

# **Democracy, Economic Development and the Ecuadorian Armed Forces: blurred lines between defense, civic action and institutional enrichment<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the Ecuadorian Army's involvement in development assistance (*apoyo al desarrollo*) programs and the military's role in the national economy to demonstrate how these activities are simultaneously beneficial to marginal sectors of society and detrimental to the democratic process. The Ecuadorian military has overstepped the boundaries of constructive participation in the national economy and eclipsed the state to which it supposedly pertains by blurring the lines between defense, development, and commercial self-interest. Moreover, the economic autonomy produced by these projects has permitted the military to unduly manipulate the budgeting process and thereby avoid Congressional and public oversight. Hence it is imperative that the Ecuadorian model be scrutinized and reformed, rather than exported wholesale to other countries, as is beginning to occur.

## **From “Meddling Militares” to the “Enablers of the State”: the historical origins of a progressive military**

Shortly after the fall and return to power of Hugo Chavez earlier this year, *The New York Times* proclaimed that the event signaled “a revitalized role for the region's military”. Perhaps this was true for those who do not watch the military terribly carefully or whose impressions of the institution are governed by decades-old stereotypes of Latin American soldiers as meddling *militares* either occupying the presidential palace or lurking in the shadows, planning their next coup. Those of us who maintain closer relations with the hemisphere's armed forces know better: Despite a return to constitutional rule in the last two decades, the military has maintained a prominent, if sometimes low-key, presence in Latin America. Today the Ecuadorian military's power comes as much from the threat of their intervention in electoral politics as their expansion into new spheres of activity. This new influence is remarkably enduring and wide-ranging, as it is present regardless of who wears the presidential sash. Hence, while other Latin American armies may wish to adopt an Ecuadorian-style development role in their respective countries, it is in fact an unadvisable course of action in the long run.

The Ecuadorian Army boasts one of the most extensive development assistance (*apoyo al desarrollo*) programs, as well as one of the most extensive roles in their country's national economy, in the Americas. This paper will examine some of the roots of these industrial, agricultural and civic action efforts and how they have taken shape in the contemporary era. Ironically, while these programs benefit many of the marginal members of society – Indians, peasants, and urban poor, in particular – they are also detrimental to the democratic process. The Ecuadorian military has overstepped the boundaries of beneficial participation in the national economy, and eclipsed the state to which it supposedly pertains, by blurring the lines between defense, development, and commercial self-interest.

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The current state of affairs was made possible by the institutional and constitutional reforms introduced by the Junta that ruled Ecuador from 1963-66. This administration, strongly influenced by the examples of contemporary progressive military governments in South America, was responsible for initiating, among other programs, agrarian reform and colonization. While most of their efforts failed, prior to leaving office the Junta sowed the seeds that have permitted the military to assume their extensive and multifaceted role vis-à-vis national development. First they reformed the Constitution so it not only recognized the possibility of the armed forces participating in development but nearly obliged those in uniform to work for the good of the *pueblo*. Second, they changed the conscription law to include non-military service as well, such as agriculture, conservation and public works.

Employing these Constitutional and legal mandates, the Army implemented the Military Agrarian Conscription (CAME) program at *la Remonta*, a ranch first established in the 1920s to breed and raise the horses required for the nation's cavalry. Like its predecessor program, Rural Indigenous Conscription (CIR) (Allión, 1945 & 1947), CAME aimed to "civilize" "*los indios*" through military service. However, CAME, unlike CIR, sought not only to reform Indians but also teach them technical agricultural methods and to promote the modernization of the country's agro-industries (Salguero, 1966). While the program was never implemented nationwide as the High Command envisioned, in the following years *la Remonta* was replicated at ten similar sites in different parts of the country. Several efforts fizzled after one or two years, and by the early 1980s CAME was well established at five key locations where they still exists today, re-designated "*Unidades de Producción*".

