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Stephany Victoria Vargas Egas

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**Scenarios and Strategies for Ecuador in
the Context of Emerging Narcoterrorism**

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Author: Stephany Victoria Vargas Egas

Supervisor: Mgr. Bohumil Doboš

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Abstract

In January 2018, Ecuador woke up to a series of attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by a group of dissidents of the Colombian Peace Accords that are said to be the operative arm of international drug cartels. Governmental reactions have been disappointing and unassertive, increasing the feeling of failure to keep the population safe. Based on “what are possible scenarios and strategies for Ecuadorian government in the context of increasing violence of narco-trafficking?” the present thesis will put in place a creative thinking scenario methodology to provide plausible answers to this central question with inputs from bibliographical research and interviews to experts in the subject. After describing the context of drug trafficking and terrorism as well as the Ecuadorian situation and policy approaches, four scenarios are presented. The variables to determine the scenarios are: (1) the level of convergence between narco-trafficking and rebel groups and (2) how militarized or non-militarized policies are applied by the government in the affected territories. Finally, a strategy aiming towards a non-militarized policy in the context of low interaction of rebel groups and drug trafficking is presented, in addition to actions to prevent the least desired scenarios.

Keywords

Creative scenario making; narco-terrorism; Ecuador; counternarcotic policy; strategies

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me throughout the process of studying this Master program, in writing this thesis and in my life in general.

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.



Master Thesis Proposal

Institute of Political Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
Charles University in Prague

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Author:	Stephany Victoria Vargas Egas	Supervisor: Bohumil Doboš
E-mail:	svve94@gmail.com	E-mail: bohumil.dobos@gmail.com
Phone:	420776408065	Phone:
Specialization:	IEPS	Defense Planned: June 2019

Proposed Topic:

Scenarios and Strategies for Ecuador in the Context of Emerging Narcoterrorism

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Topic characteristics / Research Question(s):

The thesis will aim to: provide policy recommendations to the Ecuadorian government regarding strategies towards violent actors related to narco-traffic in the northern border.

The central question will be: what are possible scenarios and strategies for Ecuadorian government in the context of increasing violence of narco-trafficking groups in the northern border?

Ecuador a primary route for narco-traffic and the need of a comprehensive strategy to manage security risks is needed, especially after recent unprecedented narco-terrorist attacks against civilians and public force.

In January 2018, Ecuador woke up to a series of attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by a group of dissidents of the Colombian Peace Accords that are said to be the operative arm of international drug cartels. These have certainly shaken up the society. Governmental reactions have been disappointing and unassertive, increasing the feeling of failure to keep the population safe. Ecuador is not the only country that faces narco-traffic related violence or dissident groups of peace negotiations; therefore, benchmarking policies of other counties in similar situations might be helpful. Identifying the vast governmental options -from the heavily militarized alternatives to the social-development proposals- for pacifying the territory, in addition to the estimated behavior of these groups can provide guidelines to scenario making and respective strategies. Having lived in Ecuador for 23 years without feeling threatened by narco-terrorism is what moves me to invest my time and studies to contribute in the formulation of alternative solutions for this situation.

Methodology:

Data Gathering of first handed information main stakeholders:

- Congressman
- Military representative
- Police representative
- Expert in Security Policy

Gathering second handed information from newspapers and interviews

Academic research on the topic

Creative Thinking Scenario Making

Intuitive Logic Model (Descriptive/Normative). Qualitative. 4 Scenarios. Expert judgment (conjecture) – forecast based on informed or expert judgments about future states of society (intuitive arguments, tacit knowledge, insight etc.).

Policy recommendations

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Fighting violent narco-related groups in other countries
3. Case Study: Ecuadorian Context
 - a. Identification of Factors
 - b. Identification of Uncertainties
4. Proposal and Description of Scenarios
 - a. Scenario 1
 - b. Scenario 2
 - c. Scenario 3
 - d. Scenario 4
5. Policy Recommendation
 - a. Strategy 1
6. Conclusions
7. References / Bibliography

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Introduction

In January 2018, Ecuador woke up to a series of attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by a group of dissidents of the Colombian Peace Accords that are said to be the operative arm of international drug cartels. These have certainly shaken up the society. Governmental reactions have been disappointing and unassertive, increasing the feeling of failure to keep the population safe. This thesis will put in place a creative thinking scenario methodology to provide plausible answers to the central question: “what are possible scenarios and strategies for Ecuadorian government in the context of increasing violence of narco-trafficking?”. In order to achieve this, the information was gathered from second-handed sources to have a theoretical framework from which the phenomenon can be analyzed. Additionally, interviews were carried out to obtain as much first-handed information as possible that helped to determine the important factors in the situation, to identify the different scenarios, and determine the most desirable future. The interviewees were: a Congressman currently working in the issue of International Affairs; an expert in security studies and representative of the academia; military and police representatives at the Ecuadorian Embassy in France.

Firstly, the thesis presents a macro vision of the context, developing a better understanding of the threats, the State and the system in which they interact. The main characteristics of narco-trafficking and terrorism are pointed out; enabling a better understanding of their behavior and conditions under which these interact. Furthermore, the evolution of the State is exposed to explain how this actor perceives the threat of narco-terrorism. Finally, the most common approach to face these threats is presented as well as its shortcomings and alternative perspectives to overcome these latter.

Secondly, a description of the current state of the country vis-à-vis the transnational drug operations and terrorist organizations. In this chapter the main enablers for drug-trafficking and terrorism are studied as well as the evolution of policies applies. Since Ecuador is not the only country that faces narco-traffic related violence, observing policies applied there in comparison to those applied in other counties in similar situations might be helpful to create the strategies.

Finally, the scenarios and the strategy will be presented not without first explaining the methodology behind the creative thinking scenario making. These scenarios will present the governmental responses, from the heavily militarized alternatives to the social-development proposals, to react towards the developing threat of emerging narco-terrorism. The strategy will set the main policy goals and some initiatives that Ecuadorian decision makers could potentially initiate to set the ground for the best scenario to develop as well as some other activities that can prevent the worst scenario to arrive.

1. Evolution of narcoterrorism as an international security threat: evolving concepts and developing policies

An international approach to narcoterrorism is of extreme importance to this thesis because it shows the transnational nature of these illicit activities and the need of multinational cooperation to fight them. Both components of the term will be conceptualized, followed by the evolution of the perception of international security so that the main strategies used over time to manage this threat can be identified.

1.1. Construction of the term narcoterrorism, a composite word

Narcoterrorism as a concept was developed as a response to the need of explaining the often evident and growing relation between narco-traffic and terrorism, two phenomena that have historically being treated separately (Björnehed, 2004). Even though the concept is still in continuous evolution, it is of interest of this section to decompose the term and analyze each element to finally identify the different ways in which they interact.

Narco-trafficking

Drugs - as natural or man-made substances - have existed for most part of human history (Ogunniyi & Britto, 2014) and have been consumed for a variety of reasons, including social and curative purposes (Cakir, 2002). Until the beginning of the 20th century, the most common narcotic used for both recreational and medical purposed was opium, coming from Asia to Europe and North America (Ogunniyi & Britto, 2014). Even if back then its commerce was already very profitable due to its scarcity, not much effort was dedicated to control traffic of this and other substances (Cakir, 2002). It wasn't until pharmaceutical improvements allowed commercial medication to be available that the international community recognized the negative and addictive effects of drug abuse (Ogunniyi & Britto, 2014). Moreover, these side effects became a useful means to gain international political influence and public attention (Cakir, 2002).

The first attempt to organize a multilateral response to this issue was the 1903 Opium Commission in Shanghai (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008); given that the latter failed to create an international agreement, a new conference was convoked and "The Hague

Opium Convention” was signed in 1912 (Cakir, 2002). Between World War I and World War II, international efforts aiming to limit production and traffic focused mainly in opium and cannabis but have had little impact in today’s counternarcotic policy (Ogunniyi & Britto, 2014; Cakir, 2002). It wasn’t until the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971) and the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988) were signed that the international community set the foundations of the current fight against narco-traffic (Rosen, 2015, p. 11). In this context, narco-traffic was defined as farming, fabrication, distribution and selling of illegal and controlled substances (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). According to UNODC (2018), the main drugs that are trafficked nowadays - due to their demand in consuming countries - are: cannabis, cocaine, opiates, amphetamine-type stimulants, hallucinogens, other psychoactive substances, and tranquilizers.

Since the 1980s, countries with high consumption indexes have urged the international community to fight narco-traffic based on the threat that its production and consumption pose in health, economic and political terms (Ogunniyi & Britto, 2014; Cakir, 2002). The counternarcotic strategy has aimed to reduce demand, supply, and related threats such as corruption of political and judicial institutions, drug-traffic-related violence, macroeconomic distortions of legal economies that laundry money, and increased funding and political gains for terrorist and insurgent groups that participate in the drug trade (Felbab-Brown, 2008, p. 5).

Regarding health and consumption, it is estimated that 5% of the global adult population uses drugs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). In general terms, the United States remains the largest single consumer of illicit drugs in the world reaching approximately 150 billion dollars sold in drugs each year followed by Europe, where cocaine consumption represents 30% of the global market even if the price per dosage can be as high as double as in the United States (Bagley, 2012).

Regarding economy, narco-traffic is thought to account for 8% of all international trade transactions, meaning around 300 billion and 500 billions dollars a year (Cakir, 2002) out of which movement of these substances across borders accounts for one-third to one-fifth of narco-traffic activity making it the most widespread activity across organized crime after property crime, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, fraud or any other illicit activity (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, p. 21).

Regarding political threats, the UNODC (2017) has received reports highlighting that 92% of all countries deal with illegal plantation of cannabis, 49 countries -mostly Asian- have illegal poppy crops and 8 countries -all of which are in America- have coca bush cultivation taking place. Their activities reach all sectors of society through corrupt practices such as bribery, providing jobs to the most vulnerable parts of population, and links with other violent crime organizations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, p. 6)

Counter-narcotics policies can be differentiated between supply reduction measures and demand reduction methods. The former involves three main policy tools: eradication, interdiction, and alternative livelihoods; the latter includes the punishment, depenalization, decriminalization, and prevention-treatment policies (Felbab-Brown, *Counternarcotics Policy Overview: Global Trends & Strategies*, 2008, p. 2). On the one hand, supply-side counter-narcotics policies assume that drug demand is flexible, thus they aim to lower the consumption by reducing availability and raising prices on consumer countries based on domestic policies of producing countries (Felbab-Brown, *Counternarcotics Policy Overview: Global Trends & Strategies*, 2008, p. 12). On the other hand, demand-side policies can vary widely; from prosecuting drug dealers and users to consider it a public health issue to be prevented and treated (Felbab-Brown, *Counternarcotics Policy Overview: Global Trends & Strategies*, 2008, pp. 16-24).

Supply-side policies have historically been used more often, not only they have been found to result costlier than treatment and prevention (Cakir, 2002; Felbab-Brown, 2008, p. 12) but criticism has developed around their unintended results. As Bagley (2012) describes it, there are three main counterproductive effects of supply-side policies. First, the balloon effect is the proliferation of areas of cultivation and smuggling routes when drug-related activities are suppressed in one territory. It can be exemplified by the spread of coca plantations in Latin America after the United States focused its attention and resources in Colombian territory, neglecting developing of coca cultivation in other countries of the region, which in the end meant a significant decrease in Colombian coca production but not as important reduction in the overall regional production. Second, the cockroach effect describes the dispersion and fragmentation of drug trafficking organizations as consequence of the persecution and punishment of drug cartel leaders. A perfect example is the evolution of highly hierarchical cartels in Colombia into smaller units that are less recognizable and vulnerable to law enforcement. Finally, deinstitutionalization effect is the failure of the State to modify its

institutions to make sure drug trafficking can be tackled. It refers to the lack of political will to adapt regulations to impede organized crime to function in a given state due to corruption or violence undermining the rule of law.

Despite the efforts, narco-trafficking is still a growing business worth billions of dollars and policies haven't delivered the expected results (Cakir, 2002). According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (2017, p. 35), drug production and traffic are still growing as well as the revenue to finance other illicit activities. It is estimated that 50% to 70% of the profits are laundered into the economy, meaning around 75% of all 207 economies have gross national incomes worth less than the money resulting from narco-trafficking (Cakir, 2002). Even if thousands of tons of heroin, cocaine and marijuana, and billions of synthetic drugs are seized by law enforcement agencies of different countries every year, they only represent approximately only 5% of the total amount of drugs that move between the continents (Cakir, 2002). In summary, traffic of narcotics is a highly profitable business that will be carried out by anyone who has the opportunity -independently of their background and location- making it a continuously growing industry.

1.1.1. Terrorism

Terrorism currently lacks a globally accepted definition. It is commonly related to violent acts committed against civilians with the intent to cause death, serious bodily injury or hold hostage to provoke a state of terror in the general public, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing a specific act (Gomis, 2015; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008). The idea was first identified as "terrorism" by the Académie Française in 1798 in reference to the 'rule of terror' used to impose French citizenship during the revolutionary years (BCC, 2002; Roser, Nagdy, & Ritchie, 2013). Examples of States using violence illicitly against its own citizens to prevent them from challenging the regime -known as State Terrorism- can be found throughout history (Merari, 2007, p. 17) but notably remarkable are the seven decades of Soviet government and the so-called "death squads" imposed in Latin American countries in the second half of the 20th century (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 18).

