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**Analysis of South-South Cooperation between
Ecuador and Colombia in the Prison Crisis in
2020-2021**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Manuel and Teresa for their love, work, and sacrifice during all these years, thanks to them I have managed to get here and become what I am. To my sister Evelyn and my friend Judy for their unconditional support.

Dedicated to my grandparents who from heaven gave me the strength to continue and achieve my goals.

APPRECIATION

I thank the Universidad del Azuay, and all my professors who taught me so much throughout this career, especially my tutor Diana Garcia who was helping me and guiding me step by step. I thank all my friends and family who were always supporting me and believing in me.

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Analysis of South-South cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia in the prison crisis in 2020-2021

Abstract

International cooperation has become a fundamental basis for the development of countries. In 2020, Ecuador began to suffer a prison crisis never seen before, which continued in 2021 without an immediate solution to the crisis. The objective of this article was to analyze South-South cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia in relation to the prison crisis and how it can help to improve the situation. The research was conducted using a qualitative methodology with the help of desk-based research, where all the most relevant literature was reviewed and then everything found was synthesized to obtain the results. The results indicated that one of the main problems of Ecuador's penitentiary system is overcrowding, due to prison overpopulation, a problem that Colombia also faces. Finally, the research showed that cooperation with Colombia has been incipient and has not had an impact on the prison issue. However, in the future, joint policies and action plans can be shared, especially with triangular cooperation.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, prison crisis, Ecuador, Colombia.

Análisis de la cooperación Sur-Sur entre Ecuador y Colombia en la crisis carcelaria en 2020 - 2021

Resumen

La cooperación internacional se ha convertido en base fundamental para el desarrollo de los países. En el 2020 Ecuador empezó a sufrir una crisis carcelaria nunca antes vista, lo cual continuó en el 2021 sin una solución próxima a dicha crisis. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la cooperación Sur- Sur entre Ecuador y Colombia en relación a la crisis carcelaria y cómo puede ayudar a mejorar la situación. La investigación se realizó con una metodología cualitativa con ayuda de la investigación de escritorio *-desk based research-* en la cual se revisó toda la literatura más relevante para posteriormente sintetizar todo lo encontrado para obtener los resultados. Los resultados indicaron que uno de los principales problemas del sistema penitenciario ecuatoriano es el hacinamiento, debido a la sobrepoblación carcelaria, problema que también enfrenta Colombia. Finalmente, la investigación mostró que la cooperación con Colombia ha sido prematura y no ha generado un impacto en el tema carcelario. Sin embargo, en un futuro existe la oportunidad de compartir políticas y planes de acción conjuntos, especialmente con cooperación triangular.

Palabras clave: Cooperación Sur-Sur, crisis carcelaria, Ecuador, Colombia.

Analysis of South-South cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia in the prison crisis in 2020-2021

1. Introduction

From 2020 to the present, Ecuador has had to deal with several riots of inmates who are deprived of their freedom in the country's prisons. According to Núñez (2006), the prison system in Ecuador is going through an institutional crisis that puts the supposed scope and limits of social rehabilitation under public debate.

The beginning of the uncontrollable riots was led by inmates in 2020, and continued in 2021; it has been almost impossible for the responsible authorities to deal with this chaos caused by them. The prison population has had an accelerated and sustained increase in the last decades, which has caused serious problems of overcrowding because the number of inmates exceeds the capacity of prisons, which happens in practically all countries around the world (Damment, M; 2006). According to Amnesty International's 2021 annual report (2022), at least 316 inmates have died in gang clashes recorded in the country's prisons by the end of 2021.

For this reason, Iván Duque, President of Colombia, helped Ecuador to face the prison crisis. He proposed cooperation on security, emphasizing that full support will be provided in terms of advice, accompaniment, and especially, integration with all the security capacity to face terrorism and drug trafficking (EFE; 2021). Thus, technical assistance was provided through bilateral international cooperation with Colombia.

This research addresses the issue of the prison crisis, which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 and 17 of the United Nations, of which Goal 16 is: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and Goal 17 is: Partnerships to Achieve the goals, which will be briefly addressed in this analysis.

In this sense, this research work seeks to analyze the instruments, policies, norms, action protocols, etc., that have been developed in Ecuador with international cooperation to counteract the prison crisis.

To achieve the proposed objective, that is, to analyze the effectiveness of cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia, this study applied the methodology of desk-based research based on the authors Benoit Guerin, Barbara Janta, and Anke van Gorp in their book Evaluating interventions that prevent or counter violent extremism, which aims to analyze the effectiveness of cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 General objective

Analyze the cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia regarding the prison crisis to understand to what level cooperation can help improve the prison situation in the country.

1.1.2 Specifics objectives

- Research on the prison crisis in Ecuador and Colombia in the years 2020 - 2021.
- Analyze cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia regarding the prison crisis.
- Recommend public policies for the improvement of the prison system in Ecuador.

1.2 Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Insecurity, violence, drug trafficking

The mission with which human beings are born is to survive in the face of all the dangers that may arise, which is why since the beginning of history they have been watching over their safety. With the knowledge that human beings can become or be defenseless, the fear of danger is born, which generates

insecurity. According to Córdova (2007), for people, the perception of insecurity is one of the most difficult terms to study about citizen security. Continuing with the perception of insecurity, according to Carrión (2007), this arises from the sensation of fear felt by human beings, which is related to the social construction of fear generated by violence.

In this way, it is clear that insecurity stems from fear of violence. But to better understand, I will describe where the perception of insecurity stems from for citizens. One of the main causes of the perception of insecurity is the violence figures presented by official agencies such as the police, which make the population evidence a notable growth in violence about the number of crimes committed daily and the constant appearance of new forms of violence (Córdova, 2007). Thus, it can be seen that for human beings the perception of insecurity is presented in the face of violence that may affect people's lives.

The perception of insecurity from a certain point of view stems from violence; but where does violence originate from? First, it is essential to define the concept of violence. Violence is a phenomenon that manifests itself through the intentional use of force, causing one or more individuals to perform an action intended to cause physical or psychological harm to other people (Córdova, 2007). Violence can also occur psychologically, where physical harm is not necessary to cause pain or fear.