In 1967 forestation was added as a key development task for conscripted Ecuadorian troops, bringing the Army into even greater contact with the rural population. At first combat brigade's conscripts were charged with this task, and later all-conscript forestation units were created to carry out the work more efficiently. The subsequent military government of General Rodríguez Lara (1972-78) maintained the Junta's core goals of progress and productivity and further amplified the scope of military activities, establishing the Directorate of Army Industries (DINE). The institutional structures and ideologies crafted during these years have shaped both military projects and relations with the populace ever since.

The transition to democracy in 1979 did not mark the end of military influence; in fact, the aftereffects of the 1967 Constitution have arguably been more profound in the last 23 years than they were in the first 12. The institutional space created by this *magna carta* has permitted the Army, and to a lesser degree other branches of the armed forces, to establish a series of military-owned, operated and/or controlled industries unlike those present anywhere else in the hemisphere. While astonishing to outsiders, this organization goes all but unnoticed today by most Ecuadorian civilians. The situation has been normalized to the point where the institutions and their underlying rationales have assumed nearly self-evident status. As a result, the "military in development" clause has been replicated in each subsequent Constitution. When reform has occurred, it has remained a paper dragon as it is difficult, if not impossible, to undo the institutions, mechanisms and culture that were created in the intervening years.

### **The Military in Development under Democracy, 1979-1999: between "free" enterprise, civic action and obligatory military service**

Among the myriad of military industries created since the 1960s one notes a remarkable variety of activities and justifications. Some are related to military necessity, including munitions and uniform manufacturing, revealing the lingering effects of anti-dependency-fueled import-substitution industrialization. Others reflect an effort to retain military influence in related spheres such as civil aviation, control of ports, and the merchant marine. Some of the military's efforts also appear to be linked to institutional financial enrichment, though they may contribute to the country's macro-economic wealth, through the operation of banana plantations, flower (rose) farms, and shrimp ponds. Finally, those efforts that fall under the rubric of *apoyo al desarrollo* are

purportedly targeted at developing the marginal sectors of society and integrating them to the state.

Unlike earlier, Vietnam-era inspired civic action programs, *apoyo al desarrollo* does not focus exclusively on building latrines, clinics, and schools. The program's primary emphasis is aimed at fostering *autogestión* in the form of cheese, *escargot*, and other small-time community production schemes. As many a soldier has told me, "today we teach the people to fish, rather than giving them the catch." The program has been further expanded in recent years to become an umbrella operation for broader forestation and unit-based agricultural production. This section will briefly sketch the parallel and interconnected growth of military programs, first focused on increasing national production then, in the last decade, shifting to a community development framework. Together, these projects have blurred the lines between free enterprise and civic-action, further reifying their efforts and placing them above the reproach and oversight of both the government and the public.

As this brief overview of the *apoyo al desarrollo* program suggests, things are not always what they appear to be in Ecuadorian military development projects. The Army's shrimp industry is an instructive example. The majority of military shrimping efforts are located on the southern coast, in the province of El Oro. During the 1941 War, Peruvian troops occupied the region and nearly seized the key port city of Guayaquil to the north. As one former commander of the shrimp project explained, these large, systematic networks of earthen walls separated by shallow pools that cover quicksand-like mud were constructed to also serve as tank traps should the Peruvians attempt to invade the region again.

The Army's presence in what would presumably be a civilian business, their occupation of nearly 1,000 acres of prime real estate, and their participation in the profitable shrimp industry is tolerated by local entrepreneurs for two reasons: On the one hand, memories of the 1941 occupation are kept fresh through military-inspired civil ceremonies, popular history, and governmental discourse. The presence of military personnel, whether raising shrimp or maneuvering, is consequently more acceptable than it might be otherwise. Secondly, the Army's shrimp ponds are worked primarily by local conscripts, and the projects are thus perceived as technical training programs, much like CAME, that ensure civilian shrimpers a plentiful supply of pre-trained, highly-skilled labor in the future. The importance of conscripts as manpower for development projects is a recurring aspect of these efforts that should not be underestimated.

