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A Multi-Level Analysis of Ecuador's Foreign Policy

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RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo es describir y analizar la política exterior del Ecuador desde un análisis multi-nivel. Se consideran el nivel sistémico, nacional e individual. En cada uno de estos niveles se utilizan distintas unidades de análisis. El objetivo es exponer la ambigüedad, y muchas veces las contradicciones que tienen la política exterior del Ecuador desde una perspectiva realista y con la utilización del análisis de contenido. El análisis se lo realiza estableciendo al regionalismo como un eje común para el análisis de las prácticas del Ecuador en materia de derechos humanos, desarrollo y el establecimiento de bloques locales.

Palabras clave: Ecuador, Política Exterior, Realismo, Desarrollo, Análisis de contenido.

ABSTRACT

The Purpose of this work is to describe and analyze Ecuador's Foreign Policy using a multi-level analysis. The levels considered will be the systemic level, national level, and individual level. The objective is to expose the ambiguity and sometimes even contradictions that Ecuador's foreign policy often presents with the use of a realist perspective and content analysis. The assessment established regionalism as a crosscutting topic to evaluate the country's practices regarding human rights, development, and the establishment of regional blocs.

Key words: Ecuador, Foreign Policy, Realism, Development, Content Analysis.

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A Multi-Level Analysis of Ecuador's Foreign Policy

Introduction

Ecuador's foreign policy has taken a turn in the last few years. A lot of relations have been established and some have ended. The country's diplomatic moves have not necessarily been aligned with the rhetoric presented to the world. The purpose of this paper is to describe and make a multi-level analysis of Ecuador's foreign policy. Three levels of analysis will be considered: First, the systemic level is the one where foreign policy is regarded as an exogenous phenomenon. Second, at the national level, Ecuador is seen as a single actor in international politics, ignoring external constraints. Finally, the smallest level of analysis will be content analysis, where public speeches will be evaluated to find ambiguous positions and actions.

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is a field of political science that evaluates the mechanisms through which foreign policy decisions and actions are made (Hudson and Vore 1995, 209). There are different theoretical tools to carry out FPA properly. In the case of this study, broad theories like Realism will be used analyze Ecuador's foreign policy. To narrow down the spectrum, content analysis will be used as a methodology. With this, it is expected that the different theories will accommodate the units of analysis that will be considered. At the systemic level, the unit of analysis will be the state within a system. Then, at the national level, the unit of analysis will be the state as an individual actor. Finally, the unit of analysis of the smallest level will be the speeches and declarations made by Ecuadorean officials. In other words, at each level of analysis only its specific elements will be considered.

The first level of analysis will be the systemic. In this section the study will evaluate Ecuador's foreign policy in different organizations but will mainly focus on certain topics, including human rights, trade and development. Additionally, a comparison will be made of Ecuador's actions and decisions in organizations that are regional and those that are supra-

regional. In the first case, the countries' actions in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, for its name in Spanish) will be assessed and then, the actions of the country at the United Nations (UN). Likewise, this section will evaluate matters such as resource concentration as means to exercise influence over an institution and how this is related to Ecuador's ambiguous foreign policy.

In the section regarding the national level of analysis, systemic inputs will not be considered as determinants of foreign policy. Instead, domestic factors and their effects over the foreign policy of the country will be addressed. This section will elaborate on the identity of the country and its interests. The importance of this section lies in the fact that it is widely believed that a small country's foreign policy is normally a consequence of international constraints. Nonetheless, the foreign policy actions of this country are not only determined by external constraints (Hudson and Vore 1995). As a matter of fact, what determines the country's foreign policy normally is product of the government's agenda and personal interests.

The final section of this study will be focused on making a content analysis of public speeches made by the president or representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. Given the frequency with which government officials refer to human rights, development and regionalism, these will be the main focus of this research. Then, regionalism will be chosen as a crosscutting topic to evaluate the ambiguity and contradiction in Ecuador's foreign policy in regards to human rights and human rights institutions, development, and regional blocs as means to face the world.

