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Flowers of evil, UNODC and the opiates crisis in the Golden Crescent



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Abstract

The Golden Crescent (a mountainous space overlapping Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) and the Andean Region (located at the confluent borders of Peru, Bolivia, Colombia Ecuador and Venezuela) are the two regions in the world where most of poppy and coke leaf are produced. Countries of both regions belong to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) and have signed compromises to develop counter narcotic policies and to fight transnational crime associated with narcotic production. Yet, despite the number of agreements made between UNDOC and countries of both regions, results are contrasting going from decrease of production and a path towards control in the Andean Region, to a steady increase at alarming number in the Golden Crescent. This raises the question on why there have been different outcomes even though similar policies have been implemented under comparable conditions. This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between regional factors and cooperation and how these explain the different control and production results in both regions despite similar efforts displayed by UNODC.

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Since its foundation in 1997 the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) has been a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. The aim of this branch of the United Nations is to assist member states in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism. UNODC member states commit to intensify efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions (UNODC, 2018). It is well known that South West and East Asia, and Latin America are core areas of drug production. The UNDOC has experienced some success in the formal side of cooperation since the number of regional counternarcotic agreements made by Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the UNODC have increased in recent years, showing the will of a greater compromise from the Golden Crescent countries towards a stronger narcotic control policy (Bathia, 2017).

Despite the signature of cooperation agreements and coordination efforts undertaken from national and international counternarcotic agencies, illegal poppies cultivation (which is mainly cultivated in the Golden Crescent region) continues increasing in alarming numbers (Bathia, 2017). This raises the question why has the UNODC failed to curb with production of narcotics in the Golden Crescent, while in the Andean Region this agency was able to control coke leaf production and even reduce its production. Most important, the outcome in the Andean countries has been obtained through the enhancement of mechanisms of regional cooperation that have led to crop substitution and alternative development policies being implemented (UNODC, 2015). In short, although UNODC is following a similar strategy in the two regions, it is obtaining divergent results.

1.2 Research relevance and research question

Regionalism literature would sustain that the lack of cooperation is a result of low regionalism (meaning the lack of regional institutions that work multilaterally to cope with specific issues) (Börzel & Risse, 2016; Söderbaum, 2016). In the same spirit, Hegemonic stability scholars would argue that the absence of a hegemon in the Golden Crescent does not allow cooperation to flourish. Indeed, the hegemon plays a stabilizing role that enables the creation of institutions and thus, enhances cooperation (Kindleberger, 1973; Mearsheimer, 1994; Börzel, 2011). However, none of this literature can explain accurately the phenomena happening in the Golden Crescent, since there is no overarching hegemon, but regional hegemons, and the region displays characteristics highlighted by the regionalism literature that should allow for an increase in cooperation on most pressing issues, but this cooperation is not happening. Moreover, the rise of opiates and poppy production are phenomena that have been largely discussed among social scientists especially from the IPE (International Political Economy) perspective which combines domestic and international aspects. The Golden Crescent case can be better explained by combining specific elements of above-mentioned theories, thus making it an interdisciplinary study. Said theory combinations would present an overarching innovative model offering a new perspective for the study of international cooperation to counter narcotic production.

Employing theoretical foundations of regionalism, hegemonic stability and IPE, the aim of this study is to have a better understanding on how “cooperation on narcotic control and eradication happens” and if regional factors play a determinant role in either potentiating or hindering domestic efforts displayed by UNDOC to decrease the illegal crop production. This thesis also seeks to establish the connection between regional hegemons and cooperation, the divergent wishes of individual countries versus the provision of collective goods and which aspects of domestic public policy may matter to obtain results in control and eradication of opioids. While much research has been done in drug control in specific areas, the analysis of results of similar policies in different areas tend to be neglected. Accordingly, the following research question can be formulated as follows: “To what extent do regional factors shape cooperation efforts displayed by IOs in two regions that face similar illegal crop cultivation problems?” Hence, the present study aims to fill the gap in the literature while continuing the debate on the influence of regional factors on cooperation outcomes.

2.Theoretical background

2.1 Literature review: why nations cooperate?

2.1.1 Regionalism

The analysis of literature on regionalism is instrumental to this study since its core assumes that the more regionalism (meaning multilateral cooperation as well as supra national institution creation), the more cooperation. Therefore, the task of the UNDOC regarding narcotic control should be easier if the countries involved in drug control policies become equally responsible for solving the issue. In political science, regionalism has largely been used as a synonym of regional cooperation and integration (Börzel, 2011). In this study regionalism and regionalization will follow Börzel and Risse (2016) definition. Therefore, regionalism signifies a state-led process for building and sustaining formal regional

institutions and organizations among at least three states (Börzel & Risse, 2016). Regionalization is defined as the processes of increasing economic, political, social, or cultural interactions among geographically or culturally contiguous states and societies (Börzel & Risse, 2016). Certainly, with the end of the Cold-War, studies have become ‘region oriented’ since there is not an overarching hegemon seeking to impose an ideology or have a complete domination. Thus, regions have some leeway to solve their own affairs (Buzan, 1998). The study of regionalism and regionalization has evolved and nowadays it is labelled as ‘post-hegemonic regionalism’, or ‘converging / networking regions’ (Söderbaum, 2016). Such terminologies point out the increasing complexity of the regionalism process. Indeed, the current world order can be categorized as ‘multiplex’ with various new players (such as the BRICS or emerging powers such as the MINTs¹) entering the scene and challenging old hegemony. Regionalism has also been characterized by the fight on war of terror, the responsibility to collaborate (on common issues), intervene and protect (for security or humanitarian reasons) as well as the persistent pattern of overlapping and crisscrossing regional and interregional processes for most different reasons (Söderbaum, 2016). One of the problems in the regionalism literature is that the drivers of regionalism and regionalization varies from one place to the other, and this is not helpful to systematize fundamental causes for cooperation or integration.