Nonetheless, the use of violent actions as means for political ends have existed for as long as political resistance movements and it is often related no non-state actors (Roser, Nagdy,

& Ritchie, 2013). At the time when political ideology was closely related to religion, the Jewish factions attempting to overthrow Roman rule during the first century are the first known acts of terror we can refer to (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 6), even if they weren't labeled as such at the time. Terrorist groups are by definition opposed to the political environment they live in, and thus, they rise and perish with the political context (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 8). At first, these groups tended to carry out "tyrannicides" or "magnicides" by targeting high profile individuals, as it was the case of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 (BCC, 2002; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). This strategy was the most commonly used during the political period when the apparatus remained mainly undemocratic.

At the time when democratic States started to develop, they provided the civil population with power and representation. This form of political organization, based on popular sovereignty, made civil population a more valuable target for modern terrorism (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 10). Furthermore, modern terrorism cannot be fully understood without the technological advancements and spread of information of the 20th and 21st centuries, that have allowed relatively small groups to hijack aircrafts, detonate bombs from distance, paralyze governmental agencies by interfering with their informatic systems. All this has contributed to take terrorist activities to an unpredictable, indiscriminate and massive level of violence never seen before (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). As terrorism is a tactic to demonstrate that the system doesn't allow certain groups to achieve political objectives through peaceful means, their activities are driven by conditions like violent governments, social inequality and poverty (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017; Kikkas, 2015). Nowadays, terrorist groups often use internet to show to a larger audience the causes they fight for, their thoughts, approaches and their attacks in order to acquire support or inflict more terror (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 10).

Despite the lack of a precise definition of terrorism, the United Nations -as the main intergovernmental platform- recognizes terrorism as a threat to the rule of law and the fundamental freedoms of citizens and society, dedicating nineteen different instruments of international law to address this topic in the last fifty years (United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, 2018). Since 2006, the United Nations has a counter-terrorism strategy based on four pillars: addressing conditions leading to terrorism; combating terrorism; improving States' capacities; and protecting human rights a rule of law (United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, 2018; Laborde, 2010). Counter-terrorism strategies have changed in the same way

terrorism has evolved: from political association fought with persecution of identified activists; to bottom-up built organizations now persecuted with technological tools and substantial security budgets (Kikkas, 2015).

Nonetheless, these global efforts haven't been as effective as desired. According to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index, there were large improvements in terms of reducing terrorist attacks in countries considered to be epicenters of violence i.e. Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Nonetheless, other regions have experienced at least one terrorist act in the last year (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). Terrorism remains disproportionate around the globe, Europe has faced various terrorist groups throughout history and still very present today, including: the Irish terrorism, the activities of ideological groups such as the Basque and Corsican movements and more recently the religious jihadists attacks in main cities (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p. 10); while the American continent was targeted in 9/11 and is often victim of violence promoted by guerrillas that often resort to terrorist tactics (Chaliand & Blin, 2007), like FARC in Colombia and The Shining Path in Peru. Still, the Middle East, North Africa and South-Asia hold the majority all deaths caused by terrorism, almost 94% (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). Even though States agree on perceiving terrorism as a threat that menaces all countries, counter-terrorist strategies are difficult to implement due to lack of agreement as well as limited political, economic and technical capacity (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

In general, as Raymond Aaron (1962) stated, violent actions can be considered terrorist when their effects in the psychology of the people surpass by far the physical damage (in Chaliand & Blin, 2007). This is important because terrorism implies a threat for all States by undermining rule of law and its institutions (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008), which motivates governments to frame terrorism around a diabolic imagery to justify any action used to fight it. In this text, terrorism will be understood as the use of indiscriminate violent mechanisms by non-State actors aiming to modify a political action of the State.

1.1.2. Narcoterrorism: Convergence of two concepts

As a concept, narcoterrorism was first coined by former Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde Terry in 1983 to describe systematic violence and intimidation to hinder law

enforcement and justice related to anti-narcotics policies (Haupt, 2009; Nevirko, 2017, p. 195). Narco-traffic and terrorism are both criminal acts in the eyes of international law regardless of their political or economic motives (Björnehed, 2004), but their interaction is what has drawn attention to improve understanding of security threats and desirable policies. In general, the definition is ambiguous and focuses on different dynamics depending on what part of the combined word is stressed (Björnehed, 2004), one definition focuses on the appropriation of terrorist methods by drug trafficking organizations to protect their activities as the Mexican Cartels; the other focuses on how terrorist organizations profit from trafficking activities to finance its activities as the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan (Nevirko, 2017, p. 195; Talbot, 2010). While national and international agencies currently emphasize the latter (Björnehed, 2004; Gomis, 2015), only a rigorous understanding of the interaction enables governments to adequately approach the threat.

Each activity -separately- is a well-known topic in the national and international policy-making agendas. Its interaction and transnational connections, on the other hand, have become a more evident threat to the sovereignty of several countries around the world (Talbot, 2010). These hybrid groups tend to operate in countries with inefficient or weak governments that cannot provide certain basic needs to its citizens. To date, the United States identified 28 terrorist groups actively engaged in drug trafficking. (de Souza Pinheiro, 2006). The problem arises when there is no specific pattern of collaboration between these two, as shown in the following examples: According to Haupt (2009), around 60% of Afghan population lives with only 300 USD a month; making poverty a key motive for farmers to involve themselves in the illicit business of growing of poppy that is controlled by the Talibs. In this case, terrorist groups can provide citizens land, credit, water and employment while at the same time making money to buy weapons to continue their ideological fight because of their involvement in drug trafficking. Thus, any attempt of the government that fails to provide alternative sources of income to its population will have almost no impact and will endanger the legitimate power of the State in certain territories. Instead, Haupt (2009) explains that Mexico hosts the largest drug cartels in the world, providing 90% of all sold cocaine passes through their territory. Drug cartels here are mainly located in strategically located places to facilitate trafficking into the United States, which in many cases are unattended by the government. Nonetheless, the money laundering process to introduce the illicit profits into the economy happens in the most developed and rich parts of the country. In this case violence is used to threaten authorities in

case they aim to change such status-quo, the objective is to make sure their business remains untouched.

An academic effort to understand the links between organized crime and terrorism is the crime-terror continuum model by Makarenko (2004), where organized crime and terrorism are situated at opposite extremes of a line and four different forms of relationships between them are described: alliances, operational cooperation, convergence and the ‘black hole’ (Björnehed, 2004). As shown in the following chart.

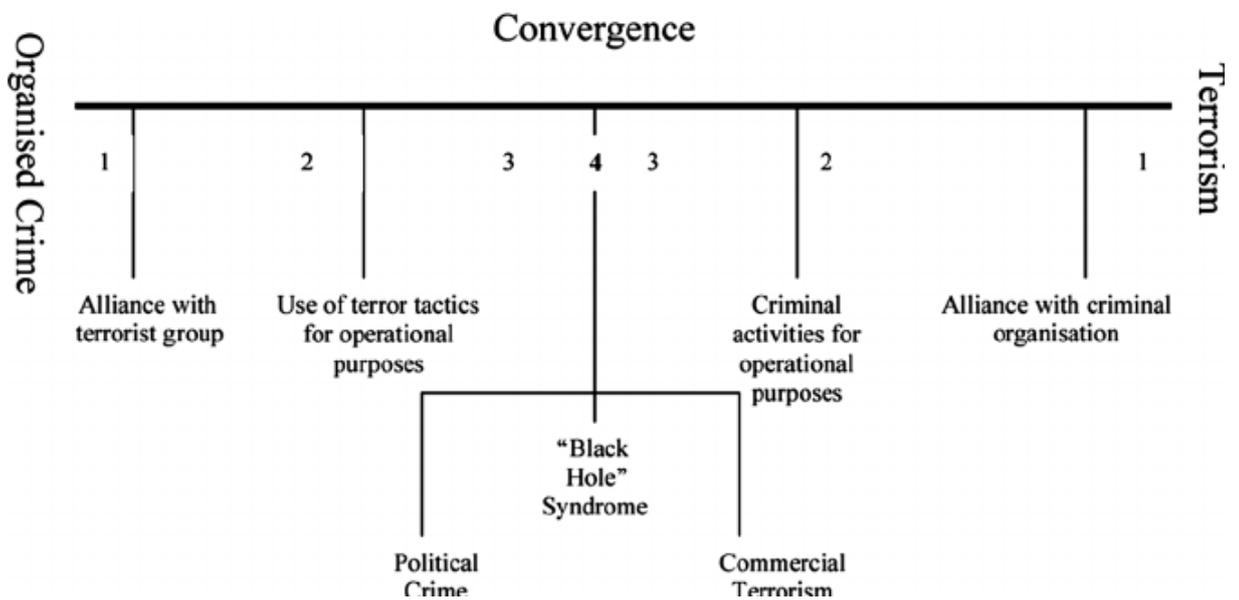


Figure 1: The Crime Terror Continuum. (Makarenko, 2004)

1. *Alliance*: is the least compromising level of interaction, they consist on punctual mutual help based on the expert knowledge each group has. It was exemplified when the Colombian cartel of Medellin formed a strategic alliance with the insurgency “ELN” to plant car bombs in 1993 because the cartel lacked the necessary skills to do it (Makarenko, The Crime–Terror Continuum, 2004).

2. *Use of terror tactics or criminal activities for operational purposes*: it refers to the development of internal capabilities that are unconventional in the organization. When drug-trafficking organizations develop their own capabilities to use terror as a tool and when terrorist groups take control of their own of drug trafficking routes and production they reduce the risks involved in alliances, such as: distrust, errors in the operation or multiplying competitors (Makarenko, The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational

Organized Crime and Terrorism, 2004). Criminal organizations seem to engage in political action through terror practices, but their objective in reality is only to secure the success of their operations, not to change any political structure or capture governmental responsibilities on their own. Examples are often found in Mafia activities in Italy, when a series of car bombs were planted nearby the most important buildings in Florence to threaten the Parliament that was trying to pass an anti-mafia law. Likewise, terrorist organizations use criminal activities to fund their operational needs, but they remain clear that the criminal activity is a means to achieve the political goal. Such is the case of FARC, PKK, ETA and Sendero Luminoso all of which have benefited from its geographically strategic positions to develop drug trafficking routes, principally cocaine and heroin (Makarenko, *The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, 2004).

3. *Convergence*: it refers to the merger into a single organization that exhibits characteristics and activities of both criminal and terrorist groups but could potentially move towards the exact opposite end of the continuum from which it began. In this case, the new organization has different objectives and interests than the two preceding groups. Either by becoming actors of political crime or commercial terrorism they become criminal groups with political interests or terrorist groups that use their political discourse to prolong their illegal businesses. An example of the former is the Albanian Mafia that carries out illicit activities but is also linked to the political life out the country by representing the Pan-Albanian ideals. An example of the latter is the FARC, which began its participation in drug trafficking as protector of crops and laboratories to later become intermediaries between farmers and drug cartels. This transition allowed them to gain more revenue (approx. 500 million USD in 2015) and acquire additional political power (controlling approx. 40% of Colombian territory) (Makarenko, *The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, 2004).

4. *The Black Hole Syndrome*: refers to the establishment of a safe territory for these convergent groups by actively controlling it. A clear case of this situation is Afghanistan where, after the Russian troops left the territory in 1989, the parties involved in the civil war kept a political discourse but initiated illicit activities like smuggling of weapons, and opiate production as well developed “free zones” where other insurgents could train and congregate (Makarenko, *The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, 2004; de Souza Pinheiro, 2006).

When this continuum is transposed to the case of organized narco-traffic and terrorism, Miller & Damask (1996) explain following categories: “True Narcoterrorism” that refers to drug trafficking organizations that use violent action to intimidate the government, through murder of other traffickers; intimidation of informers, law enforcement officers, policy makers, or prosecutors. As Inciardi (in Miller & Damask, 1996) states, the label of terrorism is used even if in other conditions the same actions would not be considered as such. “Narco-Warfare” is the use of insurgents and the population living in territory under their control to fight against any policies threatening to production of drugs (Miller & Damask, 1996). In the Latin American case, this comprises the peasants working for cultivation, production, or refining of cocaine. Finally, “Insurgent Narcoterrorism” means the transformation of insurgent groups to narco-traffic with terrorist tactics. They overtake the manufacture and distribution of drugs (Miller & Damask, 1996).

The convergence of terrorism and narco-traffic is a “marriage of convenience”. Nonetheless, it has to be highlighted that each group has different interests: the former aims to modify the social and political organization of a State while the latter benefits from perpetuating status quo (Miller & Damask, 1996). Therefore, it is important to highlight that the term “narcoterrorism” is politically constructed rather than a substantial legal category, making these activities very vulnerable to their political framing as a threat in the public opinion (Nevirko, 2017, p. 195); which is exemplified by the use of such label to increase public disfavor to such activities and provide governments the legitimacy they need to carry out activities to fight it.