Theory/ies on foreign policy analysis

The Cold War was the cause of an increasing need to explain and attempt to predict the actions of states and policymakers in the international arena (Hudson and Vore 1995, 209). FPA is a sub-field of political science that focuses on the mechanisms through which foreign policy

decisions are made (Hudson and Vore 1995, 210). FPA can take different units of analysis such as the system, the nation-state, and the individual. In each of these levels, different elements of international politics are considered to make inferences about international politics.

At the systemic level, “foreign policy is a function of the conditions that prevail outside the country” (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 416). For this reason, a realist perspective is preferred because it assumes that the world is anarchic and that states are the main actors (Nye and Welch 2013). In this sense, realism allows FPA to rely on the exogenous nature of policy patterns and their outcomes (Potter 1980, 416). As a result, part of the external influences come from the anarchic nature of the system that forces states to pick strategies to guarantee their survival (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 417). At this level of analysis, international regimes are the priority to understand and describe the behavior of any given state (Potter 1980, 417). From a realist perspective, international regimes are defined as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner 1983, 2). With this definition, it can be inferred that international regimes are the key factors in international politics and that to some extent they provide the inputs for states to make decisions (Hudson and Vore 1995, 213). Similarly, institutions play a major role in FPA because they are a “set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other” (Mearsheimer 1995, 8).

Although the concepts of regimes and institutions come from a liberal tradition, a realist perspective is used because it provides the theoretical tools needed for this analysis and it aligns with the reality and position of Ecuador in the international politics. In this regard, the concept of regimes and institutions will be used based on Mearsheimer’s (1995) understanding of them, which is that states often see them as tools in order to exercise power and influence over the rest of the states. For realists, institutions merely reflect the distribution of power between states and are instruments that portray their self-interests (Mearsheimer 1995, 8).

At this level of analysis, FPA has some limitations. First, the scope that FPA has, sometimes decisions are made by a nation's leader and the systemic approach does not consider the characteristics of an individual to describe or predict its actions (Korany 1984, 7). Another limitation is that given the exogenous nature of regimes and institutions, they will always have an effect over the interactions of states and outcomes of foreign policy decision (Potter 1980, 417). That is to say, domestic elements are ignored for the purpose of the analysis of this section.

At a smaller scale, the state-centered level of FPA focuses mainly on the role the nation-state has in international politics. To begin with, it is assumed that the state is the main unit of analysis and that it is like a billiard ball (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 414). As a result, all foreign policy decisions are regarded in terms of cause-effect (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 414). By taking the state as the unit of analysis, the systemic elements in FPA are disregarded such as international regimes or institutions. Regarding the state's interests and identity, they can be fixed or vary over time depending on the theoretical framework used. For instance, the realist perspective claims that the state's interests are mainly focused on its own survival and accumulating capabilities. Also, it assumes that the interests and identity do not change with the course of time nor with the change of the circumstances because a state will always look for its survival (Nye and Welch 2013). On the contrary, from a constructivist perspective, states' identities are an intersubjective construction that greatly depend on the context in which interactions take place (Wendt 1992). In this intersubjective construction, each state has a "national role conception" that entails the image that a country has of itself in the international arena (Hudson and Vore 1995, 219). Furthermore, the scope of this level also centers its attention on the size of the country, its political system, and the state of its economy (Korany 1984, 10). With this approach, it can be assumed that foreign policy is equivalent to any decision of the state, to whatever diplomatic move it makes, and most importantly to its objectives and strategies in international politics (Korany 1984, 11).

At the national level of analysis, FPA faces some limitations that are related to the fact that it does not consider the government and domestic institutions in the bargaining processes in international politics (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 416). Nevertheless, this limitation is addressed by Putnam's claim "that foreign policymaking is a 'two level-game'" in the sense that foreign policy decisions are a result of domestic and international inputs (Hudson and Vore 1995, 227).