It is understandable that the divergences in the different areas of the world, make it difficult to establish a unique pattern applicable to all regions and explain how regional factors affect regional cooperation. Yet, results offered by regionalism literature are variegated going from full cooperation in several issues or cooperation in one field, to complete failure to cooperate or integrate in most pressing issues. On the positive side, regionalism is considered a tool for settling conflicts and securing peace among (former) rival nations or for consolidating democracy in member states (Börzel, 2011). The delegation of authority from national governments to regional institutions allows members to gain in problem-solving capacity, particularly since many societal problems (like the ones faced by the Golden Crescent and Andean region) are not constrained to the boundaries of a nation-state (Börzel, 2011). Hence, regionalism is a successful tool in promoting accommodation

¹ MINTs (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey), are other emerging powers besides the BRICS

for integration. As posited by Söderbaum (2016), comparative regionalism approach is useful to explain the rapprochement of member states in the Golden Crescent and Andean Region in the early XXI century. Both regions have similar backgrounds, since they share heritage among their member states (either an Islamic and Persian past (Akbarzadeh, 2017), or a native indigenous culture (Bianculli, 2016), and have faced illegal crop production issues (either poppy or coke leaf). Nonetheless, collaboration in both areas remains far from being a daily routine.

On the negative side, invoking regionalism as the crucial factor for cooperation is not an easy or automatic task, and we can observe the differences in the degree of regionalism when comparing the Golden Crescent or the Andean area to more integrated regions like the EU (Börzel, 2016). Other factors may be as important for regionalism and as Olson (1971) posited long time ago, when it comes to the provision of public goods, individuals have incentives to "free-ride" on the efforts of others, especially as the group becomes larger. This behavior can be explained, because each member pertaining to an organization has its own individual interests which tend to differ from the interests of other members. Therefore, individuals belonging to a group are interested in obtaining the benefits of the common or public goods, but they do not wish to bear the cost of producing or maintaining the good (Olson, 1971). Thus, the provision of common goods (controlling or eradicating poppy cultivation) may conflict with each nation's interest (since eradication entails fighting illegal or guerrilla groups which may have the power to put in jeopardy or even overthrow the government).

2.1.2 Hegemonic stability theory

Kindleberger's (1973) was the first author to advance a neo-realist position on the role of a hegemon. His ideas further developed and culminated with the creation of the hegemonic stability theory which was popular during the 1970s and 1980s. This theory is largely used to explain the failures or successes of international cooperation. The hegemonic stability solves the problem of cooperation by the existence of a Leviathan (hegemon) with the resources and capabilities to create the common good or institutions that will ensure stability

and collective benefit (Börzel, 2011). Thus, hegemons help to overcome Olson's collective action problem. Hegemons do engage in region-building and ease tensions and advance cooperation, yet, this is done with the sole purpose of enhancing their geostrategic and economic benefits (Börzel, 2011). However, in view of the change dynamics of the world order in the XXI century, the concept of hegemony has evolved. Nowadays, hegemony tends to depict "regional hegemons" rather than a global one (Söderbaum 2016). This entails that various countries seek to be the dominant one in a region and they compete with other hegemon in neighboring areas. Mearsheimer posited the false promise of international institutions, by stating that states wish to ensure their own security and thus, will recognize that the safest position in the system is one of regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 1994). Even if Hegemons are good at creating institutions fostering cooperation, they do not necessarily explain why cooperation continues over time. As the realist survival position argues, states will act according to its neighbors' reactions.

2.1.3 IPE

The IPE literature correctly points out that the implications of the drug trade are multifaceted. Although IPE does not address directly the problem of cooperation, this literature which is at the crossroads of politics and economics, points out how some internal factors may affect the relations between countries and IOs. For example, addiction, epidemics, and related crime are some of the consequences of such narcotic manufacturing which affects public health and societal security (Talpur & George, 2014). Hafvenstein (2011) and Pothier (2009) advance that to develop a coherent counter-narcotic strategy, factors such as integration, functioning institutions, rule of law and policy pressure needs to be in place to solve the opioid problem in the Golden Crescent. Moreover, alternative commercial crops (such as wheat, or saffron) (Adhikari 2015) and employment opportunities need to be created in rural areas to cope with alternatives to poppy cultivation. Indeed, since the Golden Crescent states are highly dependent on economic growth to forge their stability, regional cooperation is a must to ensure success in fighting illegal crop production (Börzel, 2011).