Looking a little deeper into violence, there are different types of violence, but the most important for this analysis is criminal violence. Criminal violence leads low-income people to resort to gangs of young criminals to obtain income, as well as to participate in criminal mafias or work with drug traffickers (Sanchez, 2005). From this perspective, drug trafficking is present in the most abandoned and poorest neighborhoods, taking advantage of the situation in which, they find themselves to have people who lend themselves to illegal work. This causes these neighborhoods to become dangerous places where violence becomes part of daily life, clearly generating insecurity for the inhabitants of these towns, the entire city, and the entire country.

1.2.2 Creation of a security institution

From the beginning, mankind used to be governed by certain rules that helped to create order in society. This led to the creation of laws, and with this, a punishment for each person who did not comply with the laws.

According to Miquelarena (2013), prison emerged in the eighteenth century as one of the most important spaces to manage non-compliance with laws, resulting in the change from corporal punishment to deprivation of liberty as a penalty for committing crimes, which would apply certain elements for the reintegration of inmates into society. The creation of prisons was a way of trying to maintain peace and security in society, changing the corporal punishment to which lawbreakers were subjected, to depriving them of their freedom. Prisons have two main functions; one is deterrence, i.e., to avoid recidivism by not committing crimes again, and the other is rehabilitation, so that inmates can be reintegrated back into society (Carrión, 2006). However, according to Carrión (2006), prison is called the university of crime because it is where violence is perfected and reproduced, as evidenced by the lack of reinsertion and recidivism.

It can be seen how the prison began with an objective, which is to protect the population from people who may be a danger to society because they commit crimes or actions that are outside the law, in addition to the intention to reintegrate those deprived of liberty back into society when they are no longer a danger to it (Saltos, 2011). However, over the decades, it has become quite the opposite, becoming uncontrollably overpopulated due to people's recidivism by not complying with the laws and committing crimes.

Thus, authors such as Carrión (2006) argue that prisons do not fulfill the purpose for which they were created, highlighting that the lifestyle received by persons deprived of liberty does not comply with human rights. With so many inmates or lawbreakers, the prison system cannot ensure decent treatment; in fact, human rights violations of prisoners are constant because the system collapses with so many people.

1.2.3 The penitentiary system in Ecuador

The prison system in Ecuador has the same objectives as the rest of the prisons in the world, that is, to protect the population from people who break the law. For this reason, Ecuador has an organizational management system that is distributed as follows:

Ecuador's prison system is composed of Consejo Nacional de Rehabilitación Social, also known as the "CNRS", which is in charge of defining State policies focused on social rehabilitation; and the Dirección Nacional de Rehabilitación Social or "DNRS", which is an agency attached to the National Council and is the main institution for managing prison policy (Núñez, 2006).

However, these institutions have been changing over the years and with the change of governments. Thus, in 2018, the current President of Ecuador by Executive Decree No. 560 transformed the Ministerio de Justicia, Derechos Humanos y Cultos [Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Cult] for the Secretaría de Derechos Humanos [Human Rights Secretariat], where Servicio Nacional de Atención Integral a Personas Adultas Privadas de la Libertad y a Adolescentes Infractores (SNAI) [National Service of Integral Attention to People deprived of Liberty and Infractor Adolescents - SNAI] was born, and became empowered to exercise all laws and regulations regarding rehabilitation, security reinsertion, and pardons, among others; in addition to being in charge of the transfer or repatriation of Ecuadorians who are serving sentences abroad (Executive Decree No. 560, 2018). Thus, the institution in charge of the Ecuadorian penitentiary system is the Servicio Nacional de Atención Integral a Personas Adultas Privadas de la Libertad y a Adolescentes Infractores, better known as SNAI, an acronym that will be used later in the article.

One of the most important parts of the penitentiary system is the infrastructure; that is, the physical spaces available to the Ecuadorian government for the adequate social rehabilitation of persons deprived of liberty. According to SNAI (2020), Ecuador had 54 social detention centers nationwide in 2020, divided into 9 zones into the different provinces of the country.

The number of prisons in the country in 2020 is not the same as in 2022, as there have been decreases in the number of prisons. Thus, as of June 2022, Ecuador has 36 prison detention centers, which are divided into centros de privación de libertad [centers of deprivation of liberty] or "CPL" and centros de privación provisional de libertad [Centers of provisional deprivation of liberty] or "CPPL," which are located throughout the country, divided into 9 geographical zones (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2022).

With this infrastructure, the prison system in Ecuador tries to solve all the problems that arise. However, the performance of these institutions has been decadent, since they do not fulfill their purpose, which is to provide security to the population and inmates. This has resulted in the consequence that in the year 2020, violence will be uncontrollable, being the bloodiest prison crisis and with more deaths than in the entire history of Ecuador. Approximately 316 people deprived of their liberty have died in clashes inside the country's prisons (Amnesty International, 2022).

In Ecuador since 2020, there have been different situations that have resulted in violent deaths in the country's prisons. According to Núñez (2006), overcrowding in Ecuadorian prisons grew with the implementation of anti-drug policies in the early 1990s; the Ecuadorian government included the anti-drug strategy proposed by the United States, which has resulted in the main cause of detention for crimes related to illegal drugs. Drug trafficking has become a problem that grows daily and has caused crimes related to these activities to increase. Since most of the inmates have sentences of several years, every time new prisoners are admitted, the prison system is unable to meet the demand, resulting in overcrowding and the violation of the human rights of these inmates.

Data from the World Prison Brief shows that from 2000 to 2018, there was a 120% increase in the prison population, which caused chaos in prisons, pushing away the possibility of social reintegration (Kaleidos, 2021). In 2014, the government of Ecuador decided to create a reform of the prison system, which included the creation of much larger prisons than the existing ones, to solve the problem of overcrowding; however, at the same time, the Código Orgánico Integral Penal [Organic Penal Code] (COIP) lengthened and increased sentences and the use of pretrial detention (Aguirre, et al, 2020).

