund, the execution of joint security operations through the Binational Annual Operational Plan (POAB), and greater connectivity between the two countries" (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2021).

In short, there have been several efforts within the framework of International Cooperation to combat the threats that threaten the border between Ecuador and

Colombia, as there are several agreements and conventions in force, as well as constant meetings between representatives. Taking into account the Binational Annual Operational Plan 2020, signed by both countries and created to establish actions to strengthen the coordination in security and defense between them (La Vanguardia, 2020). These initiatives for the fight against organized crime, arms trafficking, and drug trafficking, among other transnational crimes that represent common threats to Ecuador and Colombia, become fundamental because they seek to ensure the safety of people and guarantee their right to a dignified life.

3.2.2.3 Relations Ecuador - Mexico

In Ecuador, illicit trafficking in substances is growing at a very rapid rate. In 2019, the InSight Crime website classified the country as a drug corridor, indicating that 30% of the narcotics produced in Colombia transited to their destination through Ecuador, but this changed in the following years. Massive drug attacks indicate that Ecuador is an important collection point. In 2021, more than 160 tons of drugs were seized, the largest amount in the country's history. In addition, the number of secret laboratories has increased. At least 15 cocaine processing kitchens have been discovered on the northern border. This shows that there is evident participation by other agencies outside the country. The development of this industry depends not only on the existence of national criminal organizations, but it has been discovered that at least two Mexican cartels are involved. Erick Benitez, a police colonel and deputy director of drug control, mentioned in a speech in November 2020, that they were not sure about the existence of Mexican cartels in the area, but several messengers were identified and arrested, according to PRIMICIAS (2021). But less than a year later, that statement changed. Giovanni Ponce, chief of police drug control, said there is already evidence that the Sinaloa Cartel has been active in Ecuador since 2009 and that the Jalisco Nueva Generación Cartel has become more frequent in recent years (PRIMICIAS, 2021).

With the cooperation of the Ministry of the Interior of Ecuador and the Attorney General's Office of Mexico and the exchange of information between the drug control officers of both countries, the fight against crimes related to transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and trafficking of illegal substances has been largely successful.

Proof of this are eight anti-drug operations that prevented drug traffickers from Ecuador, allegedly linked to Mexican criminal organizations, from sending some 24 tons of drugs abroad. Important anti-drug operations have succeeded in arresting approximately 60 key figures of these criminal organizations who are trying to use Ecuador as a transport and transit zone for alkaloids. (Ministerio de Gobierno, 2021)

According to Ministerio de Gobierno (2021), through its website, within the anti-drug operations carried out between Mexico - Ecuador there are the following:

- "Anniversary Operation: Manabi, 2003, was learned at the airport of Portoviejo 428 kilos 920 grams of cocaine and 14 detainees of different nationalities were arrested, César Fernández, former Governor of Manabí

- Operation Green Hurricane: Carried out in Esmeraldas, in October 2007; where it was found in a plane of the company Operadora de Calzado S.A, the amount of 3.7 tons of cocaine with final destination to the United States, which were going through Mexico. As a result, the two pilots were stopped.

- Operation Huracán de la Frontera: Esmeraldas, September 2008; seized 4.7 tons of cocaine that the organization Ostaiza Amay aspired to export by sea to Mexico.

- Operation Pacific: On March 17, 2011, a joint operation was carried out, called Pacific in Ecuador and Hive in Mexico, which captured, in Ecuador, 4 tons, 176 kilos, and 585 grams of cocaine and arrested 9 citizens (3 Mexicans, 2 Colombians, and 4 Ecuadorians).

- Operation Mirador: 2 tons of 513 kilograms of cocaine were retained in the hacienda located on the Via Guayaquil-Salinas.

- Operation La Victoria: Carried out in Portoviejo in November 2010, where 89 kilos of cocaine were retained with 236 grams, and a clandestine drug processing laboratory was also destroyed.

- Anniversary Operation: October 2009, executed in the provinces of Pichincha, Guayas, and Sucumbíos, capturing 8.5 tons of cocaine to be transported in boats to the United States.

- Operation Paisa: In December 2011, a criminal organization operating in Santo Domingo, Manabi, Santa Elena, and Guayas was disbanded; 415,665 kilograms of cocaine were captured."