Several other theoretical proposals have been crafted to cope with the illegal poppy and coke cultivation. Advancing IPE propositions, Van Ham and Kamminga (2007) and Miron (2003) argue that legalization of poppies, and drugs would have a positive spillover effect such as a decrease in prices, crop control, taxation or export of medical drugs derived from poppies. Likewise, in the Chapare and Yungas regions in Bolivia, legal coke production areas are permitted, since this plantation provides a higher and more stable source of income than other crops (Mercado & Molina, 2017). However, the authors understate the fact that their proposal needs to be implemented very incrementally. Otherwise, it could easily turn into a health (since with high availability people might become frequent users of drugs) or economic risk (since mass production would make the value of the crop decrease). Moreover, the legalization of drugs requires states based on a strong rule of law, a characteristic which is absent in the three countries of the Golden Crescent, but also, albeit in a lesser degree, in the Andean Region. Hence, if such plans were to be executed, help from an institution acting as an observer or contributory enforcer (such as an international organization or a regional institution) would be required to ensure best practices in the region.

Moreover, Goodhand (2007) and Nathan (2009) posit that there is no universal, one-direction relationship between, drugs, corruption and conflict. Hence, the implementation of a very aggressive counter-narcotic strategy based on crop eradication could be counterproductive. Complete eradication without alternative sources of income for producers could cause more political instability, economic stagnation and even health issues. However, IPE has its limitations since for practical purposes, IPE concentrates on dealing with either understanding the political determinants of an economic situation or either explaining how integration in the international economic sphere affect national policies.

As stated beforehand, the rise of opiates and poppy production are phenomena that have been largely discussed among social scientists. Yet, the combination of the theories belonging to different disciplines (IR, Political Science and Economics) seems to offer a promising explanation to the ongoing phenomena. Said combination of theories would

present an overarching innovative model offering a new perspective to the study of illegal crop growth and control that would highlight the multidisciplinary nature of the issue at stake.

2.2 Theoretical framework

In this thesis I will posit that the three theories are useful to explain the contrast between the Golden Crescent and the Andean regions if we introduce some amendments and take a multidisciplinary approach.

H1. Comparative regionalism

Concerning comparative regionalism, both regions have a common historical background and face similar challenges. However, in the Golden Crescent proximity and continuity are more important, while in the Andean Regions, Bolivia and Peru share this proximity, but not Bolivia and Colombia. Moreover, Peru and Bolivia are countries where coca leaf is produced and Colombia a country where coca leaf is processed until it becomes a drug. Therefore, the division of labor plays a role. Indeed, characteristics based on similarities and background do not necessarily entail the development of brotherly bonds. Otherwise, cases such as the partition of Yugoslavia would not have occurred. As mentioned beforehand, in this study the terms regionalism will follow Börzel and Risse (2016) definition. Thus, referring to a state-led process for building and sustaining formal regional institutions and organizations among at least three states (Börzel & Risse, 2016). Therefore, regionalism will be tested as a possible factor to explain cooperation. If commonalities foster regionalism, cooperation would be enhanced.

1. Cooperation is enhanced by the means of shared geographical space, challenges, and cultural commonalities(regionalism)

H2. The hegemon and the difficulties of cooperation

The second assumption highlights the fact that a hegemon can pave the way to solve cooperation issues. Olson (1971) clearly highlights the difficulties of cooperation. The different wishes of individuals might clash and this complicate the providing of public goods. Being able to reach compliance is not simple and cooperation is a pre-requisite to reach consensus. Concerning hegemonic stability theory, if there is a single hegemon (rather than regional hegemons) cooperation is easier to get started since the hegemon tend to shape the interests in the region to its own image. In contrast, if there are several regional hegemons and if IOs do not represent the interest of these regional hegemons (which may have competing claims among them) this makes the start and continuation of cooperation more difficult. In fact, under a situation of competing regional hegemons, collective action problems arise. Yet, some authors such as Snidal (1985) would argue that this theory can only be applicable to very few empirical cases. Indeed, this is a clear limitation of said theory. Nevertheless, considering the regionalism and regionalization phenomena, one could argue that the willingness and struggles that some countries undertake to become a regional hegemon seem to confirm the validity and importance of hegemonic stability theory. Yet, the “single hegemon theory” still has some usefulness, since through the creation of institutions, the hegemon is showing the way to peripheral countries on how to cooperate. Therefore, the term hegemon will be referred as a regional one for the Golden Crescent whereas in the Andean Region it will refer to the ‘global hegemon’. In short, this study will assess whether a hegemon is a *sine non-qua* for cooperation.

2. The presence of a hegemon in a region becomes an effective driver for cooperation / integration

H3. IPE

IPE theories correctly point out how in both regions political and economic factors are intertwined. But most important, IPE theories seem to suggest that that crop substitution

rather than solely crop eradication may be the uttermost important policy to control illegal crop growth. Yet, in one region this policy has been implemented, while in the other the implementation possibilities have been limited. The general belief is that development and economic prosperity entail political stability. However, in the Golden Crescent, internal factors related to security (including terrorisms and civil wars) can hinder or derail efforts from the state aimed at controlling opioid production. The presence of violent groups which can compete with the power of the state concerning areas of control and appropriation should not be dismissed. A state may consider not being very aggressive regarding eradication policies if rival groups capable of challenging the government have the control of large areas of poppy production and especially if these groups may have the capacity of overthrowing the government. This internal factor hinders international cooperation efforts.

3. Illegal crop control depends on the availability of crop substitution and the capabilities of the state to have some degree of control over internal security issues.