These problems of overcrowding have short and long-term consequences, such as the violence that has occurred in these facilities. Kaleidos (2021) notes that prison overcrowding has serious physical and psychological consequences for inmates; a major consequence being exposure to various diseases, such as HIV or tuberculosis, which can spread in these detention centers.

The actual total inmate population is complicated to determine because a new system for prisons was introduced in 2014, in which inmates' records are several, i.e., one record is obtained when they are arrested, another record when they are transferred to another prison, and another record when the person reoffends. This explains why there are a total of 240,960 records in the prison system database, when the inmate population as of April 2021 was approximately 39,000 people (SNAI, 2021).

For a better understanding of the situation of Ecuador's prisons, it is important to know the budget available for their operation. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2022) notes that since 2017 the budget has been decreasing even though the prison population has been increasing year by year.

The budget given for the prison system from 2017 to 2021 by the State is detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1

Budget for the prison system from 2017 to 2021.

Year	Budget
2017	153 million dollars
2018	131 million dollars
2019	90 million dollars
2020	88 million dollars
2021	54 million dollars

Note: Annual budget for Ecuador's penal system - Adapted from: OAS, 2022.

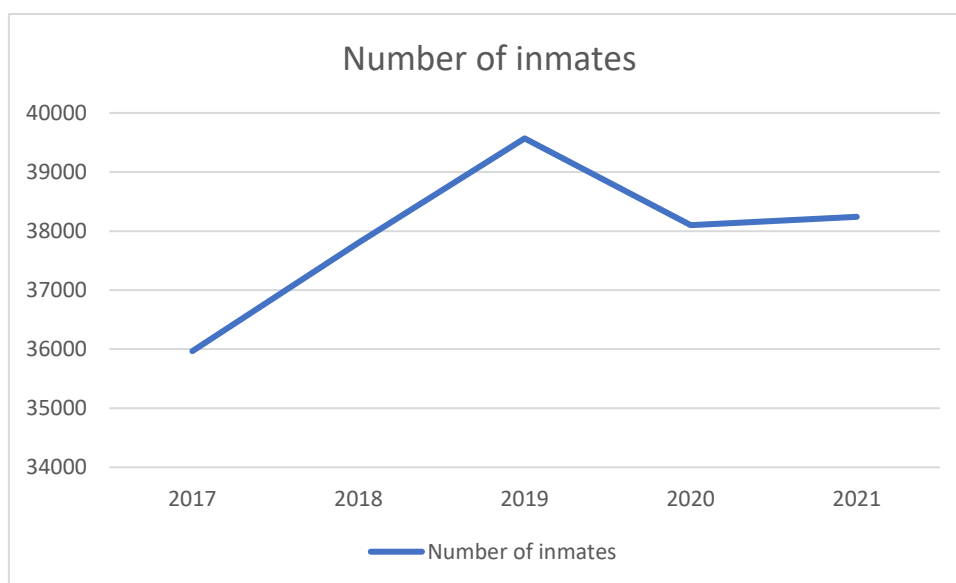
While over the years the budget for the prison system was gradually decreasing, the prison population was doing the opposite, increasing year after year.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2022) points out that in the last 20 years, in Ecuador there has been a notorious increase in the prison population due to various measures proposed by different governments. As a result, while in the year 2000 there were 8029 inmates, in 2021 there were 37,679 inmates, that is, an increase of 469.29% in a period of 20 years. These data show the large increase in the prison population that has occurred in recent years in the country, as both the SNAI and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights agree.

Regarding the prison population, it is important to know that Ecuador has been working with it during the last few years; in this way, it will be possible to observe the increase and decrease of inmates in each specific year. Thus, Figure 1 shows the data on Ecuador's prison population over the years and how it has been changing from 2017 to 2021; it is possible to appreciate an increase that is maintained for three years starting in 2017 until 2019; however, in 2020 the population was notoriously reduced. However, later in 2021, it increased again.

Figure 1

Prison population in Ecuador from 2017 to 2021.

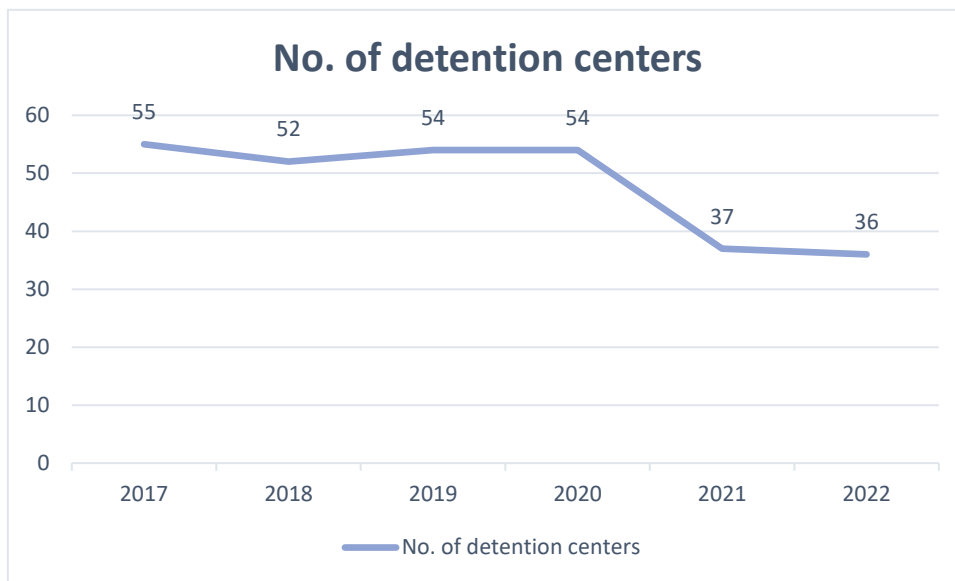


Note: Variation in the number of inmates per year – Adapted from: SNAI, 2021

On the other hand, it is also important to know the establishments that the Ecuadorian penitentiary system has to have a better understanding of the situation the system is going through. Due to the constant increase of the prison population in Ecuador, prisons must have adequate space and capacity to accommodate inmates. What should be done with an increase in population is to have more prisons. However, over the years, they have been decreasing as shown in Figure 2. In 2017 there were 57 prisons, which compared to Figure 1 in relation to inmates; this was the year that had the least prison population. Therefore, this year, with sufficient infrastructure capacity and few inmates, the situation was partially under control. In 2018, the number of penal centers was decreasing, but this year was when the population grew the most, as can be seen in Figure 2. And so, prisons were continuously decreasing to such an extent that from the 57 prisons that existed in 2017, in 2022, Ecuador has only 36 penitentiaries as can be seen in Figure 2, which is not enough for a prison overpopulation that continues to grow steadily.