1.2. From Westphalian Sovereignty to Permeable Borders

In the context of an international system organized around States, the emergence of non-State actors and unconventional threats makes policy-makers reconsider the framing of international and national security issues. The Westphalian State grants the government a monopolistic use of force and exclusive exercise of authority in the name of sovereignty within a specific territory but fails to fit the post-Cold War security setting where volatility and interconnectivity are present. It is of interest of this section to determine what is considered to be a threat to the State and how these interact with fundamentals of the Westphalian model and the modern State.

1.2.1. Security vs Defense

In a broad sense, safety is the situation when no perceived threat or feeling of vulnerability is present (Boulanin, 2012). To satisfy such basic need of people has been a responsibility of nation-states (Grozdanoska, 2014), to the point in which some argue that it is the only reason why the institution exists (Busch, 2015). This political idea dates back to classic realists such as Tomas Hobbes' portrayal of the Leviathan, which explains the need to provide external and internal security (Busch, 2015). Nonetheless, what constitutes a threat is an open debate that remains ongoing. According to Boulanin (2012), positivists and realists consider everything as a possible threat, the issue is to define how they should be categorized to identify priorities. The post-positivists and constructivists consider that threats are not predetermined, they are social constructions, the issue is to unpack them and understand what makes each situation a "threat". Anyhow, the open concept of security leads to a variety of domains that can be secured: territorial, economic, environmental, etc. (Boulanin, 2012).

The idea of national security is relatively recent, resulting from the Westphalian conceptualization of States, linking this responsibility directly to the physical integrity, territory and sovereignty of a country (Grozdanoska, 2014). In the current post-Cold War environment where a multiplicity of actors and sectors can become part of the security and defense system, the State needs to widen such definition (Boulanin, 2012). The classical security approach emphasizes the activities carried out on the political, diplomatic and military fields but the new international interactions ask to move from a state-centric approach to a widened scope that includes the individual and the international community as objects subjected to protection (Grozdanoska, 2014).

The basic structure that States developed to fulfill their protective role makes a difference between internal and external threats: creating defense and security forces, respectively (Busch, 2015). Defense operations are carried out by the military forces that are concerned with foreign disturbances, while security operations are normally performed by law enforcement agents - the police - maintaining internal security of inhabitants of a territory (Busch, 2015). The former has been sometimes contested with the argument of whether currently confrontation with other States is absolutely necessary; while the Weberian assumption of the State holding the monopoly of violence is generally accepted (Busch, 2015). Nonetheless, such strict division of responsibilities is in practice blurred because more often than not, internal security can be subjected to influence from abroad.

The shrinking distance between internal and external security has resulted from a structural transformation, namely broadening and deepening, consequence of the end of the Cold War, the changing nature of borders and globalization (Busch, 2015). The diversification of topics that can be included in the security agenda and the diversification of actors that can be threatened or a threat, have limited the once undisputed role of the military as the predominant component of security (Babayan, David, Irondelle, Le Gloannec, & Risse, 2013). An example of such dissociation were the 9/11 attacks setting an unprecedented threat, as being carried out by small groups formed by foreign nationals but with airplanes that never left the national territory, the traditional tasks of the military were incapable of providing an adequate response (de Souza Pinheiro, 2006; Busch, 2015).

The new security environment involves raising new technologies, non-state actors, linkages between organized crime groups and terrorism as well as increased migration, instable States and environmental degradation (de Souza Pinheiro, 2006). The transnational character of these activities accentuates the incapacity of States to act alone and obtain results (Babayan, David, Irondelle, Le Gloannec, & Risse, 2013). Nonetheless, States have done limited efforts to delegate power and capabilities to international cooperation, the national security issue has proved to have a reverse trend in comparison with other aspects like trade policy, because national security is closely linked to internal politics and values (Busch, 2015).

1.2.2. The Westphalian Model and the Nation-State

It is commonly agreed that the beginning of the modern international system as the field of international relations understands it began after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (Bordoni, 2013). The Westphalian system is based on the interaction between sovereign States in the system, understanding a State as an exclusive territorial entity with a legitimate authority that has the exclusive right to decide over the faith its population (Tutuianu, 2013). This idea of States being the primary actors of the international tissue is ratified by the United Nations, as the only global international organization at the moment (Bordoni, 2013). Nonetheless, much has been speculated about the accuracy of the system to deal with modern security issues where the State is not the single stakeholder (Makarenko, *The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, 2004).

The post-Westphalian model that we know has its origins in three main episodes: The Peace of Westphalia, the Congress of Vienna and the creation of the social contract as a concept. First, the Peace of Westphalia consolidates the creation of national armies to avoid external intervention and eliminate internal threats. This characterizes the State through its monopoly of use force, the military is the tool that ensures its survival and loyalty of its citizens (McCoy, 2008). Second, the structural organization was complemented by a procedural configuration with the Vienna Congress. This latter set the ground for international relations based on commonly agreed settlements where: state equality and state-centrality became the norm (Tutuianu, 2013; McCoy, 2008; Tutuianu, 2013; Kössler, 2003). Finally, the ideals of the French Revolution established the nation as the legitimate body to exercise power in the State (Tutuianu, 2013). Even if, nation as a concept has its origins before the idea of the State, the strong cultural connection between people that provide a feeling of belonging (Bordoni, 2013) was determinant to create what we know today as “nation-state”. In summary, the post-Westphalian system is based on three characteristics: each State represents a national will, it possesses a sovereign unified territory and there is a legitimate form of government independent from external forces (McCoy, 2008; Tutuianu, 2013; Kössler, 2003).

In general, the ideas emanating from the post-Westphalian model can be traced back to the realist thought of Hobbes, who developed the theory of the social contract and set the basis for the theory of sovereignty. The idea of violence used legitimately only by the State, is a concept based on realism that was later ratified by Max Weber and Charles Tilly when describing the State as being defined by its capacity to coerce (Al-Kassimi, 2016). Furthermore, sovereignty and social contract were used by Giddens in the context of internal and external use of force (Kössler, 2003; Al-Kassimi, 2016). The importance of providing the State such monopoly is to make sure that it will fulfill the duties established in the social contract, if non-state actors break such control, then the legitimacy of the State is put at risk (Al-Kassimi, 2016).

Even if the original form of the Westphalian model has suffered some changes since the Peace of Westphalia, the system remains relatively untouched. The liberalism that followed the Great War as a school of thought in International relations, materialized in the 14 Point of President Wilson, was challenged by the competition that governed the international arena at the time (Tutuianu, 2013). On the contrary, World War II has a great impact on how the system was functioning because it was a war involving never-seen before warfare and ideological motivations. This combination motivated the international community to create an inter-

governmental system that would perpetuate the hierarchy of States in the system but at the same time it would make them comply in political, economic and military issues of their interests, and so the United Nations were born (Tutuianu, 2013). Later, the Cold War also contributed to a modification in the idea of national sovereignty because many regional-ideological clusters were created at this time. The classic understanding of sovereignty was modified due to the new international organizations, but the security threats remained the same. However, the Post-Westphalian model was again modified - and this time structurally - when the type of threats in the post-Cold War era became global and risks included all possible issues of interaction (military, political, economic, societal, ecological) (Tutuianu, 2013). This evolution in history has changed alongside with technological development. Now, States can exercise public violence in a wider variety of mechanisms to maintain its sovereignty. For example by controlling its currency, providing special rights according to nationalities, etc. (Kössler, 2003).

1.2.3. Limitations of the Modern State

Even if the nation-state continues to be the primary actor; inter-connectedness has changed the global environment and has led global threats to appear, such as: transnational organized crime, terrorism, insurgencies, global warming, migration, and economic openness (Kössler, 2003). This is at a point capable of destabilizing the Westphalian model because the centrality of the state is challenged by appropriation of the constituting elements unique to the State, including the monopolist of the use of violence (Makarenko, 2005). In general, the threat remains the same but with different agents that are now capable of challenging the State sovereignty (Miller & Damask, 1996).

Globalization has been one of the forces that has reconfigured the system. Since globalization is promoting interaction through communication and transportation, the resulting phenomenon of reconfiguring geography threatens one of the territorial unities of the Westphalian State (Makarenko, 2018). Globalization doesn't only affect the territorial unity, but all elements related to it. Nowadays, States can no longer trust their borderlines because threats and identities cross them with high uncertainty and are born within them (Bordoni, 2013). These advancements in technology, communications and mobility as well as the drawbacks of globalization such as social polarization, have been used by illicit groups to amass power in the system (Makarenko, 2005).

In the post-Cold War environment, the threats can come from inside the territory, promoting conflict within the borderlines of a State which creates a bottom-up policy-making desire. The possibility of privatizing certain State functions increases the levels of violence, which further deteriorates the legitimacy and power of the State. The authority that criminal groups can exercise over a territory supposes a direct opposition to the Westphalia state-centric model, but this doesn't mean that the State is less important. In fact, it is because the non-state actors aim to manage the main functions of the States, that we can assume that the State and the power it holds are important (Makarenko, 2004).

Finally, the limitations of the State to fight narco-trafficking and terrorism as a transnational threat are based in the conceptualization of the security hazard itself. While the realist model argues in favor of exclusive participation of the State in the internal and international matters (Molano-Cruz, 2017), other approaches including critical theories can provide better understanding of the dynamics, structures and possibilities of solution and the role of the State in this (Makarenko, 2005). By expanding the conceptualization of threats, the nation-states will acquire capacity to confront transnational organizations, because the threat is transnational the need for a multi-centered and multi-layered system, that has legitimate power to coordinate responses is required (Makarenko, 2005).

1.3. Policy Overview: Strategies to Fight Narcoterrorism

Narco-trafficking and terrorism, as well as their interactions, pose a threat to the Rule of Law of States and therefore, become security issues (Haupt, 2009). Still, the different motivations between these two groups have a deep impact on the appropriate policies to be used against them, while the former is categorized as organized crime and is related to economic and political issues that can be managed by law enforcement forces; the latter has a strong military component to safeguard the inalienability of the State. Thus, this section is concerned with the different policies that have been formulated and implemented in different countries to fight narcoterrorism, its limitations and the new angles from which this issue can be analyzed.

1.3.1. The Unified Counter Narco-Terrorist Strategy

As explained in the first sub-chapter, linkages between narco-traffic and terrorism lead to think an integrated anti-drug/anti-terrorist policy is needed to fight the phenomenon (Björnehed, 2004). It is assumed that groups using terrorist tactics profit from crime to enlarge their military capabilities. Thus, governments focus on eliminating their main source of resources to eradicate the hazard (Felbab-Brow, 2015). Due to shared characteristics, it is argued that tools used in counter-narcotics can be used on counter-terrorism identically: intelligence gathering and aggressive law enforcement (Björnehed, 2004). This perspective was introduced and has been largely spread by the United States, which as the largest consuming market in the world tries to reduce production in the source countries.

The unified strategy is based on shared characteristics of narcoterrorism and the groups that constitute it. A shared need of both criminal organizations and terrorist groups is the high requirement of anonymity (Haupt, 2009; Posso, 2018), which is usually combined with the vertical organizational structure of these groups, especially at higher levels, whereas mid and lower management power is mostly shared (Björnehed, 2004; Acosta, 2018). Additionally, these groups share the demand of goods and services, like: money laundering, document falsification, government corruption and weapons (Rollins & Sun-Wyler, 2013); which can be managed more efficiently if done in collaboration, trade or sharing rather than in competition for its supply (Björnehed, 2004). Therefore, governments often combine gathering of information regarding networks, shipments, money laundering systems and upcoming activities of narco-trafficking groups and terrorist groups to avoid loopholes and mistakes (explained by lack of cooperation) when designing countermeasures (Björnehed, 2004).

The unified strategy is characterized by aggressive law enforcement with participation of military forces, primary through violent tactics including: eradication of illicit crops (Björnehed, 2004); prohibition of all the supply-chain; arrests of people directly/indirectly involved; imposition of alternative crops in the agricultural areas (Phillips, 2018; Chouvy, 2009). In general, the unified approach allows having a broad perspective when assessing the threat of narcoterrorism, as well as maximizing an efficient use of equipment and capabilities of law enforcement (Björnehed, 2004). This policy has been largely diffused through pressure of the United States to apply its approach by international organizations and

other countries including: Colombia, Peru, and Afghanistan with very reduced supporting evidence of positive results (Phillips, 2018). Historically, the fight against illicit crops through this approach has not shown positive results except for some very particular exceptions, including China, Iran, Pakistan, and Thailand (Chouvy, 2009). Nonetheless, much of the policy implementation in the latter examples have involved very violent repressive methods, cemented authoritarian regimes and have represented high economic, physical and sociopolitical risks. For instance, only after fifteen years of alternative crop development, positive results of eradication were shown in Thailand (Chouvy, 2009).