The combination of comparative regionalism, hegemonic stability and IPE can provide a good understanding of the multi-layered and multiplex dynamics in both regions. This multidisciplinary approach also highlights that notwithstanding situational similarities in the two regions, different outcomes related to cooperation for illegal crops production control and eradication may arise. This model represents a new perspective which aims to consider the multidimensionality of regionalism and go beyond binary debates (such as regionalism vs. regionalization, formal vs. informal interaction, participation of state vs. non-state actors etc.) (Söderbaum, 2016).

3. Methodological framework

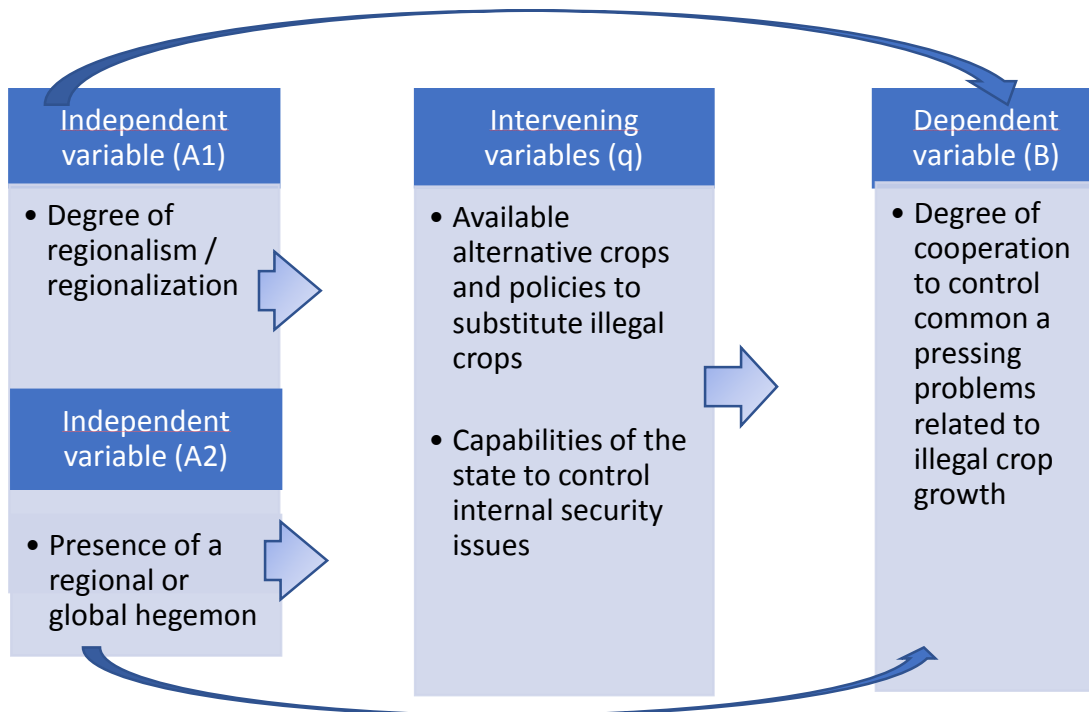
3.1 Case selection

The assumptions of regionalism and hegemonic stability theory predict that cooperation should be enhanced in the Golden Crescent and the Andean region but for

different reasons. Regionalism explains more the Golden Crescent case and hegemony the Latin American case. Yet, cooperation is bigger in Latin America and does not seem to progress in West Asia, despite having the preconditions to flourish. The in-depth comparative study that will be carried out in the following sections aims to understand the anomalies of two cases with similar backgrounds, yet, divergent results. Thus, general theory can be either proved or disproved on the basis of empirical case analysis.

3.2 Operationalization

The model used for this research is posited as follows:



H1. Cooperation is enhanced by the means of shared geographical space, challenges, and cultural commonalities (regionalism)

To determine whether regionalism does trigger cooperation, a close analysis of the degree of regionalism in both regions needs to be carried out. The theory posits that commonalities have an impact in said phenomenon. Therefore, to prove H1 counting the number of regional institutions as well as looking at joint action activities will support the line of argumentation. To disprove H1 the examination should point that regionalism does not play a key role in cooperation.

H2. The presence of a hegemon in a region becomes an effective driver for cooperation / integration

If evidence is found on the stabilizing role of hegemons which enhance cooperation, the assumption can be confirmed. If this does not happen, the theory can be refuted.

H3. Illegal crop control depends on the availability of crop substitution and on the capabilities of the state to have some degree of control over internal security issues.

Evidence of the soundness of the third hypothesis will be confirmed by analysing possible income and implementation of alternative crops that may substitute illegal crop production. Concerning the capacities of the state, we will analyse if there is a strong presence of terrorist or violent groups in production areas. If the two conditions are not supported by the evidence, this would mean that internal policy and security issues are not a crucial factor to trigger cooperation.

3.3 Data collection

To conduct comparative studies between the Andean region and the Golden Crescent, the main method of research will be the analysis of written sources from the mid 90's until present date. Books and scholarly articles will allow to have a solid theoretical and historical background on the dynamics of the region. Data collected through nine UNODC online databases regarding drug control (including monitoring reports, maps (such as

trafficking flows and production and cultivation areas), tables and graphs on the prevalence, eradication and production of opioids and coke and alternative development) will materialize facts into numbers. Other primary sources such as newspapers articles have also been analyzed to complement both scholarly articles and data sets. These documents contain the most relevant and up to date information on illegal crop control.