The final level of analysis is the individual level, which will concentrate its efforts on the study of speeches of the President and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (Farkas 1996, 343). This level of analysis is relevant because more often than not foreign policy decisions are made by a small number of people rather than the public in general (Winham 1969, 188). This approach assumes that actors in foreign policy are utility-oriented and always looking out for means to maximize it (Farkas 1996, 345). Furthermore, this level of analysis provides the opportunity to evaluate how a state might act depending on its perception of reality and not "necessarily in accordance with the actual reality" (Korany 1984, 13). FPA can be done through content analysis that focuses on the "situation in which the decision-making process occurred and how it affected the process by analyzing the communications of any given individual" (Winham 1969, 191). In this sense, speeches done by different government officials will be considered for analysis. The disadvantage of this method is that policymakers seem to be biased and "rely on heuristics" (Farkas 1996, 346).

From the previous description of the levels at which FPA can be made, it is widely believed that there is the need to have a theory that integrates all levels of analysis (Hudson and Vore 1995, 214). It is evident that a single level of analysis would not be sufficient to explain the behavior of a state nor to predict it. Aside from the use of different theories and their strengths, their weaknesses have to be regarded as possible sources of biases, especially the assumptions from which they arise. For example, content analysis assumes that important

matters are always communicated and this is not necessarily true (Winham 1969, 199). As a result, this analysis has chosen to examine all three levels. The following section analyzes Ecuador's foreign policy through a systemic lens.

Systemic approach to Ecuador's foreign policy

The systemic approach to analyze Ecuador's foreign policy is mainly focused on its role in different organizations. This section will analyze the country's actions and decisions not necessarily in an organization-by-organization manner but rather by topics in which the ambiguity is evident. Addressing the country's foreign policy this way will allow us to contrast Ecuador's actions and position towards the same topic, for instance human rights, in different settings as means to show the contradictions between its rhetoric and actions. This assessment will be elaborated based on FPA that was discussed above. It will consider the exogenous trait of foreign policy based on the anarchic nature of the international politics. One important feature to analyze at the systemic level is the nature of the institution in which Ecuador participates. If the institution is regional, then Ecuador will most likely support it and endorse it. Likewise, if the institution is supra-regional, that is includes states from North America specifically the United States, then there is the larger possibility that Ecuador will not support it. The second item to assess is the leadership and the concentration of resources within the institutions. This refers to who are the Member States that have a major say in decision-making procedures as well as those that provide the institution with more funding. In this part, a clear contradiction in Ecuador's foreign policy will be addressed. Finally, the aspect in which Ecuador can be seen as ambiguous in its foreign policy would be the human rights matter due to its participation in the Human Rights Council of the UN and the various situations that demonstrate human rights' violations.

Regarding the nature of the international organization, Ecuador has been known to have a preference to endorse regional ones. This is stated in a document published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility where the official position is the promotion of regional blocs to be able to negotiate with larger economies or other blocs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). Additionally, this is accompanied by the fact that regional institutions often leave out great powers such as the United States. As a result of the absence of a great power, Ecuador is able to portray itself as a major player at the regional arena (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). In relation to this, the country has been very supportive of the establishment and preservation of regional organizations that aggregate common interests and goals, for instance, UNASUR and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC for its name in Spanish). One explanation for this is the fact that Ecuador is able to portray an image of local leader due to various circumstances that include its high income caused by the increase in the prices of commodities as well as oil prices and the weakening of Venezuela's image and position in the region after president Hugo Chavez passed away. Although Ecuador is not very supportive of supra-regional institutions, it has been progressively gaining a position to represent the Latin American and the Caribbean bloc. Proof of this are the many appearances in which Ecuador has been delegated to present statements on different matters at the UN. For instance, in February 2015, Ecuador made a statement on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States during the second session of intergovernmental negotiations for the development of the Post-2015 Agenda (2015). This statement addressed the importance of setting goals that would be achievable by most states. In other words, the need to set universal goals that consider the domestic circumstances of all the states (Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations 2015).