Figure 2

Number of correctional facilities in Ecuador from 2017 to 2021.



Note: Prisons in Ecuador from 2017 to 2022 – Adapted from: SNAI, 2022.

After knowing the prison population and also the number of detention centers, it is important to consider the capacity of Ecuador's prisons. That is, what is the real number of people you can have in your institution, giving them appropriate space and dignified life. This is why Table 2 demonstrates Ecuador's prison capacity from 2017 to 2021, in addition to including the number of people who are out of capacity in relation to the total number of inmates they have in Ecuador.

Table 2 shows that year after year the number of vacancies, i.e., the number of people exceeding the capacity of the penitentiary centers is approximately between 8,000 and 10,000. A number that is very large, due to the fact that these people are in a place that has no space to give them a dignified treatment for life. This is one of the many reasons why prison crises are generated, an important part of which is the decrease in the number of prisons seen in Figure 2 above.

Table 2*Prison capacity vs. shortages in Ecuadorian prisons.*

Year	Prison capacity	Shortage of places
2017	27227	8740
2018	27796	10006
2019	29463	10106
2020	29746	8872
2021	30169	8071

Note: Capacity for the prison population in Ecuador vs. people exceeding these places – Adapted from: SNAI, 2022.

As previously mentioned, one of the main causes of arrests is for illegal drug offenses. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2022), drug trafficking is a phenomenon that is affecting the region, especially the country, so the different existing criminal gangs are disputing territories, both in the streets and in prisons; It is here where, due to the lack of control inside the prisons, self-government is installed in the different areas of the penitentiary centers where several of the bloodiest and most violent events have occurred, due to the dispute to obtain control of the different internal sites of the prisons by the different criminal gangs, inspired by existing illegal economic motives; serious rivalries were confirmed between several criminal groups such as Los Choneros, Los Lobos, Trigueros, Latin Kings and Nueva Generación..

Despite the Ecuadorian government's attempt to control the prisons with perimeter control, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has been informed that weapons and drugs continue to enter the prisons; it was also reported that 150 high-caliber weapons were seized, in addition to rifles, handguns, short arms, sharp weapons, and irons; it is suspected that these weapons enter through the food supplier or other private suppliers (IACHR; 2022).

1.2.4 The prison system in Colombia

Colombia is a country with a prison system aimed at maintaining peace and security in the country. However, it does present some problems; specifically, it has suffered from several prison crises throughout its history. According to Hernandez (2022), the main problems in prisons are overcrowding, corruption of officials, food in terrible conditions, cases of torture, and a lack of space for inmates to have a decent life. This has been made known to the population through different media using images. As a result, the population has been astonished to learn about the prison crisis through images.

Knowing this, anyone would think that the problem is the lack of prisons in the country. According to Hernandez (2022), the origin of all these problems is Colombian criminal policy because the solution to any social problem that arises is to use prison, which has led to the collapse of the system. These policies are supported by the population. According to Virgüéz (2022) the majority of the Colombian population supports the increase of penalties. They are also in favor of the elimination of criminal benefits and defend the creation of new crimes, which means more prison as an answer or solution to the problems of insecurity. As a result, more and more people are deprived of their liberty and few are reintegrated into society, causing major problems of overcrowding and quality of life for inmates.

It is important to know the history of prisons in Colombia to make a better analysis, which is why the first prison crisis in this country is a starting point to understand the current situation.

In 1998, one of the first prison crises in Colombia was declared, where the Constitutional Court stated that the prisons were abandoned by the state, due to the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure, a great inefficiency in the health service, and a clear violation of human dignity, resulting in a structural failure in the prison system (Hernández, 2022). In this way, the problem was quickly detected, and the points at which the Colombian penitentiary system was failing were specified to find a solution to the prison crisis of 1998.

To resolve the crisis that was occurring in 1998, urgent action by the Colombian government was needed. Thus, the state's response was to proceed with the expansion and construction of new prisons to

have the necessary capacity for Colombian inmates (Hernández, 2022). Since the construction of new penitentiaries was required quickly, the Colombian government had to spend a large budget for this action. According to the National Planning Department, several projects were approved between 2000 and 2015 in order to have more availability of inmate quotas, which certainly came at a high cost, reaching approximately \$4.4 billion Colombian pesos (Hernández, 2022). In 1998, the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute of Colombia had 33119 spaces available for inmates; later with the creation of new prisons; in 2002, it had 45575 spaces for persons deprived of liberty; and finally in 2013, it had 76066 spaces available (Hernández, 2022). Clearly, with the increase in new spaces for those deprived of liberty, it was possible to provide a dignified life for inmates during the years mentioned above.

The creation of new detention centers helped the prison crisis that began in 1998 gradually subside: That is to say, to produce the expected result with the reduction of overcrowding, where it could be seen that the crisis was being resolved. However, according to Hernández (2022), between 2000 and 2013, the prison population grew at an accelerated rate during these years, at the same time that new quotas for inmates were created, demonstrating that, despite building new prisons, the population grew much faster than the prison construction, causing the Colombian government's strategy to solve the problems in the prison system to be affected again. According to the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute, in 1998 there were 44439 people deprived of liberty, while in 2013 the prison population increased to 120032 people, showing that in approximately 15 years the number of inmates tripled (Hernandez, 2022).

Detention centers in Colombia are also known as "Establecimientos de Reclusión del Orden Nacional" [Establishments of Reclusion of the National Order] or ERON, which are the base infrastructure of the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute, in 2016 had 138 detention centers in operation (Arenas and Cerezo; 2016).