1.3.2. Shortcomings of a Unified Approach

Even if the unified approach appears to have a comprehensive method based on the similarities between drug-trafficking and terrorist groups, it presents vast limitations precisely because it can become too simplistic (Felbab-Brown, 2006). In fact, the greatest motivation for using the similarities approach is based on the common threat represented by the government rather than a shared goal (Miller & Damask, 1996). Therefore, the strengthening of violent traditional law-enforcement and persecution creates a self-enduring cycle for these non-conventional threats (Miller & Damask, 1996). In sum, the state-centric responses to fight narcoterrorism have turned out to be ineffective because these organizations capacity to morph and confront the State (Felbab-Brown, *A Better Strategy Against Narcoterrorism*, 2006; Phillips, 2018).

First, this policy incorrectly assumes that by eliminating the source of financial revenue, these organizations can be defeated (Haupt, 2009). This assumption fails to identify the particularity of narco-terrorist groups, that of the “political capital” they accumulate it allows them to be quasi-state actors with popular support for their activities (Felbab-Brown, 2006). As a consequence of the insufficient presence of the State in certain territories, terrorist and narco-trafficking groups in producing and transit countries can provide economic incomes, security and other public services to the citizens; which enable these groups to acquire citizen support and collaboration in activities like: illicit crop cultivation as well anti-government movements (Björnehed, 2004). According to Felbab-Brown (2006), there are four enablers that increase the possibilities of narco-terrorist groups to acquire “political capital” when they sponsor illicit activities: state of the overall economy; quality of labor required for the illicit economy; capacity of the group to defend the population from other violent actors; and the

government response to the illicit economy. In general, when countries are poor or have unequal distribution, when the illicit economy is labor intensive and needs hundreds of thousands of workers to succeed; when there are other violent forces that the population can be protected from; and when the State's response is aggressive or laissez-faire, it is much more probable that people will depend on narco-trafficking groups to develop (Felbab-Brown, *A Better Strategy Against Narcoterrorism*, 2006). Conclusively, by eliminating the crops, the source of income is affected and reduced the possibility of illegal economic activity and conflict (Felbab-Brown, 2008).

Secondly, the violent mechanisms used to fight narcoterrorism tend to have unexpected results. On the one hand, eradication faces consequences very similar to those described before as "cockroach effect" or "balloon effect". When counterterrorism tactics remove leaders, they increase levels of violence because it leads to a fight over the control of the organization (Phillips, 2018). These effects lie on the neglecting of differences between these groups and their ability to intervene in illicit activities and the unawareness of the antagonizing interests that narco-trafficking groups have with terrorism. Therefore, these strict policies tend to reproduce the patterns of the illicit groups that they attempt to fight on the first place. A clear example was the strong eradication policy and brutal military technique applied in Mexico that ended up creating more violence through attacks involving civilian population that was widely defused through media to create tougher psychological impact (Trovo-Harley, 2012).

Third, narco-trafficking and terrorism have different motivations; they represent different security threats to the State and as stated before; different targets and methods used to act violently. While economic-driven crime poses a threat to law-enforcement and institutionalism of States, politically-driven activities aim to reform and modify the structural conditions, representing a direct opposition to the elements constituting the State (Björnehed, 2004). Therefore, a unified approach recognizes the embeddedness of each other in their activities, but it fails to approach the highly complex relationships between human security, crime, illicit economies, and law enforcement are highly complex (Felbab-Brown, *A Better Strategy Against Narcoterrorism*, 2006).

In summary, the unified approach creates in the end an unbalanced overreaction that promotes fear and the feeling of insecurity among the population, which in the end benefits

illegal organizations (Gomis, 2015), failing to approach effectively the narco-terrorist threat (Björnehed, 2004).

1.3.3. Perspectives to Remedy the Limitations

Views challenging the classic military, state-centered approach have proposed new elements that should be taken into consideration when creating policies against narcoterrorism. Accordingly, limitations of the unified approach can be tackled through a “multidimensional strategy” inside and outside the national borders, considering: citizens’ security; dismantling illicit groups; and strengthening governments in producing countries to enforce law. As it was partially carried out by Thailand in the previously mentioned example

First, regarding human security, the proposed approach by Felbab-Brown (2008) is to consider all dimensions of security, including: physical, economic and social. By providing security in all these categories, population that otherwise would increase the “political capital” of these groups, will prefer to support government by providing intelligence and supporting eradication or crop substitution programs. Only through real support of human capital development and integration in society of the people that become victims of these groups, a long-term preventive solution can be reached (Felbab-Brow, 2015).

Secondly, as it was explained before in the field of dismantling illicit groups, eradicating the source of income of these groups is not enough. It is important to distinguish the characteristics differentiating each group, its motivations, position in the social fabric of the community within they act, and agenda (Björnehed, 2004). Furthermore, it is undeniable that money is an enabler for these groups to strengthen but instead of violent eradication programs, the government should collaborate on “follow the money” strategies to seriously injure the organizations by freezing assets and impede money-laundering, as the Obama Administration proposed in its National Strategy for Counterterrorism (Rollins & Sun-Wyler, 2013).

Last, but by no means less important, government strengthening is suggested to work from different angles. Fundamental is combating corruption, which is the facilitator for illicit groups to carry out activities with impunity at every step of the supply chain of drugs and when carrying out terrorist activities (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). According to the UNODC (2017), the growing gap of inequality perpetuates macro-economic conditions

for illicit economies to develop and for people in the most relegated areas of a country to feel alienated from the governmental protection umbrella. Also, governance is heavily constructed in diplomatic relations because a threat is transnational deserves a transnational response. Diplomatic relations can take the form of foreign aid, policy transfer, or even the sharing of know-how and intelligence by training law enforcement officials and military forces in schematic responses to activities related to narcoterrorism (Rollins & Sun-Wyler, 2013). Lastly, an adequate and consequent response to illicit activities is key to maintain the government strong enough towards the narco-terrorist threat. Responses can vary from military actions in environments where traditional law enforcement is difficult to carry out (Rollins & Sun-Wyler, 2013); to laissez-faire or licensing policies aiming to maintain peace in the territories by reducing economic and political capital of the illicit groups, as it was the case for Myanmar, India and Turkey; going through development oriented policies aiming to solve the societal conflict that prompt illicit activities (Felbab-Brow, 2015). Adoption of any of these policies, of course, will need support from the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government to maintain an updated evaluation of the progress (Rollins & Sun-Wyler, 2013).

2. Ecuador in the context of Narco-Terrorism

A closer look into the Ecuadorian context of narco-trafficking is of vital significance to this thesis because it allows us to portrait the country in terms of: general situation, enablers to organized crime and development of counternarcotic policy. Furthermore, recent events linking terrorist-like activities of armed groups be considered to understand their relation to the traffic of cocaine in and out the country.

2.1. Narco-terrorist presence in the territory

In the Andean region of South America, the largest coca producers in the world can be found: Colombia, Peru and Bolivia with 69.000 hectares, 49.800 hectares and 20.400 hectares, respectively according to the UNODC in 2014 (in Erazo, 2016). Ecuador is a small country located between Colombia and Peru that for different cultural and economic reasons has not developed such large coca plantations (Erazo, 2016). Instead, it plays the role of transit and stocking of narcotics, and traffic of chemical precursors and money launder (Bonilla y Moreano, 2009; Gherardy, 2016; Erazo, 2016). Indicators such as the homicide rate are often used to measure the effects of illicit groups in the territory. These indexes are higher in other countries in Latin America compared to Ecuador, but in reality they do not reflect the reality of the northern provinces of Ecuador where there is lack of security, high criminal activity associated with narco-traffic and human trafficking (Espinosa, 2009; Sharkey, 2018). For several years FARC used Ecuadorian territory to establish temporary camps and collaborated with Ecuadorian population in these territories to carry out trafficking-related activities, this increased the dependence of such populations of FARC and its presence in the territory (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015; Espinosa 2009). In the past few years, there has been a change of the trafficking dynamics. Since 2011 Colombian organized crime groups do not act as middlemen any more but a variety of transnational criminal organizations, including Mexican, Colombian, Nigerian, Russian, Italian, and Chinese groups, have installed themselves in Ecuador and have expanded their capacity to include such Colombian groups into their structures (Gherardy, 2016).

Several cities are key distribution points for the international and domestic markets of cocaine, including the biggest port, Guayaquil; the capital, Quito; and 10 other cities of Ecuador (Gherardy, 2016). The mechanisms used to ship drugs to the United States, Europe and Oceania



Image 1 Drug Trafficking Routes in Ecuador (Gherardy, 2016)

are varied, including: large shipment ships, small “go-fast” boats, submarines, land vehicles and airplanes (Erazo, 2016). According to the Police Communities of Americas in 2013, the maritime routes are the most representative means of transportation for the trafficking of drugs. They begin in different Ecuadorian ports, which according to their size and characteristics are used differently. In the largest ports, Guayaquil, Manta and Esmeraldas the drug is disguised in large containers along with other legal merchandise going to the United States and Europe (Erazo, 2016). According to the UNODC (in Gherardy, 2016), 90% of the cocaine sold worldwide is transported in shipping containers - out of the 500 million containers moving annually only 2% is inspected.

In geographical terms, the Ecuadorian territorial sea connects South America with Central America. This route is usually used by small “go-fast” boats and submarines that are capable to navigate near the coastline without being detected, gather fuel in Central America and continue its journey to Mexico (Gherardy, 2016). Usually these clandestine ports are located near fisher towns in the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast near Esmeraldas, Manta, Rocafuerte, the Puná Island and the Galapagos Islands (Gherardy, 2016). The land routes are usually used for shorter distances, meaning crossing the Colombo-Ecuadorian borders and the Peruvian-Ecuadorian borders through illegal entries with the purpose of moving sodium bicarbonate, kerosene, gasoline, hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, potassium permanganate, ammonia, and acetone to the cocaine labs (Gherardy, 2016) or to move the coca base to a maritime or aerial point to be trafficked to the international markets (Erazo, 2016). Finally, aerial routes are less common. With only few narco-planes found filled with cocaine, air transportation is more

common for the trafficking of heroine (Falconí, 2017). It is estimated that 150 to 200 tons of cocaine are moved through Ecuadorian territory each year, which represents between 450 million USD and 750 million USD (Rivera & Torres, 2011; Espinosa, 2009).

Ecuadorian law enforcement captured an average of 8 tons of cocaine per year between 1999 and 2003 (Espinosa, 2009). Between 2002 and 2005 the seizures of drugs had a declining trend, but it rapidly increased between 2006 and 2009, when the peak was reached in 68 tons seized (Falconí, 2017). In general, the indexes of drug captured between 2012 and 2017 multiplied by three (Espinosa, 2009) with around 50 tons of cocaine seized each year and thousands of people detained for crimes related to narco-trafficking. Counterintuitively, the increase of seizures does not imply a better law enforcement of the country but rather suggests the increase of the volume of drugs trafficked in the territory (Espinosa, 2009). This occurs because the underlying assumption is that governmental entities can usually capture only up to 20% of the total amount of drug circulating (Rivera & Torres, 2011). It is also important to highlight that the percentage of drug internal consumption has proliferated as well (Falconí, 2017), signifying a 200.000 USD and 400.000 USD dollars a month in the capital, Quito, in micro-trafficking (Gherardy, 2016).

The presence of criminal groups in Ecuador results from the strengthening of the mechanisms adopted by the Colombian Government to reduce the violence of its historical internal conflict and the feeble presence government in the northern region (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015). The Ecuadorian policy has adopted for many years a prohibitionist approach (Bonilla y Moreano, 2009); consequently, there has been strong pressure to reduce the level of violence and the presence of illicit groups that has been materialized in the Integral Security Plan on 2012-2013 (in Erazo, 2016) (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015). The narco-trafficking groups have infiltrated and corrupted bureaucrats, law enforcement officials, military forces, customs and borderline agents, private companies and the judicial system, reason why this policy plan among other policies target the most representative phenomena of transnational organized crime in the country (Rivera & Torres, 2011). The new approach in this policy leaves aside the former tactics and aims to introduce a concept of integral security, preventive diplomacy and collective security to improve the human welfare Security Plan on 2012-2013 (Erazo, 2016). The main objectives are to limit the poverty, inequalities and social execution in the northern provinces of the country paying special attention to narco-trafficking and related activities.

Drugs are the source of illegal profits that are laundered into the Ecuadorian legal economy through government corruption, the construction sector, tax avoidance, illegal mining, gold smuggling, cash smuggling, and transnational commercial activities with neighboring countries (United States Department of State, 2018); which shows that the policies applied by the government so far have been insufficient (Rivera & Torres, 2011).

2.2. Enablers for Narco-trafficking

The geographic location of Ecuador, between the two largest coca producers in the world, is certainly one of the most important reasons why the country is exposed to narco-trafficking (Espinosa, 2009). Nonetheless, there are further conditions that influence the presence of criminal activity, including: political, economic and social.

2.2.1. Political

As explained in the previous chapter, corruption is often present in countries where criminal activities are carried out; Ecuador is not the exception. According to the World Justice Project's 2017-2018, in the Rule of Law category, Ecuador is one of the most corrupted countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as one with the weakest criminal justice system (Insight Crime, 2018). As quoted by Gherardy, The Heritage Foundation in 2015 considered that in Ecuador impunity, judicial discretion, fragmented anticorruption policies, collusion flourished, in addition to dissociation between grave corruption offenses and light sanctions in the legal framework. Likewise, he mentions that, Amnesty International ranked the country in the 110th position out of 175 of the Corruption Perception Index in 2014. All these elements together provide a low-risk environment for illicit activities to develop.