Nevertheless, the selection of these documents can lead towards biased results. Time restraints and the impossibility to do field work make the use of secondary sources indispensable in this research. Nevertheless, to minimize bias, the use of various sources will help increase the construct and the internal validity in the study and try to represent as much perspectives as possible.

3.4 Methodology

Comparative studies (Lijphart, 1971) will be used to empirically compare and understand the drivers of cooperation in the Golden Crescent case and show its similarities and contrasts with the Andean region (more precisely Peru and Bolivia). To gain a better understanding of the dynamics of regional factors and cooperation and its effects on regionalism, this study will analyze different results of the implementation and alternative policies to curb illegal crop cultivation. Lijphart (1971) suggests that when using comparative studies, data becomes unrandomized. This is certainly true and a problem, however, a case which has comparative analysis with other cases is helpful for theory building or theory proving since it highlights common factors but also existing differences between the Golden Crescent and the Andean region. In fact, comparative analysis builds on the use of Most Similar Systems (MSS) which maximizes variance on the dependent variable, or Most Different System (MDS) which minimizes the variance in the dependent variable. As Peters (1998) highlights, any two cases have some comparable features. By the means of MSS this study intends to emphasize the key patterns of similarity and difference between regions. Besides, MSS designs are very helpful with testing hypothesis by confirming causation statements between the objects studied (Peters, 1998). The next section will deal with the empirical side of this study.

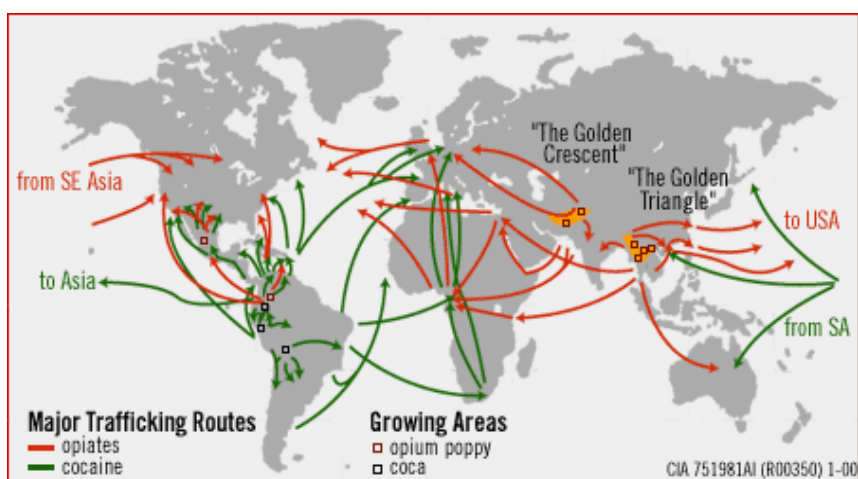
4. Empirical research

H1. Comparative regionalism

This section seeks to analyze the different degrees of regionalism in both regions. The advancement of such phenomena varies from region to region. Indeed, the development of regionalism has been very different in Asia compared to Latin America. In fact, regionalism per se in the Asian region is only present in some institutions like the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) or in SAARC (South Asia Association for regional cooperation) (Jetschke & Katada, 2016). In general, Asian countries either work on bilateral basis (which enable regionalization) yet, hampers regionalism. On the other hand, Latin American countries have been able to develop (in waves) a large amount of regional institutions which have enable them to cooperate in different areas such as the Organization of American States: OAS, CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, or the CAN: Andean Community (Bianculli, 2016).

By following the definition of regionalization given beforehand, surely, we can observe that Asia has experienced regionalization without regionalism (Jetschke & Katada, 2016). The continent itself is divided in blocks generally using cultural, religious or linguistic heritage as a bonding mechanism. Relations in Asia are mainly driven on bilateral basis rather than on the multilateral level. Such circumstances make the process of regionalism more difficult since cooperation and the creation of regional institutions requires the participation of at least three states to be truly multilateral. Indeed, cooperation and supra national institutions are the foundation for fostering the development of regionalism (Jetschke & Katada, 2016). Some of the few existing institutions concentrate their efforts to deal with trade and security issues. However, it is important to note that more regional institution-building is developing in areas such as peace keeping and conflict mediation (which are issues that characterize the Western areas of the continent) (Jetschke & Katada, 2016).

Regarding the first hypothesis, under the current circumstances, the Andean Region and Golden Crescent are facing very similar challenges while dealing with poverty and drug production. Due to the similarities in such hurdles, one would expect an almost automatic will for cooperation to fight illegal crop production. However, balances of power and mutual distrust are factors which have fostered the lack of collaboration among neighboring countries in both regions. The following map shows the most important transnational networks of production and drug trafficking which clearly correspond to the areas that are being analyzed in this study:



Major opium and coke production areas / trafficking routes (Bathia, 2017)

In terms of ethnic identities (such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazara etc.) and religion divisions within Islam (Shiites, or Sunnites), the Golden Crescent is a much more diverse region. Yet, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan have a shared historical heritage which tends to be often adduced as a mean to create ‘brotherly’ bonds (Saikal & Nourzhanov, 2017). Certainly, such ties have become a tool used by the national leaders of the Golden Crescent to join forces against issues that can only be solved by the means of joint action and collaboration. Thus, this would be a clear sign that the comparative regionalism approach is making inroads. The Afghan civil war provoked that millions of refugees seek for asylum in either Iran or Pakistan. This conflict also created a rampant illicit trade of narcotics (Saikal & Nourzhanov, 2017). Hence, this has become a problem that equally affects all the Golden Crescent members.