Faced with a new penitentiary crisis in Colombia's prisons, new problems were detected, in addition to those already known, such as overcrowding, which had already caused a crisis in the past. According to Hernandez (2022) in 2013 the new problems that caused a new prison crisis were mainly overcrowding, but also corruption, the use of torture, and the poor health service to inmates. The reason that one would think is again the cause of the crisis could be the lack of prisons; however, it is not responsible for this problem.

A study by the Ministerio de Justicia, de Comisión Asesora de Política Criminal y el Departamento Nacional de Planeación [Ministry of Justice, the Comisión Asesora de Política Criminal and the Departamento Nacional de Planeación] indicate that criminal laws have increased penalties excessively, restricting the use of other options other than incarceration, laws that have no basis that producing an increase in prison overcrowding problems (Hernández, 2022).

The problems that existed in the prisons were believed to have been solved; however, despite having invested a lot of money in the creation of new detention centers for greater capacity, it is again affected by the creation of new laws that lengthen the sentences of inmates, which again causes a prison crisis.

According to Virgüéz (2022), penal reforms have increased considerably since 2000, mainly by increasing penalties, establishing new crimes, and eliminating some existing penal benefits.

The Colombian Constitutional Court affirms that prison policy has 6 main problems that lead to a crisis:

1. Concern only with security, but not with social reintegration.
2. Creation of disproportionate sentencing standards.
3. Reaction to current problems.
4. Lack of technique and consistency in standard-setting.
5. Disregard for the criminalization of people's behavior in prisons.
6. Toughen the process to secure more convictions.

(Hernández, 2022)

Continuing with the measures taken by the Colombian government to control the prison crises that have occurred over the years, there is the Commission for Follow-up to Ruling T-388 created in 2013, which is composed of different civil society organizations, and is responsible for submitting reports on the prison crisis to the Constitutional Court, as well as presenting the measures that are adopted by the state to solve these crises (CSS, 2013).

This commission has conducted several follow-ups on the prison crisis, starting in 2015 until 2019, which is its most recent report. I feel it is the sixth report. It seems pertinent to me to analyze the two most recent reports, which are from 2019.

Fifth monitoring report 2019:

In this report, an analysis is made against a report presented by the Government of Iván Duque, where contradictions and weaknesses are observed regarding the prison crisis, especially about criminal policy, infrastructure, corruption, etc. (CSS, 2019).

Sixth monitoring report 2019:

In this report, the Sentence Follow-up Commission intervened, at the invitation of the Constitutional Court, in a process of presenting the problems of overcrowding and violation of rights, to be able to offer some recommendations to overcome the prison crisis (CSS, 2019).

The creation of the Follow-up Commission to the aforementioned Judgment is one of the main actions taken by the Colombian Government to address the prison crisis that Colombians are facing.

1.2.5 Bilateral international cooperation

The definition of cooperation has evolved over the years; since there is no unified criterion, there are different elements that can explain international cooperation:

- It responds to the criterion of co-responsibility.
- It is based on the criterion of solidarity among peoples, respect and protection of human rights, and the constant search for better conditions and greater resources that offer a man 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.
- Seeks the existence of a clear and constant dialog between the parties to harmonize interests. (Duarte Herrera & González Parías, 2014).

According to Román (2002), bilateral cooperation is when aid is provided directly, that is, from state to state, mainly through public administrations or an NGO established in the donor country; i.e., bilateral cooperation is given according to the mutual agreement of the parties or nations concerned.

The intention to help between nations is the fundamental basis of international cooperation since it has made it possible to achieve several aid projects. According to Alvarez (2016), cooperation for development arises as an essential part to form relations between states, both political and economic, in order to achieve specific objectives, as well as to unite so that humanity can live in peace after the terrible world wars that have occurred. The goal of world peace, in addition to trying to avoid all possible wars between countries, has been one of the main concerns for which cooperation was created and supported by most countries around the world. This has led to the creation of several world organizations that can help achieve the aforementioned objectives, which most of the countries of the world have accepted and become part of them. In 1945 in a functional charter, specific bases were established for a peaceful resolution in the face of any future controversy between nations, where international cooperation will be used to comply with the principles of the charter. This gave a very favorable result as it showed continuity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Alvarez, 2016).

In order for international cooperation to have a stronger backing, the necessary infrastructure and organizations had to be in place. Because of this, Alvarez (2016) argues that during 1950 and 1960 international infrastructure began to be promoted. As one of the most important institutions was the World Bank, followed by the International Monetary Fund, in addition to various important bodies of the United Nations, and finally, government agencies that would give way to the later creation of the Development Assistance Committee. Thus, with greater support in the world, cooperation began to grow significantly, specifically in development cooperation.

In the 1950s and 1960s, international cooperation was an important part of economic theories for development, where it was believed that to achieve development, industrialization was indispensable (Alvarez, 2016). In this way, the developed or more industrialized countries were the main ones to provide cooperation, pretending to help a poorer nation to achieve the expected development. So, it was posited that a country could only get out of poverty, if it is resorting to the help of a country with ample capital, with a great potential for industries (Alvarez, 2016).

At that time, it was believed that the only countries that could offer help were the industrialized countries, where top-down cooperation began to take place; that is, only the developed countries offered cooperation since the less developed countries did not have much industry. According to Alvarez (2016), it was a period where international cooperation helped a lot with the transfer of technology from the great powers (north) to developing countries (south), several plans were developed through cooperation agencies, through technical assistance, to obtain economic growth, because developing countries did not have sufficient capacity to manage the projects well, several of the plans proposed with cooperation were not given in full (p. 6). Some countries in the global South, i.e., the least developed countries, had the opportunity to industrialize. But this was not possible due to the low capacity of developing countries compared to developed countries.

In development cooperation, there is mainly technical cooperation and there is also a great deal of financial cooperation, which involves the countries of the North, the most developed countries, helping the developing countries of the South with loans.

During the seventies, international cooperation begins to have a different point of view, no longer only in the economic and development approach; but it begins to have a political approach, partially autonomous, that has its own theoretical foundations, making the world community much more aware of underdevelopment, thus obtaining greater support making aid grow and diversify (Alvarez, 2016).