Ecuador and Mexico are currently discussing a draft agreement to strengthen the fight against international crime. Among the agreements signed between Ecuador and Mexico during the visit of the former president of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, there is a memorandum of understanding and exchange of information on police cooperation between the Ministers of the Government of the United States of Mexico and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Ecuador. The purpose of this cooperation program is to ensure that information of mutual interest flows on issues of public safety and prevention of organized crime, always respecting human rights and applying reasonable force. (Ministerio de Gobierno, 2021)

The ready-to-sign agreement also defines strategies to advance regional and international agreements and strengthen the South American Council on global drug issues to overcome a purely disciplinary approach. It condemns and opposes the unilateral "war on drugs" policy that violates human rights, accelerates environmental degradation, and attacks and ignores the cultures of people's ancestors. This agreement also expresses international opposition to the criminalization of coca leaf cultivation and consumption and guarantees respect for the cultural identity and fundamental rights of the Andean peoples. The aim is to encourage and encourage international discussions on the world's drug problems. since this is considered a public health problem. On the other hand, it also seeks to support the development of scientific information that allows government action to adequately manage the supply and demand of substances (Ministerio de Gobierno, 2021).

Ecuadorians' travel to Mexico has increased in recent months. Most "tourists" never returned to their country of origin, and authorities suspect that American countries are being used as a base to enter the United States. In July 2021, 22,218 people left Ecuador for Mexico for tourism, according to the Ministry of Government, however, only 6,564 returned. That is, 15,654 Ecuadorians did not return. Between January and July 2021, 88,696 Ecuadorians traveled to Mexico and only 34,331 returned. A total of 54,365 citizens would have remained in the country bordering the United States. These numbers are the reason why Mexico has decided to require a visa from September 4, 2021, for Ecuadorians wishing to enter its territory. This measure will apply until March 4, 2022, until its continuation or suspension is analyzed (La Hora, 2021).

3.3 Analysis of International Cooperation in strengthening security in Ecuador

Good relations between States gave way to what was known as International Cooperation, which was often criticized because no one could intervene in the affairs of another State; over time, that notion had been left behind. Living in a world where globalization predominates, a country cannot be independent, that is why it speaks of an era where interdependence is fundamental to the development of nations since resources are needed, technology, knowledge, and aid in general among the international community. According to the theory, cooperation occurs when States are in the same tune, that is to say, they are willing to cooperate to face a common threat or achieve an objective and to do so follow the same standards, that is why it is important.

The current international cooperation no longer only involves States but other actors such as NGOs, international organizations, civil society organizations, etc., its purpose is to be an intercessor between the parties that need assistance and thereby contribute to the development of States. This represents collective benefits, because when speaking of interdependence, what benefits one must bring certain benefits to the rest, and not only refers to tangible benefits, but to the precedents that remain in history, and that you can learn from them to apply to other scenarios or in this case move them from one State to another. In this case, security cooperation in the Latin American region is not a recent issue. As has been observed, international assistance strategies are gaining strength and are present in the policies of States.

On the other hand, in recent years the region has also experienced an inordinate growth of violence and insecurity. According to InSight Crime (2022) " Ecuador recorded 2,464 murders in 2021, almost double the 1,362 that were presented in 2020, according to national police data. Ecuador ended the year with a homicide rate of 14 per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest in a decade." This is due to several factors such as the increase in drug trafficking, and thus the failed attempts at retaliation that States impose. As a result, security is threatened by the various problems created as a result. Concerning what the theory of International Relations presents, it can be observed that security is more than an idea and must work in a variety of situations, that is, multidimensional security. For this, according to Moreano (2016), States must cooperate in the establishment of international organizations that effectively apply the concepts of security. To achieve this

assistance at the international level, it is necessary for the intervention of governments and civil society organizations; hence, several international organizations have emerged such as the United Nations Organization (UN), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) or the European Union (EU), which creates specific agendas to address certain issues.

Organized crime and its related crimes are not a recent problem, the main activity related to organized crime is drug trafficking, which due to globalization has expanded inordinately, thus emerging new businesses such as arms trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering (Bermejo Marcos, 2009). From this, drug trafficking is considered a key element in the definition of organized criminal groups; since several activities or operations are established that are governed by bribery, extortion, the sale of services and, In particular, cooptation (UNDP, National Human Development Report 2009-2010, 2010). This ceases to be only a threat of organized crime because it goes beyond that because the system in which we live is corrupted and corruption inevitably becomes present.

Thus, the development of cooperation strategies for security in the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking is not new in the region. This is a battle that has been going on for many years, and it is important to emphasize the role that the United States has played in this struggle because it has carried out projects influenced mainly by national interests but some that have served the collective good. As is the case of former President Richard Nixon who recognized the urgency of dealing with the issue of drug abuse and that is why in 1973 the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) was created, an entity that focuses on the fight against drug smuggling and consumption, being solely responsible for carrying out and following up drug investigations abroad (Ernst, 2017).