Once international criminal organizations infiltrate the institutions in the country they produce: a diminished quality of governance, an increased the level of violence, and reduced the trust of citizens in a process of democratic consolidation (Gherardy, 2016). Despite these effects, the subject of narco-traffic has been for long relegated from the political agenda, reducing the population awareness of the issue and its impacts, which has allowed governments to continue to coordinate activities with illicit groups including: the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Mexican drug cartels working on Ecuadorian

territory (Espinosa, 2009). Notable examples are the scandals of former President Rafael Correa regarding corruption and unprecedented accusations about his first Presidential campaign in 2006 being heavily financed by money coming from drug-trafficking activities of FARC. Even if this information was corroborated in a video where the second-in-command of the criminal group and on documents found after a bombing in a FARC base camp, the former government denied all allegations and got minimal attention from the media (Gherardy, 2016).

Nonetheless, corruption at a high level is not as determinant as the involvement of middle and low-ranking officials of military and police forces in the illicit activities related to narco-trafficking. The connections that FARC has in Ecuadorian territories near the borderline with Colombia should not be under-estimated because it is with this help that precursory material and coca base is moved around the northern provinces of Ecuador, to then export it to foreign markets (Espinosa, 2009). Well-known incidents include the arrest of 18 policemen, many of them senior officers, in September and October 2014 because of their involvement in international trafficking activities. The first arrest involved a colonel formerly leading INTERPOL in Ecuador while the second arrest stroke for its large volume: 250 kilos of drugs that the policemen were aiming to counter-fight to Europe (Gherardy, 2016).

In 2000, the Ecuadorian position towards the internal conflict in Colombia was established as neutral and adopted a tradition of continuous disagreement on the threat that FARC posed to the region (Marcella, 2008). As a consequence, cooperation between these two countries was limited or inexistent, which diffculted conflict resolution in the logic of modern geopolitics. However, it is important to highlight that there are political reasons that have impede the rapid spread of large organized crime groups linked to narco-trafficking or insurgent groups from within the Ecuadorian territory. Two main reasons are recognized as key elements. Firstly, a minimum governmental presence throughout the territory is recognized to impede the development of completely isolated communities in the places distant from the capital and other large cities. What is more, the tense bilateral Peruvian-Ecuadorian relations that lasted until the mid-90s implied a highly militarized borderline between the two countries, impeding the development of coca plantations in the southern region (Rivera & Torres, 2011). Second, the intransigent policies developed by former President León Febres Cordero that annihilated the urban guerrilla known as Alfaró Vive Carajo between 1984 and 1988 and prevented it from expanding in the rest of the territory (Andrade, 1995). Nonetheless, during the Correa Administration the government did not classified FARC as a terrorist group, which provided

them with some level of political support and thus, fueled a potential external threat (Marcella, 2008).

2.2.2. Economic

There are also economic reasons why the country is a hub for narco-terrorist related activities to develop. Firstly, the lower living conditions in bordering provinces compared to other provinces in the country. While in the rest of the country the poverty incidence in 2010 was 25%, in Esmeraldas (in the coast), Carchi (in the highlands) and Sucumbíos (in the rainforest jungle) have poverty of 50%, 40% and 52%, respectively (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015). The lack of other economic activities and the limited governmental presence in such regions may largely explain the involvement of their population in illicit activities as an alternative source of income (Rivera & Torres, 2011). The latest data of 2017 shows a nationwide 21.5% of the population living under the poverty line (CIA Factbook, 2017). Coca plantation remains a very marginal activity in very remote places of the borderline with Colombia, Ecuadorian population appears to be more involved in the provision of precursor material like “white gasoline” and other dual-purpose chemicals or the transit of finished cocaine packages to export. The reason for almost inexistent plantation areas can be found in the use of the territories with appropriate climate conditions for coca to be exploited for oil since the 1970s (Rivera & Torres, 2011), which populated, modernized and provided law enforcement presence in these territories.

Secondly, as a dollarized economy, Ecuador facilitates money laundering and transactions for criminal activities (Gherardy, 2016). The large amounts of financial resources - resulting from drug-related activities - are already in dollars, which does not raise any prior first suspicion from the regulatory agencies as it would be the case in a country where the money would needed to be converted from the national currency to an international one. This condition helps to create front businesses and other investments to launder the money into the legal economy, by 2011 it was estimated that around 4% of Ecuadorians GDP (USD 3 billion) came from illegal sources (Gherardy, 2016). A number that has only increased according to the data regarding the volume of cocaine trafficked in the country.

2.2.3. Social

In Ecuador, contrary to Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, the traditional use of coca leaves as part of medicinal rituals and other ceremonies was extinguished around the XVII century by the Jesuit priests that invested in sugar cane plantations, replacing the coca territories (Espinosa, 2009). In the more recent history, Ecuadorian farmers have focused themselves into the production of cacao, bananas, potatoes, rice, corn, cassava and other products to have income while their counterparts on the other side of the border in Colombia didn't have enough government-sponsored development projects, which lead them to develop the coca plantation.

Regarding the spill over from the trafficking and terrorist activities of FARC in Colombia and the Shining Path in Peru, the effects in Ecuador have not been generalized to be considered a national threat (Rivera & Torres, 2011). Even if various generations of Ecuadorians, especially in the bordering provinces bordering provinces, have interacted with traffickers, contrabandists and high levels of law-breaking; there is thought that the Army Forces have a historical prestige and legitimacy and are able to manage any threat without getting involved corruption scandals (Marcella, 2008). This belief has downsized after recent declarations that have taken place in the U.S. vs Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman trial, have pointed out involvement of the Army Forces in the trafficking routes (Feuer, 2018) (Pallares, 4 Pelagatos, 2018).

A third point to consider is the strength of the sanctions or lack of it for activities related to narco-trafficking. The cost-benefit analysis for criminal organizations that want to operate in Ecuador seems to be positive because the Ecuadorian law tends to provide harder sanctions to micro-trafficking than to the large organized group leaders (Rivera & Torres, 2011). Moreover, the attempts of the Rafael Correa administration to reduce the persecution to consumers and pose them as victims of a failing health system, have been insufficient. In 2015 the government opened 15 public rehabilitation centers, two of which were dedicated to drug addiction; supply that falls short when compared to the more than 100 private centers distributed throughout the whole country but that result too expensive for the poorest consumers that are unable to recover (Gherardy, 2016). The combination of limited public rehabilitation institutions combined with high exposure to organized crime in the poorest sections of society, strengthens the presence and some level of social acceptance of illegal operations in the

territory. In general, the Ecuadorian population has taken an indifferent position towards the Colombian internal conflict, creating profound misunderstanding and lack of empathy between the two neighboring countries (Marcella, 2008).

2.3. Historical Review Counter-Narcotic Policies

The following sections aims to review the origins of the counter-narcotic policies in Ecuador as well as the experiences that Ecuadorian governments have had with rebel or terrorist groups. Such retrospective is vital for this academic work because it will allow to identify what initiatives have already taken place in the territory and what was their result. The following chart highlights the main periods that will described throughout the section.



2.3.1. From 1980's to 2006

As many other countries, Ecuadorian counter-narcotic policy is the result of the creation of the International Opium Commission (Andrade, 1995). In 1916, the “Opium Control” Act was created and extended its control in activities of import, sale, consumption and derivatives. In 1924, other psychotropic substances like poppy seeds and coca leaves were added to the list of controlled substances (Falconí, 2017). By the 1950s the country had a prohibitionist legal framework that caught up rapidly with the United Nation initiatives to control all stupeficient substances and to restrain the production and traffic of such substances (Rosen,

2015, p. 11). In the 1970s the Ecuadorian law focused in persecuting all activities related to these substances, including its possession and consumption (Falconí, 2017).

The decade of the 1980s was characterized by the assumption that Ecuador was an “island of peace” (Andrade, 1995). This status enabled a double policy reaction. On the one hand, the Ecuadorian government created a series of institutions to carry out its prohibitionist policy goals. On the other hand, the sanctions to those involved in cultivation, production and trafficking of drugs were increased to extreme levels in the name of keeping peace in the territory as a matter of national security (Falconí, 2017; Andrade, 1995). The very questionable methods of law enforcement included reduction of guarantees for the criminal proceedings like denying the possibility of bail in contrast to previous criminal codes. Much change was made when the President at the time -belonging to the Democratic Leftist Party- became tolerant towards drug trafficking and started considering it a public health issue (Gherardy, 2016).

In general terms the Ecuadorian counter-narcotics policy followed the U.S. lead, the peak of such influence materialized in 1991 when the Law of Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was passed in the Congress. Also known as Law 108, this legal framework paraphrased the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic of Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and supposed very strict penalties to those involved in activities related to drug growing and production. Finally, in 1999 during the Jamil Mahuad Administration, Ecuador signed an agreement that allowed the American government to settle an aerial military base in the coastal city of Manta as key point to intensify the militarized actions against drug production and narco-trafficking activities (Falconí, 2017). The American counter-narcotics strategy used the Manta Air Force as part of a larger strategy in the region to combat narco-trafficking. (Gherardy, 2016). Until 2006, during the Noboa and Gutierrez Administrations, Ecuador was an avid receiver of US funding to fight narco-trafficking in the region and it was considered a valuable ally that actively carried out joint operations to destroy illicit crops. Between 1996 and 2004 the United States increased its aid from USD 3 million and USD 42 million, to train the Ecuadorian police, impulse stronger criminalization laws and increase consciousness regarding the drug problematic grew in the national and regional politics (Gherardy, 2016).

2.3.2. From 2007 to 2017: Rafael Correa's Regime

After a period of political instability, Rafael Correa comes to power aiming to distance Ecuadorian politics, including the drug-trafficking problematic, independently from the U.S. influence (Gherardy, 2016). Bilateral relations and the overall counter-narcotics strategy were heavily impacted when in 2009 Correa terminated the occupation agreement of the Air Force Base in Manta (Marcella, 2008). Rafael Correa will ultimately last ten years in power and would radically change the former dynamics of the country regarding narco-trafficking and organized crime. The first issue to note is that since 2008, the Ecuadorian Constitution talks about “integral security” as a concept in the context of counter-narcotics policy. The second matter to radically modify this policy issue is that the Constitution also highlights that addictions are an issue of public health.

Even if at first Correa declared a strict control to any crossing of FARC into Ecuadorian territory would be responded with military operations, which was well received by Colombia and the United States, the actions proved to be less consistent and even complicit with the armed group (Marcella, 2008). According to the Colombian newspaper “El Tiempo” (in Marcella, 2008), the national intelligence and the Department of Administrative Security would inform Latin American countries of the presence of FARC in their territories. While Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela would actively perform on such information; it is said that 80% of times that Ecuadorian government was informed the answers would be evasive and the actions would be very limited (Marcella, 2008). The inconsistency of the Ecuadorian posture towards FARC that was perceived by many as support, created distrust between the two neighboring countries to the point of unwrapping a diplomatic crisis in 2008, at the time when Plan Colombia was having a remarkable success. Plan Colombia started in 1988 as the strategy to fight the narco-trafficking and the violence produced by terrorist-like activities through: destruction of the production and processing sites of cocaine by aerial spraying, manual eradication, strict control of chemicals and capture of shipments; which was followed by peace negotiations in Cuba and a Peace Agreement in 2015 (Moulin, 2016; Marcella, 2008). Plan Colombia sprayed 128 thousand hectares of coca plantations every year between 2001 and 2007, one third of which were territories located in the departments of Putumayo and Nariño, borders with Ecuador (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015). Due to such great success, FARC installed many quasi-permanent camps in Ecuadorian territory and in many

occasions Colombian military forces would cross the border in pursuit of these criminals. Ecuadorian and Colombian Foreign Ministers could not settle on an established response to these incursions, perpetuating their mutual distrust (Marcella, 2008). Finally, on the 1st of March 2007 the Colombian three Colombian airplanes bombed a FARC camp located in Angostura, 1.8 km into the Ecuadorian territory killing a FARC leader and 24 other people from different Latin American countries (Marcella, 2008). The Ecuadorian government could not even detect the airplanes on time and were informed afterwards of the trespassing, it was heavily condemned as an attack to Ecuadorian sovereignty and unleashed the diplomatic crisis. The Colombian authorities argued that it was a “hot-pursuit” and that was the reason why they only informed of the operation after it was carried out, but many consider that the Ecuadorian government was purposefully not informed because of the lacking trust between the two governments. Considering that for long time Rafael Correa as well as former President Hugo Chávez campaigned internationally to modify the status of FARC from a terrorist group to an insurgent group, such suspiciousness was not unfounded. The Angostura bombing had a large impact on Ecuadorian imaginary because it proved how weak were the security forces in the borderline, lack of coordination with the neighbor country and the limited military capability that the country had (Marcella, 2008). During a Summit of the Organization of American States of March 17th of that year, the international community rejected the Colombian incursion based on the Westphalian principle of sovereignty, but it didn’t condemn the Colombian motive. On the contrary, the resolution would call for the countries commitment to fight irregular groups (Marcella, 2008). The Colombo-Ecuadorian relations became very tense when a video and an audio of FARC leaders declaring their financial support to Rafael Correa’s campaign became public and the Colombian president at the time, Álvaro Uribe, exposed such connections in the Presidential Summit of 2008 in the Dominican Republic (Pallares, 4 Pelagatos, 2018). The Ecuadorian reaction was of victimization, explaining that the Ecuadorian attempt to carry out an independent policy from the United States has convert Ecuador into a target of the strong Colombian State and the American support (Marcella, 2008).