Considering the leadership of institutions, the landscape changes dramatically for a state like Ecuador when assessing regional and supra-regional settings. The country can be

considered, as it was mentioned before, as a revisionist state that seeks to change the way in which power is distributed between states within institutions and their capabilities. First, Ecuador at a regional level has a better position in comparison to its position at larger institutions. In this regard, the resources accumulated by states come into consideration because questions like *who pays for what?* arise and represent a significant challenge to states to agree upon the distribution of responsibilities. In this sense, Ecuador at a regional level has been able to stand out from its neighbors because of a commodity boom that increased considerably its income throughout the last five years; therefore, its ability to provide regional organizations with funding. This resulted in Ecuador being the host of UNASUR's headquarters and assuming all the costs that this responsibility entails. Although the country has been highly critical of the fact that large organization's headquarters are located in the United States, Ecuador has decided to do the same with much smaller institutions. The ambiguity of this topic is clear when other states, specifically the United States, have headquarters inside their territories, it is with the objective of having it as a primordial tool to exercise influence. So having the headquarters for UNASUR inside Ecuadorian territory depicts that the country is following the same actions and path that it has widely criticized in the past.

Ecuador has constantly called for a review of the efficiency of human rights institutions both regionally and internationally. Although Ecuador is not a big supporter of supra-regional institutions, such as the United Nations and specifically its human rights system, the country's position has been curious because it managed to be elected to the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2010 with 180 votes, among the highest number of votes in favor, with the exception of Maldives that received 185 votes (General Assembly 2010). The election to this position has a great value at the systemic level because the 47 countries that serve at the HRC are often seen as those that uphold the highest standards in the matter of human rights (General Assembly 2010). The contradiction in this matter is that almost simultaneously, Ecuador criticized the

Inter-American Human Rights System. The state actually attempted to dismantle it and promote the establishment of a new human rights system that would not be biased with the presence of the Northern states, specifically the United States. From the side of the institutions, Ecuador's stand towards human rights is ambiguous too. The UN has showed its concern regarding the human rights situation of the country. For example, in September 2015 the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemned Ecuador's decision to dissolve Fundamedios, a domestic organization focused on the promotion of freedom of expression and media freedom in the country (OHCHR 2015). Additionally, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples called attention on the Ecuadorian government to open dialogues with an indigenous organization that convened a national strike (OHCHR 2015). These show the two sides Ecuador has displayed regarding human rights topics.

Ecuador at the national level

In this section, systemic inputs will not be regarded as the main determinants of foreign policy. What really matters at this level of analysis is the domestic reality of the country and how this is related to its actions in international politics. In this sense, the prices of its exports are important as well as the political and institutional stability of the state. Additionally, at the national level, the government plays a major role because it is the one that sets the agenda for what the country is looking out for. Traditionally importance of this level has rested on the notion that "the scholarly consensus views small state behavior from a state-centric perspective in which foreign-policy outputs are a response to external constraints" (Elman 1995, 175). However, Ecuador puts this affirmation to the test because regardless of the systemic constraints, it has been able to act in ways that have challenged them. In this regard, a construction of Ecuador's identity will be elaborated based not only on a domestic perception of itself but also in an inter-subjective way, so that the country's image is comprehensive and

useful for the purpose of this analysis. Once the image is constructed, the interests of Ecuador will be considered to provide a better understanding of its foreign policy and how they have been a driver for the country to establish relations with different States. Finally, the current domestic status will be assessed as a determinant of foreign policy, namely the country's economy.