Nor is shrimp farming the Army's only ambiguous commercial effort. The military is quick to commit its resources to development projects deemed too risky to attract civilian investors. This includes numerous road and infrastructure construction projects in Amazonia as well as opening portions of the region to tourism (*El Comercio*, 2002; Lucas, 2002). By blazing trails, literally and figuratively, the military hopes to stimulate productivity, unify the nation, and generate and redistribute wealth. Within the High Command, these efforts are also justified as valuable training opportunities, much like the US Army's view of deploying Reserve medical units to rural Central America. As one former commander of the *Comando Conjunto* noted, these programs maximize the potential of the armed forces as a state institution in peace time (Moncayo, 1995). While perhaps second-best to "real" military training, these activities are a vast improvement over the alternatives. According to this line of reasoning, if the planes, buildings, and personnel involved were not guiding foreign tourists through the jungle, they would likely not be used at all, as the associated operating and maintenance costs would be overwhelming. Today, the *turistas gringos* pay for the "training".

Questionable though this logic may be, in practice the problem is not so much with the appropriateness of the armed forces "blazing new economic trails" where others fear to tread or re-classifying tour-guiding as patrolling. The larger concern is how to ensure that the military walks away from these projects when they are in condition to be assumed by an appropriate civilian or non-military state entity. If much of the pretext for the Army's involvement in the first place is that they want to serve as an economic catalyst to "complement civilian industry", how do we assure that they do not become entrepreneurs – something never contemplated in the

Constitution? In other words, how do we assure that the military walks away just when their development projects become profitable?

The obvious problem is that the military is often loath to give up their involvement in such ventures because of both a sense of propriety and dependency on the income they generate. To adapt the old adage, “why give away the cow if you can continue to sell the milk?”\* Congress, on the other hand, is hesitant to intervene either out of ignorance, fear of irritating the powerful *militares*, or worse yet, having to substitute the lost income with state-generated revenue. The government is not terribly interested in buying the Army’s “cow” either, as 17% of the institution’s budget today is self-financed from industries and development projects (Burbano, 2002). Together, the military’s commercial and development efforts serve as an institutional escape vale in an era of declining military budgets.

The question this raises is just how benevolent the military’s efforts are and how naïve private citizens, legislators, and investors are when they agree to collaborate on or approve such projects. Most of the time it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell who is taking advantage of whom. Nor are *militares* solely interested in participating in unprofitable or risky projects, as a chagrined country learned when the Army Corps of Engineers tendered an official bid to construct the new heavy crude pipeline. While the bid was later disqualified as unconstitutional, it served as a rude wakeup call to those who maintained an unrealistically sanguine view of the military’s developmental efforts.

The most persistent and vociferous protests come from the country’s *Cámaras de la Producción e Industria*, especially those in Guayaquil. They contend that the *militares* are exploiting unfair competitive advantages: The armed forces’ overhead, operating expenses, and equipment are bought and paid for by the state in the form of the defense budget. They have access to a nearly unlimited and “free” labor pool in the 20,000+ young, healthy men conscripted for 9-12 months each year. Not to mention the military’s special tax status. I believe there is some merit to these clamorings, particularly those around conscription. Conscripts are not “free labor”. In fact the state incurs considerable expenses in the identification, transportation, training, feeding, and housing of recruits.

The Army sidesteps these criticisms with another example of its multi-purpose mentality: Conscription in Ecuador is as much a socio-cultural process as a military project. Spending a year in the *cuartel* is believed to facilitate *formación*, the process through which young men learn the importance of punctuality, hard work, discipline, and family values necessary to become “new men” who will contribute to the national project as civilians. *Formación*, together with other discursive mechanisms, creates a shared framework that makes conscription a desirable activity alleviating the Army’s need to coerce young men into service (Selmeski, forthcoming). At the same time, conscription provides the military with the equivalent of *jornaleros* who keep the institution operating by pulling guard duty, cutting the grass, peeling the potatoes, and sweeping the floors. Finally, as *licenciados*, ex-conscripts form the backbone of the reserves, permitting the High Command to maintain a smaller active-duty force than otherwise would be necessary. What goes largely unacknowledged in this official discourse is the conscripts’ role in Army development projects.