The success of Plan Colombia meant also higher number of displaced people looking for asylum in Ecuador and the impoverishment of the territories near the northern border. According to the Defense Minister at the time, General Oswaldo Jarrín, these conditions created general disappointment among the population, which emphasized the dependency of local population in FARC and the conditions of ungovernability and violence in the region (Marcella, 2008). Consequently, a Plan Ecuador was created to materialize the “integral security” provided

in the Constitution (Gherardy, 2016). The strategy aimed to mirror Plan Colombia by promoting security, economic development and justice in the vulnerable territories by creating incentives for the people to get involved in economic activities different from those related to FARC and narco-trafficking (Marcella, 2008). The idea was to weaken the negative effects of Plan Colombia on the Ecuadorian territory through three main policy goals:

1. Create a culture of peace based on fulfilling needs, developing capabilities and potentializing freedoms to consolidate security;
2. Build Foreign Policy based on equitable and supportive relations between States;
3. Establish a defense strategy that considers the protection of the people, the natural resources and effective control of territory (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015)

Based on Plan Ecuador, the government avoided a neorealist military response to the narco-trafficking phenomenon and developed a preventive diplomacy, addressed development from a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approach, and enhanced a nation building process (Marcella, 2008; Fernández & Pazzona, 2015).

Even if the initiative did not present vast success upon its instauration, Ecuador made immense efforts to increase the military presence in the bordering provinces (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015), designating around 11% of its military and police forces to these territories comparing to the mere 2% that Colombia allocated on their side (Marcella, 2008). Around \$22.5 million between 2011 and 2012 were invested in the northern provinces (Gherardy, 2016), but Ecuador remains a transit country for precursor chemicals, drugs, illegal weapons and a destine to laundry money (Marcella, 2008). Nonetheless, the sympathetic actions that the regime of Correa had with FARC, created an even more advantageous environment for this group to consolidate in the territory. The increased presence of FARC is corroborated by the increased amount of cocaine seizures taking place in the country, from 61.63 tons in 2014 to 48.5 tons in the first six months of 2015 (Gherardy, 2016).

2.3.3. Latest Events

In May 2017, Lenin Moreno comes to power. Having acted as vice-president during Rafael Correa's first administration, he was expected to maintain the same political trend with a revised and friendlier approach (Human Rights Watch, 2018). This assumption did not last

long because Moreno started to show distance from the policy-making of the previous regime, which gain him much support during his firsts months in office (Brittel, 2018). Soon, President Moreno was confronted with a series of unexpected issues like the fragile economy, political reconfiguration of its party and aggravated situation of violence in the northern of Ecuador. In this context, on 27th January 2018, Ecuador woke up to an unprecedented car bomb attack next to a police station in one of the towns near the northern border of the country. The police highlights that the town of San Lorenzo is a “hot” zone due to the flow of drug, weapons and fuel trafficked to irregular groups in Colombia. According to the authorities this event was a retaliation coming from these criminal groups because of the strengthened law enforcement activities in the field of counter-narcotics (Sharkey, 2018). As newspaper “El Comercio” (2018) describes, during the previous 24 months 25 tons of cocaine were seized only in province of Esmeraldas and the threats of a possible attack were spread in the town in advance to the events (El Comercio, 2018). The group to which the attack was attributed is led by a man named Walter Arisala Vernaza, who was part of FARC for the last 10 years and now it commands his own criminal group with other 50 people that wanted to distance themselves from the Colombian peace process (Sharkey, 2018).

Even if a violent environment has been present in the borderline territories and well-documented for the last 20 years, the violence that has occurred over the past year in Ecuador’s northern border region materialized in bombings, unjustified attacks and threats is unprecedented and met the government unprepared. Among the series of attacks in other small peripheral towns that killed Ecuadorian Marines and left hundreds of civilians injured, the kidnapping of two journalists and their driver in San Lorenzo on April 13th, which ended in their murder two weeks later, stupefied the country, the government and drew attention of the international community (Sharkey, 2018; El Comercio, 2018). The journalistic team was kidnapped and used as element to negotiate with the government. Their objective was the liberation of three men associated with the Oliver Sinisterra Front, a group formed by FARC dissidents and related to narco-trafficking activities (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Such negotiations were unfruitful for both sides and resulted in the death of these three people and two other civilians some days later.

The actions were rapidly condemned and labeled “terrorist” by the Ecuadorian government. Thus, operations were strengthened in the northern region with combined force operations -involving police and army forces- but it was clear that the lack of investment and

the debilitated State capacities weren't able to match those of the criminal groups (Sharkey, 2018), who have a better knowledge of the territory and can silence the population (El Comercio, 2018). The actions have diversified, and the government has started to cooperate with Colombia since February 2018 (El Comercio, 2018) and with the United States in the security issue, something that was unthinkable during the last ten years in the foreign policy of the country (Brittel, 2018). During the last months of the Presidency of Juan Manuel Santos in Colombia before Iván Duque took office in August 2018, the operations to control the criminal organizations and their influence in the departments where coca is grown were powerful and coordinated with the Ecuadorian government, but further long-term solutions remain to be seen because there are at least other six dissident groups in the territory (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

After the Agreement was signed in 2016 with the Colombian government, the FARC dissidents no longer have a strong structure to follow (Alarcón, 2018), are detached from the ideological goals that once dominated them (Medina, 2018), are migrating closer to the Ecuadorian border (Fernández & Pazzona, 2015) and are keeping the lucrative business and alliances with drug cartels (Sharkey, 2018). This context certainly challenges the traditional Westphalian system and international order around which the Ecuadorian security forces have worked for long. Furthermore, the protagonism that was given to the leader of this group clearly overlooks the fact that in this type of organizations there is always a new leader that will take the control if the current is captured (Acosta, 2018; Sharkey, 2018).

3. Scenarios and Strategies

To organize and process the information gathered, this thesis has chosen the creative thinking scenario logic as methodology. The following sections will firstly explain the logic of the method and will lead the reader through the stages required to develop scenarios. Secondly, four scenarios will be presented based on the uncertainties identified in the previous section. Thirdly, the most likely and desirable scenario will be chosen, and a strategy will be presented to achieve it.

3.1. Creative Thinking Scenario Methodology

According to Kahn and Wiener (1967, in Lobo, Costa, Nogueira, Antunes, & António, 2005), scenarios are “hypothetical sequences of events constructed for the purpose of focusing attention on causal processes and decision points”. The proposition of scenarios is a method intended to point out risks and opportunities of strategic decisions in a plausible future situation (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010). Scenarios differentiate themselves from forecasts, prognoses and predictions (European Commission, 2006) because instead of focusing on a single extrapolation of past trends, they imply intense portrayals that include uncertain drivers and expand understanding of a complex situation in the future (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010). In this context, scenarios are a process that facilitates decision making in a wide range of fields, including the public sector (Volkery & Ribeiro, 2009). It is rooted in a deep understanding of the environment where the political decisions will take place, delivering as output a set of plausible, internally consistent and coherent settings that focus on the most influential elements and have some decision-making utility (European Commission, 2006).

3.1.1. Timeframe

Scenarios are there to help identify policy options in the context of long-term uncertainties, risks and opportunities. Furthermore, the definition of a timeframe is an important aspect to take into account because a scenario can only be created for plausible events in the middle-long future. To illustrate this array of possibilities, the image below showcases the best points to work as scenarios.

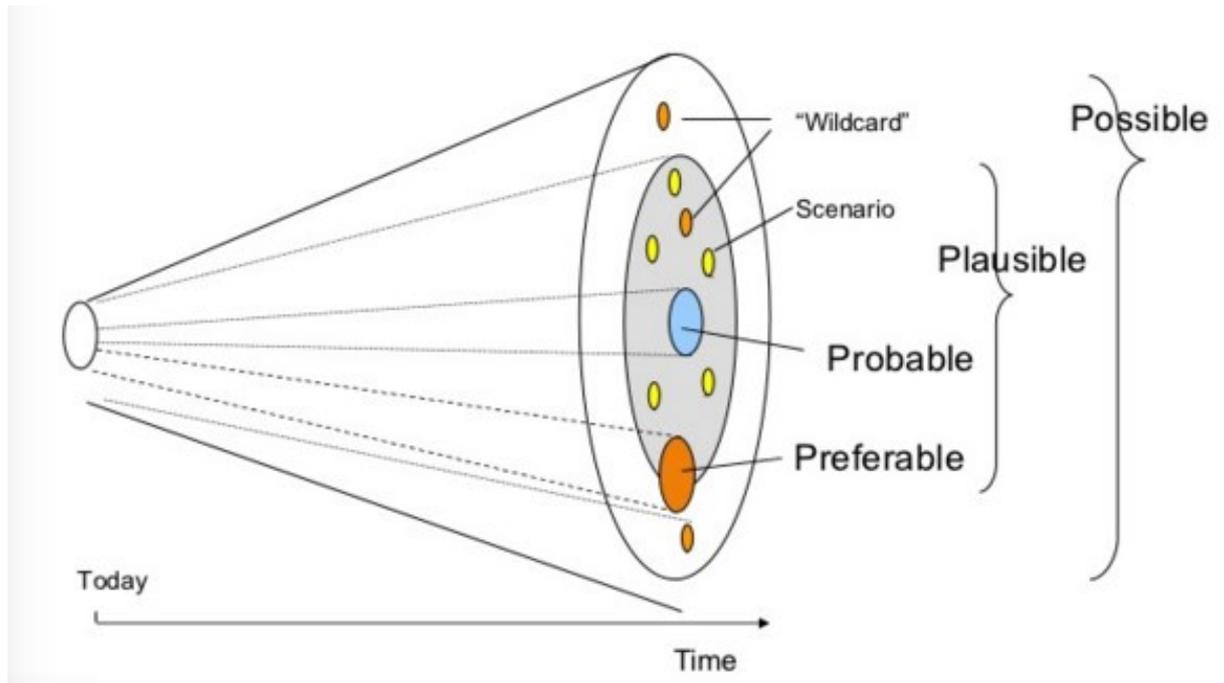


Image 2 Timeframe and Futures for Scenario-Making (Conway, 2007)

As the graphic shows, on the one hand, the exclusively probable scenarios are discarded from the array of analysis because they can be explored through prediction tools given by qualitative methods. On the other hand, the events that are on the opposite situation and are remotely likely to happen are also excluded from the development of scenarios. If one of these situations turns out to be unlikely but it would have a very important impact, then it is identified as a wildcat. The ideal points in the future to develop scenarios are those for which are plausible and represent a mid-point between what is predictable and what is unexpected (Van der Heijden, 2005) because only then the richness of qualitative data that has been collected is significant and can be included (European Commission, 2006). As to include the sufficient information to develop scenario planning, research should include micro and macro-environment data. The idea is to enable the incentives, beliefs and comporment of the main actors to be exposed in the description of each scenario (Van der Heijden, 2005).

In the case of Ecuador in the context of emerging narco-terrorism, the actors that have been identified are the government and it's different branches, the military and police forces, the population in the northern provinces of Ecuador, the people involved in trafficking throughout the country, the Colombian terrorist groups FARC, other rebel groups resulting from the Colombian Peace Accords, drug cartel leaders and members in Colombia and Mexico,

consumers in final markets. Furthermore, the timeframe chosen for the scenarios will be three years from now, i.e. 2022. Since elections will be held in Ecuador in 2021, the period until then will allow the current government to set the path for the type of policy that the next government will decide to continue or modify.

3.1.2. Focal Issue, Driving Forces

The very first step to begin with the scenario is to define the “focal issue” which is considering the general question and defining the focus that the scenarios will have (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010). For this thesis the focal issue is the understanding of Ecuador in the context of the phenomenon of narco-terrorism that had recently taken the new brinks. The creative scenario building enables the policy-makers to ask themselves questions beginning with “what if”, to then articulate preferable futures that will be the direction to which the formal decision-making process of policy will lead. In this case, the scenarios are going to be used to simulate the impact of different policy decisions concerning the driving forces.

Secondly, the driving forces need to be identified. These are decisive factors that can modify the course of events and need to be considered to understand the unfolding of alternatives as well as the possible actions that can be taken to boost or hamper those driving forces (European Commission, 2006; Lobo, Costa, Nogueira, Antunes, & António, 2005). These forces should be considered in the micro and the macro-level; the former have straight-forward influence on the issue, and the latter are global circumstances. The forces to be analyzed are social, technological, political, economic and environmental, among others that can be specific to the issue.