Table 3 below shows the types of cooperation and how they occur.

Table 3

Types of international cooperation

Types of cooperation	
Financial Cooperation	Reimbursable
	Non-reimbursable
Technical Cooperation	North – South
	South – South
	Triangular
Humanitarian and emergency aid	
Food aid	Emergency
	By program
	By project

Note: Types of cooperation – Adapted from: Álvarez, 2016

1.2.6 South-South Technical Cooperation

There are several types of cooperation as shown in Table 2; however, for this article the main one is technical cooperation, and specifically South - South, since it involves Ecuador and Colombia, both of which are developing countries.

Delving a little deeper, specifically in technical cooperation, this refers to the transfer of techniques, technologies, skills, and knowledge which allows helping the development of countries with a lower level of socioeconomic development (Alvarez, 2016). Other authors such as Ayllón (2007) describe technical cooperation as the strengthening of Southern countries in skills and techniques, as well as exchange of knowledge between countries. With these two descriptions, it can be summarized that international cooperation is the sharing of knowledge that can help solve a problem or situation that another country is going through.

In this technical cooperation, human resources, the improvement of capacities in institutions, and technological transfers are highlighted, where the sharing of knowledge that helps the development of productive skills is achieved (Alvarez, 2016).

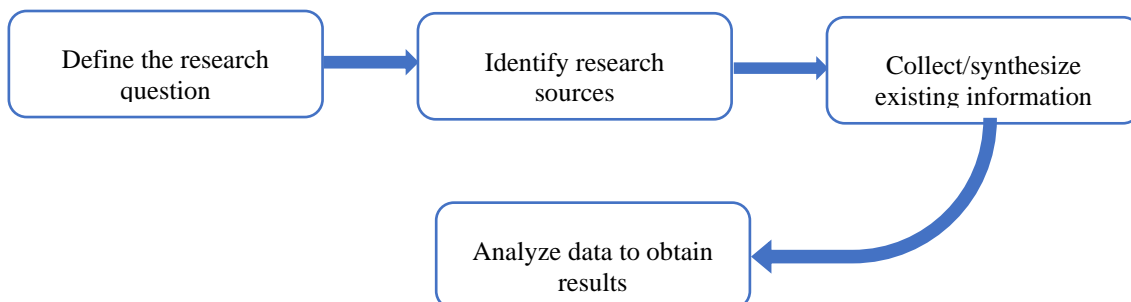
Initially, this cooperation was used only in the North-South direction, since it generally focused on the more developed countries that had the knowledge to provide to the less developed countries. According to Álvarez (2016), the main thing that is done in technical cooperation is the adoption of capacities, knowledge, experiences, skills, and better techniques to which the aid recipient country does not have access, and where cooperation agencies contribute to make them happen in the best possible way.

2. Methodology

The present research work is a qualitative study applying desk-based research methodology, based on the authors Benoit Guerin, Barbara Janta and Anke van Gorp from chapter 12 of their book "Evaluating interventions that prevent or counter violent extremism". The desk research method is a literature review that aims to obtain an overview of a specific topic with all published papers, in order to synthesize or summarize to obtain a result. This research was based on different sources that helped to gather information, such as: digital academic literature, dialogues with people, available statistical data, or databases. The guidelines that were followed according to the methodology were: 1) a research question was defined and the type of review needed was decided; 2) relevant literature was identified, selected, and reviewed; and finally, the evidence was synthesized in order to obtain the results (Guerin, Janta, & van Gorp; 2018). In order to complement this research study, information was collected from the Kaleidos website, which has a database called "Ethno Data".

Figure 3

Methodology process



Note: Own elaboration

3. Results

Ecuador is a country that has very good relations with Colombia, due to the fact that they are countries that share a border, Ecuador to the North and Colombia to the South. Both countries are part of Mercosur, and CAN; therefore, their diplomatic relations have been harmonious (OAS, 2022). There are several agreements that have been signed between these countries; however, there is a lack of commitment to implement them efficiently.

In 2020 - 2021, Ecuador suffered several prison crises, where the president in office declared several times a state of emergency due to the seriousness of the matter. It is here where Colombia intervened through President Iván Duque, offering technical cooperation between the two countries to solve the problems in Ecuador's prisons (EFE, 2021). One of the first states of exception declared by the president was on September 29, 2021, due to heavy clashes in the prisons, thus the state of exception was declared for 60 days from the day it was decreed, because the rights of inmates were being violated, mainly the right to life (Decree No. 210, 2021). For these reasons, the assistance offered by Colombia was immediately accepted with technical cooperation to address the terrible situation that the prison system was going through.

Thanks to this agreement, in January 2021, the first activities have already been carried out so that technical cooperation can begin to become a reality. The authorities of the SNAI of Ecuador met with the authorities of the Instituto Nacional Penitenciario y Carcelario [National Penitentiary and Jail Institute] of Colombia to exchange experiences with the aim of improving and transforming the prison system, with emphasis on prison intelligence as well as productive activities and how to improve the living conditions of inmates (SNAI, 2021).

The aid activities towards Ecuador did not stop, because in March 2021, the I International Congress on Penitentiary Criminology, Criminal Psychology and Citizen Security was held, with the participation of experts from several countries, including Italy, Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and obviously Ecuador, where specialists in criminal psychology, citizen security and social rehabilitation were introduced (SNAI, 2021).

Continuing with the actions carried out through the agreement with Colombia, in May 2021 different meetings were held between the Colombian and Ecuadorian Armed Forces to reinforce the already existing alliances in international cooperation. This meeting closed happily with several agreements that will allow counteracting crime at the borders (Saumeth, 2021).

On the other hand, the actions taken by the Colombian government are also important, as they directly affect the situation in Ecuador with the prison crisis. Due to this, the Ecuadorian government decided to repatriate foreign prisoners deprived of their liberty in the country; however, Colombia's response was not so positive since it announced that it would only accept repatriation for humanitarian reasons (Primicias, 2021). This greatly affects the prison system since the majority of foreigners incarcerated in Ecuador are Colombians, with approximately 1,819 Colombians being deprived of their liberty in Ecuador and only 35 people qualifying for repatriation to their country of origin. (Primicias, 2021). In spite of the cooperation agreement to solve the prison crisis, Colombia, by not receiving prisoners in Ecuadorian territory, does not directly help to solve the problems in any way, since one of the main problems is overcrowding and prison overpopulation in Ecuador.