Those military development efforts that cannot be glossed over with the *formación* rhetoric, defended with the multi-purpose efficiency argument, or justified within the all-encompassing discourse of national security are often rationalized within the powerful framework of production: According to this line of reasoning the military is not just consuming (in terms of human, financial, and other resources), as they have historically. Today they are also contributing to the economy

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\* The IMF’s neoliberal economic model will inevitably be applied to Ecuadorian military industries as it has to civilian and other state entities, precipitating a battle royal between the international fiscal watchdog, chief executive and armed forces. This debate will call in to question the number of military industries, their necessity and efficiency, eventually reducing their number (see Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, 2002b for a summary of the businesses in question). However, the income-generating aspects of *apoyo al desarrollo* will likely remain under the IMF’s radar, making its continued existence a primary concern for the High Command.

and national growth by producing new wealth. The benefits of production are apparent even when this income remains in the military's coffers, as it supposedly reduces the military budget accordingly.

First it would be enlightening to explore how these tendencies have transformed over the last decade under the guise of *apoyo al desarrollo*. These programs can be traced directly to preemptive counterinsurgency plans initiated in the early 1980s. Faced with active guerrilla movements in neighboring Peru (particularly *Sendero Luminoso*) and Colombia (especially FARC and ELN), individual commanders began approaching local rural communities with piecemeal civic action projects. These programs were aimed at both integrating marginal groups to the state and ensuring that the naïve *campesinos* did not fall under the sway of foreign extremists by ameliorating the crushing poverty in which a large portion of the population lived. Building on the CAME tradition, conscripts and soldiers soon found themselves constructing latrines, schools, basketball courts, and other community facilities. Meanwhile, the officers came to appreciate the horrific conditions of life in the *campo* and gradually recognize the resourcefulness, industriousness, and ingenuity of the *campesinos*. Likewise, the military's image, tarnished by the failed dictatorships of the 1960s and 70s, was rehabilitated in the eyes of peasants and Indians, thankful for even token assistance and all too eager to be integrated to the state if it meant they would see these sorts of material rewards.

In the years following the humiliating Paquisha Conflict of 1981, many of these efforts being carried out in the border region were conjoined first under the "*Fronteras Vivas*" project then, starting in 1992, as CACYF (*Compañías de Acción Cívica y Forestación*). The armed forces believed that by improving the conditions of the region's inhabitants and solidifying their allegiance to the nation, in the form of the military, that citizens could become the first line of defense against future Peruvian aggression. These efforts yielded great rewards in the 1995 Cenepa War when the citizenry, particularly in the conflict area, independently and spontaneously provided provisioning, logistical, and other support to remote military detachments. The civic action program was augmented in the wake of the war and in 1998 pre-existing forestation efforts were officially grafted to the program. CACYFs were quickly established in all active-duty combat brigades to coordinate development and civic action projects within their areas of responsibility (Dirección de Desarrollo de la Fuerza Terrestre, 1998b). Unlike their predecessor programs, CACYF's development projects emphasize community participation, providing a hand-up instead of a handout.

This reorganization effort was far more than just a reshuffling of commands or empty rhetoric. It reflected fundamental changes in attitude toward Indians, the environment and development. As CACYF's forestry program demonstrates, however, the Army once again operationalized their vision by crafting a multi-purpose mission. Unlike the military's earlier conservation-style forestry projects, the present plan emphasizes "productive forestation". Under this scheme, indigenous and peasant communities provide the land and protect the plants while the Army supplies the seeds, conscript labor, and technical advice. Trees will be systematically harvested in cycles and processed in a military-controlled company, which will sell the pulp on the Asian market. The profits will then be divided between the groups, with the *campesinos* receiving an ever-increasing proportion of the benefits in the form of community development and investments. As one general officer explained, by "closing the circle and eliminating the middle men" the Army hopes to pay higher profits to the Indians while "avoiding giving them cash that they will inevitably spend on alcohol."