The main driving forces in the micro-level for the issue of narco-terrorism in Ecuador are described in the sub-chapters concerning enablers for narco-terrorism, that include: generalized corruption in the public sector, a weak judicial system that allows impunity, poverty as a motivation to get involved in illegal activities, lack of cooperation with Colombia to manage the post-conflict environment, weak governmental presence in the territories. Additionally, the types of policies that Ecuador used to tackle the phenomenon are substantial to determine possible future conditions. The micro-level forces concerning the other main actors (narco-traffickers and rebel groups) is the type of interaction between them, the level of

integration of the supply chain of cocaine and the decision between having a low profile or send highly mediatic messages to government to maintain power of narco-terrorist operations. Finally, at the macro-level, market forces like consumption levels in final markets and the prices of cocaine in the market are important to consider. Additionally, the counter-narcotics policies applied by other countries potentially affect the scenarios through conditions such as the balloon effect, discussed previously in the first chapter of this thesis.

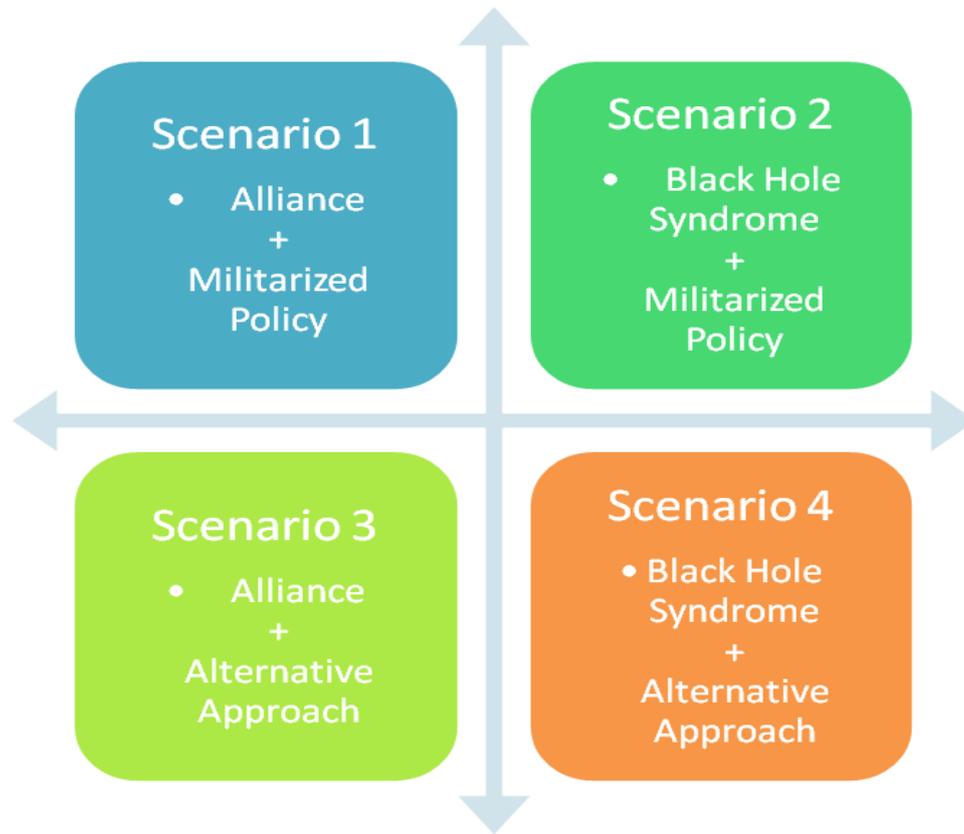
3.1.3. Uncertainties

The following step in the process of creative scenario planning is to rank the driving forces according to their how influential they are in the evolution of the future and their level of uncertainty (European Commission, 2006). The objective is to identify the driving forces that pose a level of uncertainty from those that seem to have a predictable evolution and rank the importance of the uncertainties (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010). The “high importance” – “low uncertainty” are situations for which regular preparation and other strategic planning tools should already create policies. On the contrary, highly “important” and highly “uncertain” forces are the prospective elements to take into account for a longer-term scenario planning (European Commission, 2006). The objective of this step is to identify the two main forces that will represent the axes along which the scenarios can be constructed. Also, the driving forces that can cluster other forces should be prioritized when evaluating their importance. A wildcard - an event that is unlikely to happen but would have large effects on the future scenario- is the development of Ecuadorian rebel groups, who will directly deal with the larger cartels and create their own political goals, making all scenarios a Black Hole Syndrome situation. Nonetheless, there are no indicators that any political motivated rebel groups will develop in the territory.

Driving Force	Importance	Uncertainty
Levels of corruption in the public sector	High	Low
Indicators of weak judicial system, high impunity	High	Low
Isolationist foreign policy, reduced cooperation in the region	Mid	Mid
Weak governmental presence in the borderline territories	High	Mid
Level of convergence between narco-trafficking and terrorism	High	High
Level of integration of the supply chain of cocaine	Mid	Mid
Governmental approach to transnational threats	High	High
Rise of new terrorist organizations in the region	Mid	Low
Consumption levels in final markets	High	Low
Steady prices of cocaine in the market	Mid	Low
International trend on counter-narcotics policies	High	Mid

Table 1: Evaluation of Driving Forces

In the context of the situation this thesis currently studies, the table above highlights the most important driving forces that were identified by the researcher and were often mentioned by the authors and references. It is clear that in terms of the threat, the most important and most uncertain driving factor is the level of convergence of these to criminal organizations. Furthermore, the elements that involve Ecuador can be highly influenced by the general governmental approach to the main threat. This makes the type of policy the second axis. The international trend of counter-narcotics is a general macro-trend that influences the general context of the narco-terrorist situation but since it is not within the capacity of the Ecuadorian State to manage, it will be an element with which the axis will deal with in the scenarios. In summary, the X axis will be the level of convergence that narco-traffic and terrorism have, based on the model proposed by Makarenko and explained in the very first chapter of this thesis, considering alliance on the one end of the axis and Black Hole Syndrome in the opposite end. On the Y axis the governmental approach will be reflected, going from a militarized approach to a development/alternative human centered approach.



3.2. Scenarios

After defining the main axis, the scenario involves the qualitative description of the situations, narrating the effects of the coexistence of the driving forces (Lobo, Costa, Nogueira, Antunes, & António, 2005). The characterization of each alternative must be internally consistent and should be able to answer the question of “what if” plausible hypotheses were to happen. Based on the previous research, the consulted expert’s opinions and indicators, these scenarios should depict desirable and undesirable futures towards which the strategies will work to prevent or enhance based (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010).

According to the explanatory document of the European Commission (2006), even if the creative-thinking scenario methodology allows a broader set of assumptions and conditions to consider, the scenarios must fulfill five basic characteristics:

1. **Plausibility:** the future described is within the parameters of what might credibly happen.
2. **Differentiation:** each scenario should be structurally different from the other, so that they do not become variations of one single future situation.
3. **Consistency:** the logic behind each scenario cannot include a built-in contradiction.

4. Decision making utility: each plausible future that is described ought to contribute with specific insights that will facilitate the decision-making process.
5. Challenge: each scenario should prompt an untraditional perspective to the regular organizational perspective.

The scenarios should as well have: a memorable title that sufficiently describes the essence of such future; a compelling story line that explains how events might evolve in the selected time-frame and the logics behind them.

3.2.1. Scenario 1: The Realist State VS the Anomalous Threat

The monopoly of use of force remains in the possession of the Ecuadorian State. Thus, in this scenario the government invests money on improving equipment and training its army and police forces. The division between police and army is clear, maintaining a classic Westphalian State model. The military forces in this case are in charge of the duty of protecting the borders, through which the drug is trafficked but once the drug is within the borders it becomes a matter dealt by the police. Responsibilities are clear and the threat of terrorism linked to narco-trafficking is of exclusive responsibility of the police. In this case, the law enforcement agencies work hand by hand, but counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism do not become one in a whole because it is understood that these are two different phenomena that will share practices but will be produced under different circumstances. In general, there is a good understanding of the two threats and their opportunistic alliances, but they are both seen as external threats in the system that need to be eliminated. In this case the concept of “narco-terrorism” remains as it was originally used in the 1980s, where the core crime is drug-related, and terror is just a complement used eventually to restore power if the business.

Whereas the levels of poverty don't see changes, a well-introduced law-enforcement policy might raise the feeling of security among the population in the northern regions of Ecuador and other cities. The presence of the law enforcement forces is concentrated in the populated areas while the military forces work on the borders with easy access; Ecuador still lacks capabilities to have full control of the areas with difficult access. Corruption in this context is still a problem, the government will need to develop strategies to impede defense and security forces from getting involved in the activities they are supposed to fight. Given that this scenario

follows the military logic, a system of strong sanctions to the military men and police involved so far in corruption scandals is implemented; as well as rewards and promotions to those with good behavior. This doesn't eliminate the issue anyway. Deputation of other powers of the State do not fall directly in the field of influence of the counter-narcotics and counter-terrorist policy, though they might occur within a larger anti-corruption policy if the State recognizes that loop in the system. On the contrary, foreign policy in security matters is affected. The 10-year isolation is broken and Ecuador coordinates action and shares information with Colombian intelligence and military forces. Nonetheless, the approach remains only in the level of coordination.

On the other side, the criminal groups clearly differentiate themselves, drug traffickers from politically motivated terrorists. The drug business is still run by large cartels abroad, they hire people to provide them with specific services that help the business to succeed. These jobs are given to Ecuadorian civilians in the northern provinces and those with access to mechanisms to move the drug out of the country. Independently of what happens with the Colombian Peace Agreement, the drug cartels look to settle crops in the isolated territories between Ecuador and Colombia to maintain a low profile but hire former guerilla men to carry out activities aiming to produce terror when necessary. These arrangements are very specific and are produced only when the cartels fear that the Ecuadorian government is altering the terms of a tacit agreement where the drug can pass through the isolated territories to reach the final markets as long as the perceived level of violence in the territory does not rise.

3.2.2. Scenario 2: Fight Violence with Violence

In this context there is an actual dispute between the State and the criminal groups over the effective exercise of power and monopoly of force in certain northern territories. As the Ecuadorian State is following a classical Westphalian logic of power and force, the fact that another actor is de facto taking over territory implies an existential threat to the State and thus, it has to be eliminated. The responsibilities of police forces and military forces, inside and outside threats, are still clearly separated but they work closer because the threat of narco-terrorism is one in a whole. They act more violently and sturdily against this type of threat than against any other security menace because this one alters directly the sovereignty of the State. In this scenario the threat is understood as one organization with various different objectives,

political and monetary but the term “narco-terrorism” differs from other uses. In this case the use of “terror” in the concept is used to justify State actions such as increased use of force, state of emergency in specific territories, shortened trials to criminals, and other actions that can at times be at the edge of international law and human rights (norms? Or other synonym to add).

In this scenario poverty in the most northern regions is not reduced. Furthermore, the level of violence increases due to the brutality used to fight narco-traffic and the feeling of security throughout the country is ambivalent. Any civilian can be persecuted by crimes related to narco-terrorism and the citizens do not feel protected by their own State. The same treatment is applied to the military and police forces that are involved in collusion with organized crime groups. The sanctions to the State forces in this scenario are not only used as exemplary but they are true means to avoid criminal groups exercising real power of the State. Still, this doesn't mean that corruption disappears, it morphs to be less perceived by the population. Foreign policy in this scenario is cooperative with those States that share a militarized approach to counter-narcotics. In this context, the Ecuadorian State creates alliances with other States influenced by realism.

The criminal groups in this case are merged into one organization with equally important monetary and political motivations. The political capital for the narco-terrorism in this case is large because it occupies the power vacuum that government left with its lack of presence in the territory. The level of integration in the supply chain of cocaine production is very high. This high level of integration is explained because distant behaviors (terrorism) from the core activity (drug trafficking) cannot be reached before the specialization in the whole core process. In other words, one cannot experiment in new activities without having mastered the main one. This merger represents jobs for the civil population, who become involved in illicit activities as a source of economic income and defense of political objectives. Consequently, the loyalty of the population in certain territories responds to criminal groups. The aggressive approach of the State against narco-terrorism threats provides motivation to reproduce violent action. Citizens see in organized crime groups hopes for better life standards and tolerate or even participate in activities to support criminal groups. The extreme poverty does not disappear, but the feeling of cash flow increases in the country due to money laundering in the whole country.

3.2.3. Scenario 3: Debilitate the Threat by Fixing the Building Blocks

In this scenario the level of interaction between narco-trafficking groups and rebel groups is sporadic. The State here, drives away from the classical Westphalian State and understands that due to the complexity of the geography and the transnational connections that characterize criminal groups, the static rigid State cannot provide an accurate solution.