After the announcement of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, and with the arrival of new government native officials to power, there seems to be a change in the regional dynamics. Indeed, the three members of the Golden Crescent seem to be less worried about direct foreign influence and occupation in Afghanistan². Therefore, collaboration among neighbors has become a promising way to cope with threats that equally affects them (such as the opiates crisis) (Saikal & Nourzhanov, 2017). Moving towards collaboration is an historical step, since relations among these three countries were very rocky at times.

Slowly Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran seem to be catching up with the regionalism phenomenon. The foundation of two intelligence sharing institutions (the Joint Planning Cell (JPC) and various Border Liaison Office (BLOs)) seem to be the first illustrations of a developing regionalism in the Golden Crescent (UNODC, 2018). For example, in September 2017, the BLO at Islam Qala (Afghanistan), stopped and searched a trailer crossing the border from the Islamic Republic of Iran (UNODC, 2017). The vehicle was supposed to carry 1,059 drums of motor oil. However, after a close inspection, only 252 drums contained oil, while 807 contained acetic anhydride (acid used to process opium and transform it into heroin). That amount of chemicals could have been used to produce up to 8 tons of heroin (UNODC, 2017). Therefore, this would confirm our first hypothesis regarding the similarities in the challenges faced by countries.

Likewise, the Andean Region is composed by a group of commonalities. Several groups of native indigenous tribes (including Quechuas, Aymaras, Awajún, Kallawaya, Guaraní etc.) who's coexistence and relations date from the Inca Empire times (Maúrtua de Romaña, 1994). Relations among Andean neighbors were quite steady due to cultural homogeneity, except for the Peru-Bolivian war in 1841 (IPeru, 2018). Latin American supranational institutions (such as OAS: Organization of American States, or CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) being highly based on the American model, are the result of Washington's indirect influence in the region (Bianculli, 2016). However, the creation of bodies such as CAN (Andean Community) is a clear example of

² This phenomenon is quite surprising since the diminish presence of the hegemon is triggering cooperation.

contestation of the American model. Currently, regionalism in Latin America is characterized by the pluralism of regional organizations, including complementary and competing ones with overlapping memberships (Bianculli, 2016). Therefore, cooperation is complicated since, agreements in one organization might contradict the other agreements a nation has signed with another organization. This happens to be the case with the share membership of the CAN (which seeks Andean integration and has divisions in all branches of the *trias politica*), that differs with the ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América) (where Bolivia is a member state of this left wing economic organization) or the Pacific Alliance (where Peru is a member state of this free trade institution) (Ministerio de asuntos exteriores y de cooperación de España, 2018).

Despite divergences in the areas, South America and South West Asia seem to have a similar pattern in the ways regionalism has evolved. Both Andean countries and Golden Crescent members have sought to mitigate foreign influence (especially referring to American troops). Indeed, such wishes seem a natural outcome of the Pan-American and Pan-Islamic agendas that both regions have built through the years (Jetschke & Katada, 2016; Bianculli, 2016). Thus, we can confirm that factors such as commonalities among regions help develop regionalism. Besides, it is important to highlight that now more than ever, both regions are proving to be more committed to amplify cooperation in view of fulfilling their wish of avoiding further American influence (Bianculli, 2011; Akbarzadeh, 2017; Zaman, 2017). The creation of new regional organizations (like CAN) as well as fostering more agreements among nations (like the Triangular Initiative) (UNODC, 2018) are some examples of this process. The next section will deal with the importance of the hegemon, and the ways its presence can foster cooperation.

H2. The hegemon and the difficulties of cooperation

The following section will deal with the quest of hegemony. Some scholars argue that the absence or ineffectiveness of Asian regionalism is often linked with the non-existence of a hegemon (Börzel, 2011). In the pursuit of hegemony, many states seek to create balances of power over different areas of the continent to exert control in weaker states.

In the Golden Crescent case, it is very clear that Iran wishes to influence Afghanistan to counterpower Saudi Arabian influence (Akbarzadeh, 2017). Likewise, Pakistan intends to do the same on Afghan soil to avoid further Indian penetration (Zaman, 2017). Pakistan and Afghanistan had a rough past regarding cooperation due to the security-driven agenda regarding balance of power against India (here referring to the fight over Kashmir and influence in Afghanistan), seeking terrorism control as well as to mitigate Afghan claims on specific areas of Pakistani territory along the Durand line (Zaman, 2017). Relations also were affected by the fact that Pakistan (in joint covert assistance with the Americans and Saudi Arabia) supported certain terrorist groups such as the *Mujahideen* or the Taliban (who are one of the main guardian of poppy production) by equipping them and by providing shelter (Zaman, 2017). Indeed, Pakistan looked Afghanistan as the perfect place for securing strategic depth³ by supporting the Taliban on a proxy war (with the support of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) against the Northern Alliance (supported by Iran, Russia and India) (Zaman, 2017).