Paternalistic overtones aside, the project exhibits many of the characteristics of the earlier shrimp farming and CAME examples: The Indians are lifted from poverty, the conscripts and peasants are trained in technical production practices, and the Army treasury enhanced. This "multi-mission" philosophy has also generated a remarkably close relationship between the Ecuadorian Army and the (or "their", as they are fond of saying) *pueblo*. This bond exists on at least two levels. First, the *pueblo* provides the land and labor for these projects in the form of conscripts who have traditionally come from the lowest strata of society. Second, the *pueblo* receives the benefits of productive forestry efforts, civic action projects, and *autogestión* programs.

As a result, observers should not be so surprised when indigenous organizations and military personnel unite to overthrow elected leaders as they did in January 2000.

While the goals remain quite similar to earlier projects, the new “partners with the *pueblo*” vision and increased emphasis CACYF received within the highest circles was only made possible by the discursive space created within the hemispheric Defense *Ministeriales*. As environmental and developmental missions became more mainstream in the post-Cold War era, the Army command was able to dedicate greater amounts of resources to the projects. Not surprisingly, many of these coincided with their preexisting strategic, institutional, and social objectives. Moreover, once a definitive peace treaty was signed with Peru, and before Plan Colombia became an issue, the armed forces found themselves increasingly perceived as a force with neither a mission nor an enemy. By reframing poverty as a primary threat to national security, rather than an underlying cause of internal conflict, the military sought to maintain its status quo. After all, how could anyone say no to national development and environmental preservation?

Shortly after the implementation of the CACYF plan, local versions of the *Unidades de Producción* (UP), CAME’s successor program, were established. Using the same organizational rubric as the forestry program, these on-base haciendas, designated CACYF-UP, reflect the Army’s strategic multi-mission mentality. Today these new units’ conscripts labor in agriculture and animal husbandry for the Army’s consumption and sale in various markets. In the centrally located Chimborazo province, for example, potatoes and carrots are sold in local plazas at discounted prices because of the *cuartel’s* productive advantage. These transactions further perpetuate the institutional goals of being perceived as “*militares amigos*” and an efficient, productive institution that responds to the needs of the people by eliminating the middlemen. At the same time, they raise eggs and chickens for consumption by military personnel, thereby reducing expenditures for provisions and freeing up precious budget funds for commanders. Lastly, they grow tomatoes, passion fruit, and other crops for sale on the national and/or international markets, contributing to institutional financial enrichment.

But, what sort of oversight exists for the funds generated by these sorts of projects? While the high command claims that all income is properly reported to Congress, in practice the accounting system is less than ideal. I do not mean to suggest that development projects necessarily foster institutional corruption; in fact, I have never seen any evidence of this in Ecuador. Instead, I argue that the mechanisms for disclosing, reviewing, and overseeing funds generated by military development and industrial projects are inadequate. Ecuadorian legislators have confessed their lack of knowledge about and ability to influence the military budgeting process in general. Complex proformas, they say, are provided to them at the last minute, barely debated during full Congressional sessions, and never audited. The result is that the legislature has essentially become a rubber stamp for the Ministry’s budget.

The High Command is quite content with this relationship, as it ensures that they do not become the victims of pork-barrel politics. Soldiers, like most Ecuadorians, consider the government, and especially the Congress, to be self-serving and corrupt. They believe that the military is above the pettiness of individual administrations and political parties. The armed forces know what should be done and how, they argue: why involve Congress when they are sure to muck up the process? As a result, the Ecuadorian military today possesses an extraordinary degree of financial and operational autonomy from the rest of the state.