To elaborate Ecuador's identity it has to be assumed that the state is the main unit of analysis (Patnaik and Nunes 2007, 414). This assumption is based on the realist metaphor of the billiard balls in which what matters are the balls and not the table itself (Krasner 1983). In this respect, two international relations theories can be used. First, the realist perspective that establishes that the state's interests are fixed and focused on the state's survival (Nye and Welch 2013, 65). Then, to further analyze, a constructivist perspective will be used to develop the intersubjective construction of Ecuador's identity (Wendt 1992). In this perspective the importance of having the state as the unit of analysis falls in the fact that the interactions are among states. Based on several documents released by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and its Constitution, for the purposes of this analysis, the country's identity and interests can be narrowed down to the following. First, Ecuador promotes self-determination and sovereignty, and it condemns the intervention of States in domestic matters. Second, the country promotes human rights and recognizes the rights of different groups that coexist within each state. Third, it condemns all forms of imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism, and recognizes the right of the people to resist and free themselves from oppression. Finally, Ecuador endorses South-South cooperation as well as the promotion of regional economic markets and blocs to achieve a multipolar system (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015).

In addition to this, the Ministry released a document last year that summarizes the accomplishments achieved by the regime. In this sense, foreign policy is envisioned as a tool

to fulfill this government's domestic objectives (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). Furthermore, it emphasizes that Ecuador has turned into an actor in the international system that has a voice that reflects bargaining power as well as an agent that moves for the transformation of the system into a fair space (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). As a result, based on the documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ecuador's identity can be established in the following terms from a realist perspective: Ecuador is a revisionist country that challenges the *status quo*. It is constantly appealing to sovereign rights of States and non-intervention, and it questions the previous management of its foreign policy. This is combined with the following understanding of its identity from a constructivist perspective: Ecuador is viewed as a state that has managed to gain a leading position in the region with influence in international politics in general. Additionally, Ecuador can be identified as a regional-oriented state that pursues the establishment of local alliances to interact with the rest of the world. Together both perspective attempt to summarize the identity of the country.

With Ecuador's identity already described, its interests will be analyzed. To begin with, the revisionist nature of the country has oriented its interest towards the establishment regional cooperation and institutions to have more bargaining power in international decision-making processes, particularly in terms of trade and human rights (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). Furthermore, it has to be highlighted that no matter what actions are carried out by the Ecuadorian government, it is always based on the principle of sovereignty (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). This is particularly interesting because several foreign policy decisions and actions have been criticized both domestically and internationally by, for example the UN (OHCHR 2015), yet Ecuador always claims that whatever they are doing is within its sovereign right and that other States should not intervene in its domestic matters. This behavior in fact is often the source of foreign policy

ambiguity from which Ecuador suffers. One example of this is the asylum granted to Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, United Kingdom. Ecuador portrays itself as a human rights promoter in all instances and this has been demonstrated with repetitive declarations in favor of Julian Assange as a way to demonstrate its commitment to defend human rights, specifically freedom of speech (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2014). However, as it was mentioned in the previous section, Ecuador has been criticized for its domestic actions regarding freedom of expression (OHCHR 2015). And almost three years after granting asylum to the journalist, Ecuador has softened its position with the British government by promoting dialogues to solve this stalemate. No solution has been found, however (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). With this, it could be said that Ecuador's interests go in accordance to what the country is trying to hide domestically. In other words, if there is a domestic issue in which the State is failing to fulfill its obligations or acts against the norms, then the country will try to promote them internationally. This is exemplified with its position towards human rights, in spite of being highly criticized domestically, the government highlights its successes internationally (Correa 2015).