In recent years, new forms of cooperation have been proposed by the requirements and needs of relations between South American countries. Within this context, a security cooperation agenda emerged to combat transnational organized crime in the so-called South-South relations. The ability to plan, manage, implement and demonstrate policy outcomes is key to the effectiveness of such cooperation and is linked to the institutional strength of the countries involved; strategic coherence is essential to achieving the region's shared objectives (Srouji, 2011, p.5).

Ecuador ranks tenth among the recipients of ODA in Latin America, and it could be said that it has decreased in importance within the list of recipients since it occupied seventh place in 1993. This is because Ecuador became a middle-income country, so international aid funds decreased. Ambassador Carlos Játiva, director of the Ecuadorian Institute of International Cooperation (INECI), in 2006. said the fall in aid was due to distribution criteria. As Ecuador is now considered a middle-income country, the amount of resources it obtains from abroad has decreased, but, he warns, these standards ignore the severe inequality that the country still suffers (Torres, 2008).

In 2016, SETECI was eliminated, and in 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility was designated as the body responsible for regulating international aid, and contributing to the achievement of the development priorities of the country, which through strengthening the capacity to implement plans and projects with free external funds, mainly technical cooperation and economic assistance. This agency is responsible for implementing the plans and policies of the National Government to ensure that these projects meet development needs, and thereby ensure that human rights are fully respected within the framework of participatory democracy and international and regional commitments (Políticas y Estrategias de la Cooperación Internacional No Reembolsable 2017-2021)

Recently, Ecuador has undergone a process of national restructuring, and its efficiency in the fight against crime has increased significantly, with a homicide rate that fell from 17.5% in 2010 to 5.8% in 2019, one of the lowest in South America. Ecuador is ranked in the middle range in the Fragile States Index (FSI) 2020 ranking 89th worldwide, which shows the vulnerability and fragility of the state. Still, the country's vulnerability score has improved significantly over the past 11 years. In 2019, it was the seventh most improved country in the world, climbing 13 places in the FSI ranking since 2017 (Plan V, 2021).

As mentioned in Plan V (2021), on its website, "Ecuador has signed and ratified various treaties and conventions to combat organized crime, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

Substances, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. However, the country has not ratified the Arms Trade Treaty. In addition, Ecuador has had 16 extradition agreements since then, although some need to be updated to make them more effective. In 2018, the National Court of Justice had 102 active extradition requests to different countries and received 38. During the first nine months of that year, 10 people were extradited to Ecuador from Chile, Colombia, and Peru."

The country has also signed several cooperation agreements to combat criminal markets. For example, in July 2016, he signed a memorandum in the capital Brasilia that would help fight organized crime, and serve primarily to prevent drug trafficking and related crimes. In 2018, Ecuador and Spain signed a cooperation agreement related to organized crime that included police matters. This agreement establishes mechanisms and protocols specialized in the exchange of information on police intelligence, and research that helps in the fight against the transnational organized crime that the country is currently going through. On the other hand, an agreement has been signed between the Attorney General's Office of Ecuador, the United Mexican States, Peru, and Colombia and has strengthened relations with one of its most strategic partners in this fight, the United States of North America (Plan V, 2021).

Another strategy that is important to mention is Plan Colombia because this alliance between Colombia and the United States was created in 1999, and aimed to effectively eradicate the production, distribution, and consumption of cocaine. This plan was established under four fundamental pillars: economic and social recovery; institutional strengthening and social development; the negotiated political solution to the armed conflict; and the fight against drug trafficking (Bermeo & Pabón, 2008). However, although the results were not entirely positive, the initiative must be rescued and thanks to cooperation can create alliances and fight for the same goal as if it is not today but in the long run, the results will be seen.

The strategies taken by the Ecuadorian government are many, however, it does not depend only on the country to eradicate the problem, As has been mentioned throughout the research, this is a joint fight and effective cooperation between States, as

this is a transnational problem and the measures to be taken must be large-scale. The country's efforts were significant but there was still a long way to go, and the situation must be constantly analyzed to take initiatives that could be carried out with the help of other countries. In Ecuador, we have the Plan Nacional de Seguridad Integral 2019-2030 to strengthen the State's efforts and capacity to respond to various threats.