When pressed, senior officers have downplayed this financial independence by explaining that each year the services’ various income-generating activities anticipate their profits. These projections are then subtracted from the funding request sent to Congress. However, since these figures are never independently verified nor confirmed to the legislature through year-end financial statements, they are actually little more than unsubstantiated assertions. So the claim that the military pays for 17% of its own expenses is questionable, as are the justifications of the budget request put before Congress, and the appropriateness of how funds are allocated. Moreover, while most of the military budget is no longer classified, it is nearly impossible for civilians to obtain, thanks to the almost impenetrable web of bureaucratic procedures and tendency for functionaries

to treat all internal documents as confidential. It seems safe to conclude that as a result, the Ecuadorian military budget is simply not a topic of scholarly, activist, or informed citizens' debate as it is in mature democracies.

Considering how the military's development projects benefit the poorest segment of the populace, permit administrations to focus their limited resources on the better off cities, and how taken-for-granted the efforts have become, it seems unlikely that public debate would be critical of either the military's budgeting process or programs. Both the *militares* and the *pueblo* benefit from the Army's development projects, but unequally. The armed forces acquire ever more power as a result, while also neutralizing the "peasant threat". The *campesinos*, on the other hand, while slightly better off, are never truly empowered and in some cases become dependent on the military. Moreover, these activities blur the line between civic action (strategic), development (for the *pueblo*) and institutionally self-enriching financial programs.

### **Obligated to Act or Acting Obligated?: the military as social firemen, economic catalysts, and semi-autonomous actors**

The social and political consequences of the Ecuadorian Army's development roles are clearly varied, some advantageous and others quite troubling. In brief, there are two main schools of thought on the appropriateness of the military in development: Some argue that the armed forces are debilitating civilian authority by expanding into non-military roles. Others contend that the military is filling a necessary gap where the state has abandoned its duty, such as in isolated parts of the countryside inhabited largely by Indians and peasants. I take a less extreme and more nuanced position, located firmly in the messy middle ground.

On the one hand the Ecuadorian state has failed in its obligations to the marginal sectors of society. The Army has stepped into this chasm to provide important educational, medical, commercial, and infrastructural services that these citizens might not otherwise receive. At the same time, only a naïve observer could qualify the military's activities as selfless and disinterested. Institutional financial enrichment, expansion, strategic maneuvering, and prestige are, as I have demonstrated, also important factors. This is not terribly surprising, though, given Latin American militaries' unspoken geopolitical assumptions that institutions are like organisms in that they must grow or die (Hepple, 1992).

Viewed in their panoramic context, I argue that these development efforts are part of a larger pattern. The Ecuadorian state has used, and continues to use, the military as social and political firemen. When gasoline must be rationed, bankrupt banks safeguarded, election material distributed throughout the country, the customs service taken over, etc., on whom does the president call? The armed forces. The same holds true for much of the population, who clamor for military intervention during periods of intractable political struggle and economic chaos such as those that preceded the ousters of Presidents Bucaram and Mahuad. In terms of development, the Army's efforts, while excessive in some fields, are seen as beneficial in others, as they permit the state's weak institutions to focus on urban areas and overlook marginal citizens. Both the state and urban citizens see this as a positive tradeoff. While pragmatic, this hardly seems like the most promising *modus operandi* for consolidating and strengthening democracy, in which the state should concern itself with the well being of all its citizens.

Given the complexity of the situation, one should ask what an appropriate path for the future might be. In framing my suggestions I want to recall the words of philosopher Jaime Balmes, who, referring to 19th century Spain, concluded that "the state is not weak because the military is strong; the military is strong because the state is weak" (quoted in Quesada, 2002). Likewise, I argue that the solution is not to debilitate the military, because it is often the only omnipresent, competent, disciplined, well-trained, and reasonably well-equipped institution the state has. Rather, the goal should be to strengthen civilian institutions and generate a political ethos that stresses a preoccupation for the inclusion of all sectors of society. Simultaneously the military needs to be brought under ever-stricter civilian control, reducing their social, political, and economic

autonomy. This is challenging, but feasible, as reform in post-Fujimori Peru and post-Pinochet Chile demonstrate.