As previously mentioned, international cooperation was born several years ago, which means that Ecuador and Colombia had already had their cooperation agreements for some time. The year in which the most notable development in the relations between the two countries was observed was in 2010, when Juan Manuel Santos was in charge of the Colombian government; from then on, several negotiations were carried out, highlighting military strengthening, as well as dialogs to share and exchange information, thus creating the Planes Binacionales de Seguridad Fronteriza [Bilateral Border Security Plan], also known as PBSF (Achig & Rodríguez, 2022). This was the beginning between Ecuador and Colombia, to jointly combat insecurity and several other issues they have in common, such as the now analyzed prison crisis. Thus, cooperation agreements with Colombia are continuously being signed, which favors the political relations of both countries.

On the other hand, being countries that share a border, there is a great interest in strengthening bilateral cooperation. Some of the agreements and conventions have already been mentioned above; however, there are still several more agreements that are very important in the analysis of cooperation between these two countries. It is for this reason that the Comisión Binacional Fronteriza [Binational Border Commission] or (COMBIFRON) was created with the objective of being ready before any event that could affect the security of the States. In addition, this commission is in charge of supervising the military and police commitments to border security. (Achig & Rodríguez, 2022). This commission provides security to both states since the union of the two countries helps to better control the dangers that may arise for the states. The Comisión Binacional Fronteriza [Binational Border Commission], created in an agreement between the two countries to generate confidence in the government, carried out its first action, which was to form the Security Charter for Border Military and Police Units of the Republics of Ecuador and Colombia, which presented the processes to be carried out to provide security, mainly in charge of controlling air traffic. On the other hand, they also have the responsibility to carry out international procedures such as delivering people who have been responsible or accused of committing a crime (Achig & Rodríguez, 2022).

The aforementioned is the central point of this research, because knowing the overpopulation that exists in Ecuador, this commission should act against the repatriation policy; however, there are many agreements that are made, several treaties, and many creations of commissions, but in the action they do not respond efficiently. This is regrettable, since the lack of action reduces the credibility of the agreements signed between these countries because there may be many agreements in place, but without action, there are no benefits for the development of both countries.

Political relations between Ecuador and Colombia had a critical situation where they broke diplomatic relations in 2008, due to several incidents. Specifically, a bombing of the Colombian Armed Forces towards a FARC camp which ended up entering Ecuadorian territory, causing damage in several sectors, which put both countries in tension. Since the Ecuadorian State perceived it as a violation of the country's sovereignty, since the military entered another state without permission, which is not allowed according to International Relations (Achig & Rodríguez, 2022). The year 2008 was one of the most critical in terms of binational relations between Colombia and Ecuador. In a certain way it can be observed that not

many actions were carried out with respect to the cooperation agreements signed between these two States; on the contrary, to carry out a project of the Colombian government, they did not mind invading Ecuadorian territory to fulfill their mission.

Relations between Ecuador and Colombia remained tense until 2010, when the presidents of Colombia and Ecuador met again for the first time in several years, thanks to the Unity Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Mexico. In this meeting, they returned to address issues of the bilateral agenda, which resulted in new agreements that focus on finding solutions to prevent and counteract organized crime; problems that were affecting the entire region, including Colombia and Ecuador (Achig & Rodríguez, 2022). In this way, cooperation between these nations is resumed in order to join efforts to find a solution to the problems that were occurring.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, these are some of the agreements that have been signed to date, 2022.

- Comisión Mixta de Cooperación Técnica y Científica. [Joint Commission for Technical and Scientific Cooperation].
- Comisión de Vecindad e Integración entre los dos países. [Neighborhood and Integration Commission between the two countries]
- Asistencia Internacional de Colombia a Ecuador – Iniciativa Yasuní ITT. [International Assistance from Colombia to Ecuador - Yasuní ITT Initiative]
- Asistencia Internacional de Colombia a Ecuador - Contribución voluntaria a ACNUR Ecuador. [Colombia's International Assistance to Ecuador - Voluntary contribution to UNHCR Ecuador].
- Programa de Acción Binacional para Fortalecer la Seguridad Fronteriza entre los Ministerios de Defensa de Ecuador y Colombia. [Binational Action Program to Strengthen Border Security between the Ministries of Defense of Ecuador and Colombia].
- Convenio de Cooperación Intergubernamental en la prevención de delitos transfronterizos, firmados por el viceministro del Interior de Ecuador y el viceministro de Defensa de Colombia. [Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement on the prevention of cross-border crimes, signed by the Vice Minister of the Interior of Ecuador and the Vice Minister of Defense of Colombia].

(Chancellery of Ecuador, 2022).

With the existence of so many cooperation agreements, one can see the intention of collaboration and willingness of both countries. Colombia and Ecuador reconciled their political relations to together have a much broader vision of certain problems, since both countries may be going through the same problems. But they manage to see them in different ways. But in spite of everything, going back to the commissions that were created a few years ago, such as the Binational Border Commission, they have not continued to have the same action as when they were created. According to the Colombian Foreign Ministry, the last meeting with the different commissions created by both countries was in 2020 (Chancellery of Colombia, 2022). It was precisely in 2020 when the prison crisis began in Ecuador, which is why the commissions should have acted quickly to help the Ecuadorian country; however, there has been little or almost no action on the part of the commissions that are there to help.

Faced with this prison crisis, Ecuador, in addition to cooperating with Colombia, also took action to seek a solution. This is why President Guillermo Lasso issued decree number 294, where he created the "Commission for Penitentiary Dialogue and Pacification" with the objective of seeking a solution to eradicate the violent deaths that occurred in 2020 and 2021, contributing with strategies to eliminate the cruelty with which inmates were interacting in prisons in the country (Decree No. 294, 2021). Because once again, in spite of the Colombian government's intention to help, very little action has been taken, although it is somewhat understandable, since Colombia is going through the same prison crisis situation as Ecuador.