The threat is now understood as the result of internal and external conditions that lead civilians to engage in illicit activities. Therefore, the military forces and police forces participate hand in hand with other governmental institutions to prevent criminal groups to spread, fight their effects if they are already installed in a territory and keep that peace and feeling of security in the long term. In this context the security forces share responsibilities in a combined unit directed to fight narco-terrorism by sharing intelligence information gathered by the police and acting on the capacity that the military forces can provide. In this way, the issue of security is confronted. Furthermore, governmental institutions depending on the Executive Power, Ministries and General Directions, help to implement preventive policies. In this case, the issue of poverty prevails as one of the most important enables for narco-terrorist activities to spread. Therefore, presence of governmental agencies in the territory, promoting work opportunities and allowing farmers and countryside population to reach more populous areas with their products increases the feeling of belonging in the State of this sector of society. In this scenario, organized crime groups face real impediments to pass through Ecuadorian territory, in comparison to other scenarios. The social fabric begins to be repaired in the north of the country and other -previously affected- regions with the objective to make narco-terrorist incident very isolated events that are condemned by society. In this scenario narco-terrorism is not extinguished but the level of convergence of these two activities remains to the minimum. This internal approach is complemented with a cooperation action against transnational threats in the region, that enables governments to pose a real menace to illicit activities. This is evidence in the fact that there are fewer terror events and the narco-trafficking needs to re-think how to break the newly founded feeling of belonging.

3.2.4. Scenario 4: A Weak Hand to Slap a Strong Threat

In this scenario the threat is one with political and monetary interests, this allows the criminal groups to take de facto possession of the territories that can benefit them to transport drugs to the final markets. Nonetheless, the political capital they enjoy is wide but not solid because of government attempts to increase its presence in the territories. This is the scenario in which the government is solidly investing to fix the underlying causes of narco-terrorism, but the organized crime money manages to outbalance these attempts.

The States understands the threat as a combined entity and, as such, it focused in the similarities that terrorist and narco-trafficking activities have. Consequently, military forces and police forces cooperate. Nonetheless, this cooperation does not reach the point of a unified unit because the high levels of violence that the narco-terrorism can display make the forces want to remain as dispersed as possible. The institutions dependent on the Executive power have as priority to develop the northern areas of the country by providing these populations with basic services; the efforts are not sufficient because the potential violence impedes effective actions. In Foreign Policy terms there is a call for international cooperation to help Ecuadorian government to fight this threat, the initiative is backed up but is a hard task to confront.

On the side of the criminal groups, they are highly integrated. They have managed to acquire acceptance among the population by providing goods and services that the government fails to deliver, but this political capital is not solid because there are people that sometimes oppose the criminal activities and look to support the governmental attempts to enter the territory. In this scenario the drugs flow regularly through very specific territories that become part of the chain of supply of drug cartels. Political causes are used to increase the acceptance of the population where governmental presence is weak. In this scenario the criminal groups have large possibilities to get involved in formal politics because they have the financial means to do so and because the government reaction is not violent but very inclusive and participative. This represents a potential problem for Ecuadorian governability.

3.2.5. Comparative Table

The following table aims to summarize the differences between the different scenarios presented above, based on the drivers and factors considered important for the context. It must be clarified that this is not an objective measure but a comparative table between the scenarios, nurtured by the previously gathered information in other countries and the opinions provided by the interviewed experts.

Parameter	Scenario 1: The Realist State VS the Anomalous Threat	Scenario 2: Fight Violence with Violence	Scenario 3: Debilitate the Threat by Fixing the Building Blocks	Scenario 4: A Weak Hand to Slap a Strong Threat
<i>Violence</i>	Medium (Localized)	High (Extended)	Low	Medium-High
<i>Poverty</i>	High	High	Medium	Medium
<i>Corruption</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	High
<i>Governance</i>	Medium - High	Medium	Medium-High	Low
<i>Convergence</i>	Low	High	Low	High
<i>Political Capital</i>	Medium	Medium	Low	High
<i>Impact of supply</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	Low

3.3. Strategy Development

The final step of the methodology is to assess the scenarios and determine those that are important enough to design a strategy for. This assessment is carried out considering the main driving forces that were mentioned before and establishing a baseline from which the strategy will work forward (Alberti, Russo, & Tenneson, 2010).

By creating a strategy, the methodology “closes” the cycle of gathering information, organizing it and then evaluating the possible future situations. In order to create such strategy some basic questions must be answered:

- What is the desirable scenario?
- How well prepared is the governmental apparatus to take over an opportunity and minimize the hazards?
- What is the best strategy tool to use in the preferred scenario?
- What is a constant in all scenarios?

Evidently, this method is highly intuitive and depends on how reliable the available information is. As in any other strategy formulation, the more the researcher know about the resources and capacity of the institution, the more tailored the strategy can be (European Commission, 2006).

3.3.1. Scenario Implications

In all scenarios there are traces of poverty, which is a good indicator to use as baseline to compare the present and what the State wants to achieve. Furthermore, corruption and money-laundering are also constantly present in the scenarios as enablers but because the former is measured through perception it becomes a harder indicator to use, and because the latter is only a symptom of the deeper problem (drug and terrorist activities) it will not be the main indicator to measure success. On the other hand, violence and security is a useful way to measure the success of a policy in the context of narco-terrorism.

In summary, the least preferable scenarios are the second one and the fourth one because in both cases the State capacity is limited, the criminal groups have the unified into one, levels of violence increase, security is reduced and poverty in the affected regions is perpetuated. The biggest threat is for these groups to merge into one and for the government to feed such violence with only militarized responses or to have a weak hand with exclusively development projects. The preferred scenario is the third one, which enables the government to act against the deep-rooted causes against the emerging narco-terrorism; making the social-development tools of policy the best instruments to tackle the threat.

Finally, the Ecuadorian governmental apparatus lacks resources and technique to face such a large menace alone. Therefore, there is another constant in all scenarios that is key to have successful results, that is: international coordination and cooperation. In the preferable

scenario, Ecuadorian government cooperates within the region to have a larger set of tools and capacity to face narco-terrorism as a transnational issue.

3.3.2. Strategy Proposal

Because this thesis used policy options as one of the axis in the matrix to build the scenarios, the strategy will be constructed to set the basic conditions for the policy to take place. In this case, the preferred scenario is the third one, where the Ecuadorian Government avoids the militarized approach to transnational crime and aims for a constructivist vision that hopes to involve the population in the process of policy making.

Therefore, the strategy suggested in this scenario follows the strategic objective of “reducing negative externalities of narco-terrorism in the northern provinces of Ecuador”, which is followed by a set of 5 goals that government would need to start working on today to arrive to that plausible future.

1. Economic & Social Goals: Increase presence of government in the territory by promoting cooperative economy initiatives and providing goods and services to reduce poverty and increase feeling of belonging of the population.
 - a. Implement a plan to support alternative economic development, similarly to crop substitution, the objective is to break the supply chain of narcotics by enhancing local production of agricultural goods. It includes training on agricultural techniques as well as support in the distribution and selling of such products.
 - i. Provide micro-credits to engage the population into participating in the regular economy and feel support from the State
 - b. Establish through the Ministry of Interior, education seminars in affected communities to inform them about crime, laws, conflict-resolution mechanisms to assist them in the process of strengthening the social tissue.
 - c. Create a campaign to raise awareness to the general population, including large cities, about the potential danger of ignoring the menace of narco-terrorism and about the mechanisms they have at their

disposal to act. This will reduce the incidence of violent citizens making justice on their own (which is currently a large problem in the country) and will increase the resilience of the population to overcome this type of threats.

2. Security & Defense Goals: Propose a counter-narcotics policy that understands the connection with rebel groups to have a coordinated response of security and defense forces.
 - a. Provide new equipment and training to the police and military to update their capabilities to fight the threat.
 - b. Integrate law enforcement programs to face narco-trafficking and organized crime as a joint effort including the strengthening of the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Police
 - c. Strengthen maritime guards and border surveillance based on intelligence gathered by police and military
 - d. Outline a list of entry-exit points and occupations highly exposed to getting involved in trafficking business to have a better profiling of suspects
 - e. Engage community leaders and local population in security procedures to recruit people that have been directly affected by the violence of narco-terrorism to reduce the possibility of corruption and collusion.
 - i. Distance these activities from a system of intelligence or surveillance to avoid a counterproductive feeling of distrust in the population
3. Legislative & Judicial: Reformulate the penalties for trafficking and terrorism to reduce the prison population represented by consumers - the very last piece of the supply chain - and increase the representation of middle-men and big coordinators and corrupted officials
 - a. Create databases that keep record of people suspected of participating in these activities to cross it with law-enforcement agencies in and out the country
 - b. Establish a “follow the money” legal framework so that the motivation to participate in a profit-oriented criminal organization diminishes and the high-level participants are persecuted.

- c. Create a special regime for subsidized products in the bordering provinces, especially gasoline, that is illegally sold (due to the price gap between Colombia and Ecuador) to produce cocaine
 - d. Strengthen the policies to sell and distribute “dual-purpose” chemicals throughout the country, especially in the northern and southern provinces
4. Foreign Policy: Draft a regional agenda to coordinate and cooperate to tackle transnational threats from their social, political and economic causes
- a. Strengthen efforts with Colombia, the United States and other regional allies in the subject to aim at a semi-unified legal approach to punish this type of crime and so, avoid “safe-havens”
 - b. Regional framework of international law enforcement standards for the particular situation of narco-terrorism in the Andean Region
 - c. Establish regional agreements to facilitate following laundered money
 - d. Join multilateral initiatives, like the G8 assistance to reduce cost of training and equipping forces as Afghanistan did with German training; acquire best practices of organised crime control from countries with more experience like Italy; and the United Kingdom in terms of micro-trafficking.

These five goals set the very basic steps for the Ecuadorian government to walk in the path of a long-term peaceful environment in the territories that are now being the stage of violent acts. The results obtained from the creative scenario thinking methodology enables the academic studies, the expert’s positions and the civil society find a middle point from which critical needs and objectives have been identified to reach the desirable future.

3.3.3. Averting the worst scenario

Part of the strategy to be implemented needs to focus on preventing the worst scenarios from happening, this means avoiding the narco-trafficking groups from merging with rebel groups. A key element that must be addressed is the political capital that narco-trafficking groups can have in the territory. In order to do this, the presence of the government in the territory needs to increase, so that citizens feel protected and represented by the legitimate authority. The alternative approach already provides a good start by applying development

programs instead of militarized mechanisms only. By doing this, the State ensures that the motivations for citizens to actively join an organization that works in detriment of governability. The possibility of organized rebel group with political purposes within the social fabric in Ecuador is very limited. Nonetheless, the policies applied in Colombia against their terrorist groups have alienated them and have pushed them towards the Ecuadorian territory. These phenomenon increases the possibility of Ecuadorian population being recruited in these militant groups. Therefore, strong incentives for these citizens need to be developed in order to impede them from joining a rebel organization. Additionally, the current situation in Venezuela has increased the migratory flux exponentially, which facilitates the entrance of rebels in the territory by camouflaging them among the Venezuelan refugees. Therefore, the border controls need to be more rigorous, especially in the context of the Venezuelan exodus. Furthermore, to outbalance the political capital that these organizations might gather; it is important not to use the label “terrorist” to justify unfair or severely punishing measures because these may feed the political discontent of society and have a counterproductive effect.

Conclusion

This academic work presents four different scenarios that Ecuador possibly will face in the mid-term regarding the emerging threat of narco-terrorism. After an overview of the literature regarding the evolution of drug-trafficking organizations and rebel groups, it was noted that their interaction was often based on alliances of common interests but different motivation. The former is motivated by profit, while the latter tends to have proposals for structural changes in the State. Nonetheless, both can potentially benefit from political capital that undermines the State capacity of attacking this threat and their interaction can potentially develop further into convergence towards a single organization. Furthermore, the review of the Ecuadorian situation, as a key territory to pass when cocaine is sent to its main markets, unravels a series of enablers that facilitate illegal activities to develop. Among these enablers, the most significant for the interviewees were the poverty and the lack of governmental presence in the northern provinces, that is further evidenced in the levels of security and violence and the corruption. Throughout these two chapters, different policy approaches are also described, compared, and evaluated in their efficacy to fight narco-terrorism according to the type of State that applies them and the priorities behind the government interests. In this context, it was denoted that the militarized approaches tend to lack civilian support due to the unexpected consequences that they carry, such as the increase of violence levels and the feeling of alienation from the State through the population.

The scenarios presented follow the creative scenario thinking methodology that emphasizes the proposal of plausible futures using key variables that result in drastic differences between the scenarios. In this context, the variables that were thought to be the widest and the most important were: (1) the level of convergence between these two organized crime groups and (2) how militarized or non-militarized policies are applied by the government in the affected territories. These two have great impact on the different factors that play in the context of emerging narco-terrorism in Ecuador, according to the collected information and opinions. As a result, four scenarios were presented: The Realist State VS the Anomalous Threat; Fight Violence with Violence; Debilitate the Threat by Fixing the Building Blocks; and A Weak Hand to Slap a Strong Threat. Out of these scenarios, it was perceived that the third one was the most preferred one because it proposed an integral solution to a relatively weak threat. On the contrary, the second and forth scenarios were considered to be the least desirable because the

possible responses to a unified narco-terrorist organization were not sufficient. Consequently, a strategy aiming towards a non-militarized policy in the context of low interaction of rebel groups and drug trafficking was presented, in addition to actions preventing the least desired scenarios from happening.

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