Finally, an element that has great influence in foreign policy is the domestic status of a country. In the case of Ecuador, its economy has been faced with a constant decline of commodity prices as well as low oil prices from the second half of 2015. First, in economic terms, Ecuador has had to negotiate with various actors to establish agreements that help sustain its economy. In this regard, its relations with the European Union (EU) reveal some ambiguity. First, the country used to benefit from the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). This meant that all of its exportation products to the EU were duty-free (European Commission 2013). However, as of 2014 Ecuador was no longer eligible to be part of the GSP. As a result, in 2014 Ecuador negotiated a trade agreement with the EU that aimed and followed the development

path of the country (El Comercio 2014). In this regard, the negotiations were focused on diminishing the burden to the Ecuadorian people to the minimum. In spite of the negotiations and the terms with which they ended, Ecuador in 2015 decided to implement a safeguard system on more than a thousand import products for the period of 15 months, regardless of their origin and this included the EU (El Universo 2015). This had a repercussion in the negotiations with the EU because it reduced the importation of various products and it went against the objective of the negotiations, which looked out for the establishment of a free trade agreement. Nevertheless, Ecuador's Ministry of Industry assured that this decision would not affect the negotiation process with the EU (Enríquez 2015). At first, the country's foreign policy was contradictory but later Ecuador recognized that EU products should not have to pay for this extra import tax because of the ongoing negotiation process, which ameliorated the situation. Additionally, Ecuador was criticized both domestically and internationally for this decision. Not surprisingly, though, the government affirmed that it was their right to make this decision (Enríquez 2015).

In addition to this ambiguous case with the EU, Ecuador has decided to have very strong cooperation with China. This bilateral cooperation includes various fields like security, education, economy, and the environment (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana 2015). For many, the fact that China is now deeply involved in the development of infrastructure in Ecuador and the fact that it is one of the biggest lenders is unfortunate because it increases Chinese influence in the region (Krauss and Bradsher 2015). The Ecuadorian government is in big debt with the Chinese and negotiated the loans with very unfavorable terms, especially regarding oil production and exportation to that country (Ecuador recibirá crédito chino de \$970 millones 2016). It is estimated that Ecuador's debt with the Chinese reaches 6.3 billion dollars, which accounts for almost the 20% of Ecuador's public debt (La deuda con China suma USD 6395 millones 2016). The ambiguity of this lies in the fact that

Ecuador has claimed several times that it is a sovereign state that will not allow external influence by anyone and yet the Chinese have had great influence on the country's policy and economy given the great amount of money that they have provided the country with.

To conclude this section, it is evident that Ecuador is a revisionist state that has constantly challenged international constraints. Although its identity has been somewhat consistent through time, it has been contradictory in some aspects such as its condemnation of imperialism and the extent to which its relations with China have developed. Considering that China is seen as a rising imperialist power. Additionally, in terms of social issues such as human rights, the ambiguity is evident when the international image it portrays is contrasted with the domestic reality of the country. The most important thing is the fact that Ecuador seeks to establish regional alliances to face international politics, yet it is currently negotiating by itself with the EU. Finally, its interests respond to a domestic reality with specific demands that often are given by the needs of the government and the people.

Content analysis in Ecuador

As shown in the previous sections, Ecuador at the systemic level makes a special emphasis on presenting the region as a unified front towards the rest of the world. At the national level, it portrays itself as major player in the region that often has the ability to lead the efforts of neighboring countries favoring common interests and positions. At this level of analysis, both the systemic and national identities converge in the country's rhetoric. In this sense, the most frequent topic in public statements is the importance of regionalism for the development and advancement of the country.

This was the result of analyzing several speeches presented at different scenarios. Their selection was based on the subject of the meeting in which Ecuador intervened. For instance, the summit between CELAC and the European Union is relevant because it was a setting in

which regional blocs were gathered. Another example is the address provided at UNASUR's anniversary. None of them is a meeting specifically related to a certain topic; therefore, general topics can be addressed and, as a result, content analysis is more viable. Throughout this section, three topics will be considered. First, the importance of development for Ecuador will be considered as it is highlighted in some interventions made by the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. Second, the relevance of pursuing the establishment of regional blocs will be evaluated. Finally, human rights will be analyzed as a frequent topic in Ecuador's public statements.