With the fall of the Taliban regime, the arrival of a new Pashtun majority government, and the diversion of American capabilities to Iraq, Pakistan saw its fears of Indian penetration into its strategic backyard increase dramatically (Zaman, 2017). Thus, to prevent India and Iran to fill the void that the Americans were leaving behind, Islamabad decided to revive and support the Taliban cause. However, due to Pakistan's commitment on the war on terror, the Pakistani military established a tactic that distinguished 'good' (Taliban-Kashmir oriented groups) from 'bad' (any other group) militants (Zaman, 2017). Yet, as mentioned beforehand, the withdrawal of NATO and the change in administrations in Afghanistan and Pakistan have become a new opportunity for both nations to overcome their differences and develop a positive bilateral relation. Collaboration on security issues is a key question for Pakistan since religious extremism has had a domestic blowback (Zaman, 2017).

³ In military terms, strategic depth refers to the distance from the frontline to its center of gravity or Heartland, its core population areas or important cities or industrial installations (Khan, 2015).

The fall of the Taliban regime also offered major opportunities for reconciliation between Iran and Afghanistan. Tehran had expressed its concern regarding American presence in Afghan soil, since there was an existing threat of action against Iran from the United States (Akbarzadeh, 2017). Iran also took the opportunity to further expand and reinforce their ideology by highlighting their ‘enmity’ towards the United States. More engagement in Afghan reconstruction would mean fighting against the global hegemon and enemy (Akbarzadeh, 2017). Tehran’s rapprochement with Kabul was aimed to convince Afghanistan of expelling U.S. forces from its territory or at least to ensure no further hostile acts against Iran (Akbarzadeh, 2017).

For the Latin American case, the U.S. world hegemon has always considered the region as its backyard. During the Pax Americana, Washington was interested in building regional cooperation institutions such as in regions like Europe (Bianculli, 2016). Despite the fact of having no geographical continuity with the Andean Region, the United States power is still a regional hegemon, and Central and South America are considered its zones of influence (Bianculli, 2016). Certainly, the regional institutions created in Latin America (such as OAS, CELAC, etc.) are highly influenced by the American institutional model (Bianculli, 2016). Furthermore, many agencies and projects carried out in the region are financed by American funds, thus, confirming American hegemony towards its southern neighbors. In a way, this has brought stability to the continent which has not witnessed civil wars in the early XXI century. However, emerging powers have proved to be willing to further enhance cooperation within the sub region in the continent to avoid further American influence (Bianculli, 2016).

Certainly, hegemony has been experienced in both regions in a very different way. Hegemonic stability theory as factor for cooperation can be contested since both regions dealt with different types of hegemony. Yet, they worked towards mitigating foreign influence. The next section will focus on presenting other alternatives to illegal crop eradication and the positive effects these can have.

H3. IPE and alternative development

This section deals with the third hypothesis based on IPE lines. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold-War, the fight against drugs replaced the fight against communism (Chouvy, 2010). Nonetheless, the war on drugs has substantially failed to reach its goal. In fact, the prohibitionist status of the war on drug has only fostered military actions as the preferred mean to solve the problem from its root. Policy makers advocating in favor of such war have failed to understand that illicit cropping is an economic activity that should be addressed through political and economic measures and not only through military ones (Chouvy, 2010). Besides, the war on drugs seeks to reduce the supply of drugs in foreign countries *via* eradication and thus, it raises the price of drugs in Western markets, with the hope that consumers will quit (Chouvy, 2010). However, as Chouvy (2010) referring to the 2004 World Bank report notes:

“Eradication being a coercive method can further enhance crop location mobility or political instability. A key lesson is that forced eradication alone will not work and is likely to be counterproductive, resulting in perverse incentives for farmers to grow more drugs (e.g. in Colombia), displacement of production to more remote areas, and fueling of violence and insecurity (Peru, Bolivia, Colombia), which in several cases forced the eradication policy to be reversed and lead to adverse political outcomes.”

As Chouvy (2010) suggests, the major problem regarding direct eradication relies on the fact there is no other alternative income offered to farmers and eradication implies a direct economic loss for them. Indeed, eradication reinforces the main driver for opium or coke leaf production: poverty. For the past 25 years, UNODC has encouraged member states to adopt alternative development as a form of drug control policy (UNODC, 2018). These methods have proven to be a preferred alternative to eradication to deal with illegal crop cultivation. Regions where illegal crops are produced tend to be isolated and populations tend to live under the poverty line. Farmers are incentivized to cultivate these types of crops, since the legal alternative of traditional cash crops) does not always provide sufficient income (UNODC, 2018). This phenomenon is pervasive for the Andean and Golden Crescent regions.