4. Discussion

4.1 Analysis of cooperation Colombia – Ecuador

After an extensive investigation of both situations regarding prisons in Colombia and Ecuador, I will proceed to mention the most important findings.

Colombia and Ecuador are very similar countries, so cooperation between them is a good way to help each other. However, Colombia is a country that has suffered too many prison crises. Some of them have been favorably solved, just as the first prison crisis, which was solved with the creation of new prisons, thus increasing the infrastructure for the Colombian penitentiary system. On the other hand, while they increased the number of prisons, the Colombian Constitution grew the penalties for several offenses, in

addition to creating new crimes, which again affected Colombian prisons through a growing population of prisoners, which resulted in a new prison crisis that led to a major failure of the solution that was already in progress.

Colombia is a country that has shown that it has constantly had to face these prison crises. The Constitutional Court has vowed on several occasions that the Colombian prison system has suffered humanitarian crises mainly due to prison policies that are created by constantly increasing penalties (Hernandez, 2018). Knowing this, there is a clear idea that the solution for Ecuador is not the creation of new policies; the failure of certain actions taken in front of the crisis can also be learned from; however, the increase of prison infrastructure in the country can be a solution to the crisis. Colombia has demonstrated that the quality of life of inmates could be upgraded by increasing infrastructure.

Another example we can learn from Colombia is in one of its 2018 projects which sought to promote citizen security by increasing the penalties for crimes, especially those related to drugs, since as previously discussed, one of the main crimes committed by inmates is drug trafficking and others related to it (Hernandez, 2018). This again harms the prison crisis, since with the increase in sentences many more people will remain in prisons, generating overcrowding due to the inclusion of the new laws. Therefore, this solution has already been proven not to work since increasing penalties and crimes do not stop people from committing crimes. Nonetheless, these measures are being taken repeatedly without obtaining good results, so it should be clear that the increase in penalties and crimes does not help solve the problems of both security and overcrowding in Colombian prisons.

It is important to remember what is the main purpose of the creation of prisons. The main objective is clearly the security of society. But they were also created with the purpose that people who enter these centers of deprivation of liberty could be reintegrated into society, later achieving resocialization, so that after serving their sentence, they can rebuild their lives in society outside of prisons and feel encouraged not to commit crimes again. This is why Ecuador should think carefully about its prison policies, taking into consideration the example of Colombia, and do things in a better way, i.e., not by increasing the penalties, but rather by focusing on people's reintegration into society.

Colombia is a country that can teach Ecuador a lot about the prison crisis, so its cooperation is focused on sharing experiences in the same situations for congresses or discussions in search of a solution for both countries. Unfortunately, the situation in Colombian prisons is very similar to the situation in Ecuador, but not in the same magnitude, since Ecuador experienced one of the bloodiest crises ever seen, which emphasized that in the Ecuadorian penal system, the problem is not only overpopulation, but also corruption within the prisons, and mainly, the constant war between criminal gangs who fight for territories in the penitentiary centers.

Regarding the cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia, it can be observed that over the years several agreements have been signed with the purpose of helping each other, it is unfortunate that most of the agreements remain only on paper and the action is decadent since what has been agreed is not fulfilled. In this way, international cooperation has very good intentions, so there would be excellent cooperation if the agreements were implemented more, and not just kept in words. Commitment is needed from both governments to make the agreements a reality and to implement them, for which they have met several times.

4.2 Policy recommendations

After analyzing the cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia, a policy recommendation can be made based on what was discovered about the prison situation in Colombia. In the first place, it is important to emphasize that assistance between these countries is important, since having the same or almost similar problems can lead to a solution where both countries can collaborate and find joint solutions.

Thus, the following policies are recommended with due justification:

1. Create more openness towards the reduction of sentences for good behavior, or illnesses: The reduction of sentences would allow for more space and resources in the prison system, being part of the solution to the overpopulation that exists in Ecuador's prisons.
2. More broadly, allow house arrest for the elderly, or for good behavior: In order to do this, more electronic shackles must be purchased, which will allow for continued control of the inmates' freedom.

3. Improving technology and monitoring means in prisons: In this way, it is possible to control much more of what enters the prisons, such as increasing x-ray scanners, increasing the number of security cameras to have more control inside the prisons, as well as technologically improving the system for the entry and exit of inmates.
4. Improve the infrastructure of existing penitentiary centers: Specifically, to provide basic services, in addition to increasing the space so that they can have more capacity than they currently have.
5. Create a monitoring commission that can constantly report on the situation in the prisons, which would have to submit these reports directly to the state.
6. Increase the number of personnel working in the penitentiary centers, obtaining greater control over them. Personnel who are trained to deal with crises that may arise.

These are some of the policies that can be obtained as a result of the analysis of the prison situation in Colombia, and policies that can be applied in Ecuador.

5. Conclusion

Ecuador's cooperation with Colombia is a fundamental basis for solving the problems; however, after a long investigation it was concluded that Colombia is in the same state, that is, in crisis, due to a long series of problems, which it also shares with Ecuador. But, on the other hand, this cooperation can help with experience, so as not to make the same mistakes that perhaps Colombia made at some point. In the same way, Ecuador can help Colombia with new ways to solve the prison crisis.

It has been concluded that cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia lacks commitment to comply with what has been agreed, whenever action is necessary to obtain the expected results. However, in spite of the existing decadence, this cooperation is important due to the similarities that they present.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, both countries are in similar situations concerning prisons, which is why I have concluded that the possibility of triangular cooperation should be sought, with the third country involved being a country that does not have problems in its prison system, so that the three States can seek solutions since there is a case of success versus two cases of failure in the control and supervision of the prison system. Triangular cooperation may be the best solution to remedy all the problems that have arisen in the prisons of both countries.

According to the objectives set out, several policies were recommended that can help improve the prison situation in Ecuador, based on the research that was conducted on the prison system in Colombia, taking into account the policies that failed because we can also learn from the mistakes made, which is why the policies that were recommended for Ecuador focus heavily on reducing sentences and generating more openness to house arrest or parole, to alleviate prison overcrowding in Ecuador.

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