Development is crucial for all states in the international system, yet what makes the difference the development models is the various means that states use to achieve it and how they portray it. In the case of Ecuador, development is considered a matter of national priority that has to be aligned with the protection of the environment and the people, as mentioned by Correa at the UN during a conference focused on the establishment of the Post-2015 Agenda (2015). Additionally, in this same intervention Correa highlights that center states should "spend less time diagnosing [...] underdevelopment and more time questioning their own development model" (2015). This follows world-system analysis, which claims that American and European theories could be applied to the third world (Wallerstein 1998). This also implies that Ecuador is a country of the periphery in the process of developing. So far Ecuador's position is clear because the public statements depict that is a developing country that is far from the center of the system. The source of ambiguity in this regard is particularly interesting because the country at the UN has criticized the some international financial institutions and consequently has raised the need to improve them and make them more inclusive (Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations 2015). In spite of this position towards them, Ecuador is still using them as a source of funding. In addition to this, Ecuador condemns the development model in which central countries use the resources of small states to sustain their

economic growth (Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations 2015). In particular, the development model of the United States has been regularly criticized for this reason. However, in practice Ecuador follows this same model of development only that instead of having the U.S. as an ally, at least rhetorically, it has chosen to be aligned with China. In other words, Ecuador might condemn the development model proposed by the U.S. but it still follows it with the only difference that has China as the main center state with which it relates. Nevertheless, in spite of the content of the speeches made by Ecuador, the U.S. is still one of the country's main trade partners because almost 30% of Ecuadorian exports go to the U.S. (Instituto de promoción de exportaciones e inversiones 2015).

Aside from intensifying trade activities with China, in the last nine years it has also intensified the pursuit of organizing the region into a bloc. Historically, Latin America has had many efforts to achieve a unity, yet there have been so many initiatives that what they did was actually disaggregate the interests of all states. In this regard, the rhetoric that Ecuador has utilized follows the logic of attaining a Latin American bloc to face the world. One example of this is the fact that at the UN, Ecuador has been able to speak on behalf of CELAC and has always made special emphasis on the importance of having a united region, as it was mentioned during the summit between the EU and CELAC (Correa 2015). Minister Patiño also highlighted this the Organization of American States (OAS). He claimed that the world order has shifted and now institutions should adapt and respond to the rise of the region as a unified group of states (Patiño 2014). For Ecuador, fostering Latin American cohesion has resulted in an opportunity to gain relevance in international politics and portray the image of an important player with great influence. Nonetheless, on the topic of establishing a Latin American bloc, Ecuador's foreign policy rhetoric demonstrates its ambiguity. Ecuador criticizes the fact that the headquarters of the OAS are located in the US because that gives them great influence over the institution. Surprisingly, Ecuador pushed to have the headquarters of UNASUR in its own

territory and now the secretariat of this organization is located in the capital city of Quito. This also means that the country is a good source of funding for the organization, providing it with great influence. Correa made allusion to this during the anniversary of UNASUR in April 2015, referring to the headquarters as the “epicenter of integration for [Latin American] countries” (Correa 2015).

Finally, Ecuador’s rhetoric demonstrates the ambiguity of its foreign policy when it comes to human rights matters. As it was mentioned in previous sections, Ecuador served at the HRC, which means that at a certain point the perception of the country’s human rights situation was one of the best. However, Ecuador has actively moved for the establishment of a regional human rights system. More specifically, it has pushed one without the U.S. as it was mentioned by President Correa during an address to UNASUR. He referred to the “Inter-American Human Rights System, the United States has not signed any instrument, not even ratified the Pact of San José but holds the headquarters for the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.” Then he added “Who can justify this? They, with Europe, finance the Commission [...] that is to say that they pay to control the others, the evils, to the Latin Americans” (Correa 2015). Considering this, it can be agreed that Ecuador has a strong opposition to the way human rights issues are handled in the region, yet is a country that has received warnings from international institutions (OHCHR 2015). This can be understood as an attempt to control human rights institutions to keep on having the practices that have been widely criticized internationally. For instance, freedom of expression and free press has been questioned in the country and the official response is that “there is so much free press that they can publish every day that they don’t have free press” (Correa 2015). The Ecuadorian position is supported by alleging that the “region has gone through deep changes”, thus, the institutions should respond to the changes (Patiño 2014).