However, this process is not just about having a civilian running the Ministry of Defense. Autonomy comes in many forms: Economic, which can be countered as interim President Paniagua did in Peru by requiring that all income generated by the post-Montesinos military be deposited directly to the Central Bank, rather than into their own coffers. This eliminated myriad opportunities for institutional and personal corruption and made the armed forces more financially accountable to the state. Operational, where autonomy can have profound consequences for elected and uniformed leaders. After human rights abuses became public in Somalia, for example, the Canadian Forces were faced with the choice of disbanding the Airborne Regiment or risking being abolished entirely by Parliament. Strategic, where long-term military goals are set by democratically elected administrations, not generals who may see themselves as the embodiment of the *Patria* and beyond question or reproach. The Ecuadorian Army's development projects demonstrate and generate a remarkable degree of autonomy on all three levels. The ultimate goal of reforms should be to make the military part of the executive branch, subordinate to the elected officials, and part of the system of governance.

Some Latin American militaries are beginning to shy away from involvement in development after failed experiments in the field. Today in Peru and Venezuela, for example, the stigma of soldiers being seen as social workers, the perceived lack of focus on "real military missions", the increased possibilities for institutional corruption, as well as the impossible objectives of national development – like those of the "war on drugs" – have tempered or reversed earlier efforts. While largely unexamined, these trends often underlie the more "newsworthy" stories, such as the Chavez example with which I began, and are further obscured by journalists' mistaken priorities.

Yet others of the region's armed forces have noted the Ecuadorians' success and are eager to copy their model. Many Bolivian officers, for example, see the Ecuadorians as pioneers to be followed. On a recent visit to La Paz I had an opportunity to discuss the Ecuadorian model with the Vice-Minister of Defense for Development. He summed up his impression by simply noting that "Ecuador copies our development projects and makes them better". This begrudging respect led the Bolivian Ministry of Defense to request the former Ecuadorian Army chief of *apoyo al desarrollo* as the next military attaché to their country.

Likewise, at a public debate on the future of the Bolivian armed forces, the deputy chair of the Congressional Committee on Military Affairs asked Army Commanding General Rosales when his service was going to be able to start partially funding themselves – particularly for maintenance. The US military attaché went completely pallid at the suggestion, as this sort of practice runs contrary to the very essence of the US system of governance and defense policy: separation of powers, Congressionally apportioned funds, independent auditing. Yet on the surface it seems to be an attractive solution both for Bolivian politicians interested in trimming the defense budget and for generals seeking increased institutional autonomy.

Perhaps even more disconcerting is the possibility of development assistance becoming a crutch in post-war Colombia. When the conflict finally ends, the country will be left with enormous armed forces that possess massive resources, well-trained personnel, and, if the most recent polls stay where they are currently, a very high popularity rating with the citizenry. The institution and elected government will likely seek to avoid the mistakes committed during the transition to peace in Central America and those within Colombia itself, such as the demobilization of M-19. Drastically reducing the armed forces would only create additional unemployment, while reducing the state's ability to contain former combatants-turned-freelance. I suspect that one of the easiest ways to justify and occupy these *Fuerzas Armadas sobredimensionadas*, will be to use them to rebuild the country. While this may prove to be a wise transitional strategy, it should not become long-term policy. A bloated military that has grown 200-300% under Plan Colombia will quickly be criticized as a social welfare program. More importantly, maintaining current personnel levels in the long-term under the pretext of national development will not permit the consolidation of a state already weakened by a decades-long civil war.



While Ecuadorian military development projects are tempting to replicate, in the long run I believe they are counter-productive, fostering undue institutional autonomy and thereby weakening democracy. Today the Ecuadorian military represents more a fourth arm of the state than a subordinate part of the executive branch. This transformation has reinforced the institution's tutelary tendency to act as the ultimate arbiter in not just the political but also social realms. Hence I believe it is imperative that the Ecuadorian model be scrutinized and reformed, rather than exported wholesale to other countries, as is beginning to occur. If a society agrees that the military should be involved in industry or development, that is their sovereign right. This activity should not, however, be permitted to interfere with proper legislative and executive oversight of the military, nor blur the lines between different activities so as to permit the armed forces to, in colloquial terms, "play both ends against the middle".

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