Finally, public policy must go hand in hand with foreign policy because the problem of organized crime and drug trafficking derive many more as arms trafficking, human trafficking, and something that resonates a lot in the country today, the prison crisis and the insecurity of the streets. To face these new threats, the policy must take a turn oriented to the optimization of resources, strengthening cooperation, and the fight against corruption. There is no point in taking decisions if the system is not implemented in the right way, so it is important to have a legal framework that guarantees the effective use of its units and institutions, in this case particularly the National Police and the Armed Forces. Likewise, that the tactics be multidimensional and respond to the interests of the citizens more than a country, the rights and safety of people must be ensured and the time is ripe to start strengthening legislation so that all the problems that come can be addressed, but fairly and effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the objectives established in the investigation of the role of International Cooperation in strengthening national security and the fight against organized crime in Ecuador, the following conclusions were reached:

As regards the security situation within Ecuador, the insecurity and violence in the country goes back several years. The results indicate that this is due to several factors mainly due to its geographical location; the country is an important factor in what constitutes drug trafficking networks because it is located within Latin America, which is the area where most drug trafficking businesses are run. Ecuador has also become more vulnerable to new threats emerging from the central problem of organized crime; as a result of weak government administration, lack of control, and ineffective regulations, the country has become a potential market where mafias operate and carry out various illegal activities. Crime in the region has penetrated many areas since in addition to drug

trafficking there is human trafficking due to the difficulty of enforcing the regulations and therefore it is easier for these criminal networks to corrupt the Ecuadorian system.

Together, the presence of illicit businesses has a great influence on the country's prison crisis. Just as there are alliances within the penitentiaries there are also disputes, they are given to assume the leadership of the criminal market associated with drug trafficking and organized crime. These conflicts incite manifestations of violence, which threatens the security of both persons deprived of their liberty and civilians; thus demonstrating that the weakening of the State by acts of corruption and ineffective security and intelligence policies in the country, aggravates this reality. Attention should also be paid to anti-drug policy regulations, since the majority of persons deprived of their liberty are held in prisons for drug trafficking, and today the country has proven incapable of curbing this threat by not having and complying with the right strategies.

Analyzing the Role of International Cooperation in strengthening regional security, it can be concluded that thanks to the different forms of assistance, Ecuador and the rest of the Latin American region, have undertaken an arduous fight against organized crime and its main derivatives. There are various national and international entities dedicated to safeguarding the security of countries, however, some have shown results and others have not.

Organized crime has been embedded in Latin American societies since the 1970s, and most governments in the region failed to build sound security policies that would enable the international community to identify the problems facing the region and to seek joint solutions to resolve these problems, which have increasingly negative consequences and affect more citizens. The actions of the organizations dedicated to this fight have been important, however, there has been a lack of greater commitment and dedication in the formulation of policies that are effective against these phenomena, since they do not directly attack the origin of the problem, and therefore there is no continuity in these processes.

Although there have been different national and international strategies to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the prison crisis in each of the countries of the region, such cooperation has not been sufficient to eradicate or eliminate the problem as

a whole, and one of the main reasons for this is that, while international aid workers work under the same interest, they are also motivated by their interests and in this way, each one works differently. A clear example of this is the aid that comes from the United States of America, which although it has contributed with a lot of resources in this fight, has been heavily criticized for not showing concrete results and focusing more on the benefits it can get from each country.

Focusing on the instruments of International Cooperation that Ecuador carries out with other subjects of International Law, it can be said that the results that have been achieved have been diverse because the conventions and strategies created by the different organizations have focused on attacking different areas of the problem. Several projects have been carried out, which it can be said, have stood out in this fight by showing positive results. Although there is still a long way to go to eradicate the problems caused by organized crime, thanks to the different plans that have been put in place, these negative effects have been countered to a significant extent.

Regarding the strategies highlighted in this struggle, we can mention the National Integral Security Plan 2019-2030 in Ecuador, which aims to integrate and articulate public policy instruments to guarantee citizen security. Another organization that has had a fairly strong presence in this fight is UNODC, with different projects, we can highlight the Palermo Convention, which is an international treaty created to combat transnational organized crime and promotes cooperation between authorities at the global, regional, and national levels to combat different forms of organized crime. Similarly, another UNODC project highlighted in Ecuador is the comprehensive drug prevention project in the urban communities of Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca, where approximately five hundred people received training to prevent the use of illegal substances. On the other hand, we can also highlight the different projects that Ecuador has carried out in conjunction with the FIIAPP, Expertise France, IILA, and Camôes, four important European organizations, which together with several Latin American countries, have collaborated to develop strategies to combat transnational organized crime

In conclusion, we can say that the implementation of strategies within the Latin American region has not been enough to fight organized crime, especially in the fight against drug activity, which has caused this phenomenon to cross borders, and in response

to this, violence, in turn, has escalated to the status quo of States. However, it can be emphasized that international cooperation is a mechanism that if implemented in the right way and with perseverance, can bring positive results on a large scale.

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