Content analysis could be more extended and deep, yet given the nature of this work, it is useful to provide key evidence on how ambiguous Ecuador's foreign policy is and how incoherent the country's position can be. In regards to human rights, it is clear that Ecuador needs a system that allows it to continue its systematic human rights violations. This is supported by the fact that other Latin American states also seek this because their human rights practices have raised the attention of international institutions. This gives also room for pushing the establishment of a Latin American bloc that really aggregates the interests of the region and that pushes for significant changes in international politics. The objective is not only to be there but also to have enough influence to become an agent of change in international politics. Additionally, every decision made by Ecuador and every public statement is focused towards implementing a view of development that respects human rights in spite of all the critiques that raise awareness of the country's human rights situation.

Conclusions

This paper utilized several theories and conceptual tools to analyze Ecuador's foreign policy. One strength was the fact that different theories were used in the three levels that this work considered. However, this also posed a limitation in terms of elaborating a more comprehensive analysis of the country's foreign policy and actions in international politics. At the systemic level, it is clear that the country portrays an image of a revisionist state that is constantly pushing for systemic changes that allow more participation of smaller states. From the evidence used in this research, Ecuador can be seen as an individual actor of the international system that regardless of international restraints, it acts in accordance to its interests. At the smallest level of analysis which was the content of its public statements, it was found that its foreign policy is indeed ambiguous.

FPA is a field that requires the exhaustive elaboration of tools that accommodate the diversity of states that there are in the world. International politics undoubtedly constantly change and FPA should be able to keep up with the evolving dynamics of the world. Although many different theories and tools have been used throughout this work, it is certain that a single multi-level theory should be developed more formally, especially to analyze cases like Ecuador. The largest theoretical limitations were that traditional theories like realism were used in combination with a methodological tool like content analysis. This poses a limitation because both have different units of analysis, and methodologies to address foreign policy. However, the analysis overcame this limitation when each level only concentrated on its specific elements.

As for Ecuador at the systemic level, it is persistently moving towards updating institutions and practices that often determine the actions of states. In this regard, Ecuador is a state that in spite of constantly criticizing the system, it uses it for its advantage. This might be explained by assuming that the country now considers the current institutions as tools for the exercise of foreign policy. The example provided in this regard was the contradiction in human rights matters when Ecuador served at the HRC and at the same time the country systematically violated human rights. For instance, freedom of expression and the rights of indigenous people. Additionally, we can conclude that no matter how much Ecuador acts against international institutions, regardless of its nature, it needs them to be part of the international system and to be an actor that can exercise influence over the rest of the states.

Considering the country as an individual actor and analyzing it at the national level, Ecuador challenges traditional actions or commonly accepted practices of states. For example, no matter how much it criticizes the US for its imperialist practices, the country chose to establish very strong relations with China that is considered as a rising imperialist power. Furthermore, Ecuador has acted in ways that more often than not are reproachable such as its

negotiations the EU to achieve a trade agreement, instead of doing it with a regional bloc. This is evidently a move that needs to be further analyzed, but as far as this work goes, Ecuador could have benefited itself from continuing with these negotiations. The country is currently responding to domestic needs and this can be an explanation for its actions but it certainly is not excuse act incongruently in different settings.

Finally, the content analysis of public speeches done by Ecuadorian authorities connects the dots in terms of making the ambiguity of its foreign policy more apparent to the public eye. Something might be said publicly but if the interests change, there is no problem acting contrary to what was initially stated. Additionally, the rhetoric is one of the strongest tools Ecuador has at the moment because it is able to aggregate the interests of other states and yet be broad enough to not have to comply with what was proclaimed in the first place.

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