Currently UNODC is carrying alternative development projects in six countries: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Laos, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia (UNODC, 2018). UNODC's main objective is to promote lawful and sustainable socio-economic options for communities living out of illegal livelihoods (UNODC, 2018). However, the focus area of each program differs from region to region and from country to country. Indeed, each program is intended to be tailor made to deal with the challenges that each country has. For instance, programs in Colombia or Peru target increasing the production of export agricultural products whereas countries like Afghanistan, Myanmar or Laos programs seek to ensure food security (UNODC, 2018). Alternative development consists of a combination of the following nine activities:

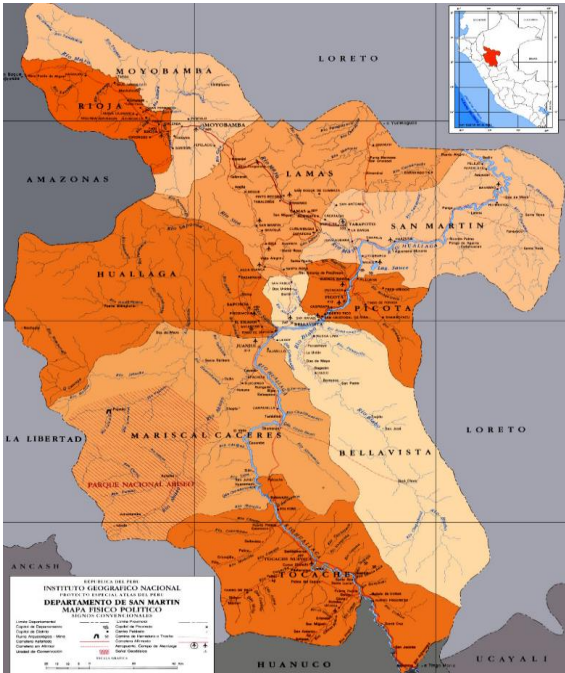


Components of Alternative Development (UNODC, 2018)

UNODC's is using an encompassing strategy composed by elements that include: improved markets, environmental protection, agricultural development, education, community development, gender equality, basic infrastructure, health, and security and rule of law (UNODC, 2018). These components have both social and economic factors, which

would entail that solving issues related to illegal crop growth would require collaboration in more than one domain.

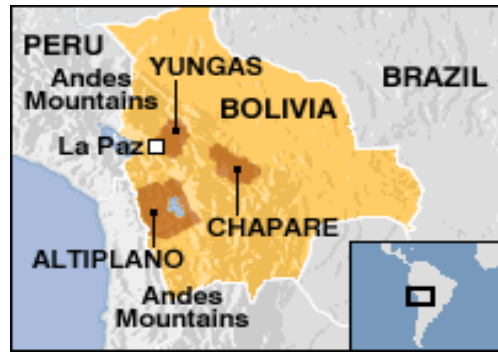
The Andean region has seen great improvements regarding illegal crop cultivation. Without any doubt, such policy implementation has been more effective than direct eradication. The cultivation of coffee, palm oil, cacao, pijuayo, palm heart and eucalyptus in a sustainable and environmentally-friendly way, as well as the development of agroforestry schemes are some of the projects that are being implemented by UNODC in the region (UNODC, 2018). In Peru, UNODC has worked with over 40,000 former coke farmers in implementing and combining some of these alternatives. Such techniques have been very successful and steady in providing families with an increase in their revenues. In 2012 the income produced from alternative development products reached \$150 million (UNODC, 2018). Thus, this seems to demonstrate that in some cases, the measures taken by IOs reinforce cooperation. For instance, in the 1990's the department of San Martín (located in the north-eastern Peru) was the main coke leaf producer. According to official data, in 1992, the cultivated area of illegal coke reached a total number of 130,000 hectares, accounting for 55% of the total cultivated area (UNODC, 2009).



Map of San Martín department (Map-Peru, 2010).

In the same year, coca represented 46% of the gross value of agricultural production which; in contrast in 2008 once the UNDOC alternative programs were implemented, coca only represented 0.5%. In addition, extreme poverty has been reduced from 20.9% in 2004 to 14.5% in 2008, and moderate poverty from 57.1% in 2004 to 33.2% in 2008. Currently the San Martín region has 260,000 hectares of licit crops such as rice, coffee, cacao, palm oil, corn, or cotton (UNODC, 2009). The gross value of agricultural production is estimated at \$ 330 million dollars. This is a significant increase in producers' revenue compared to the \$ 2 million dollars value of illicit coke. More than any other producers, cacao farmers have increased their income from \$ 3 million dollars in 2003 to \$ 20 million dollars in 2008. This is expected to increase to \$ 35 million dollars per year, due to the increasing demands for chocolate and cacao products in Asian markets (UNODC, 2009).

According to the 2012 coca monitoring survey, in Bolivia the illegal cultivation of the crop has decreased by 7%. In 2011, the number of hectares dedicated to illicit coke leaf cultivation stood around 27,200 hectares whereas in 2012 only 25,300 hectares were cultivated (UNODC, 2018). Alternative development projects are mainly being carried out in the Yungas and Chapare areas that stand as the main coke producers in the country. Such programs focus on income generation and environmental protection activities that tackle poverty (UNODC, 2018). These projects aim at consolidating sustainable use and conservation of natural resources through rational and sustainable forest utilization and agroforestry management practices. Forest development, the conservation of soil, rivers and watersheds, and institutional strengthening are some of the initiatives of the alternative development programs. Approximately 4,500 families and 50 local organizations directly benefit from such projects activities thanks to an increased income, employment and availability of agricultural and forest resources (UNODC, 2018). Another project of alternative development consists on providing vocational training in a wide range of areas defined by market demand and regional development needs, such as tourism, agriculture and the food industry. Thanks to these type of programs, around 7,500 young men and women will be qualified to work in the productive and service sectors (UNODC, 2018).



Map of illegal coke production in Bolivia (BBC, 2006)

Likewise, planting other high value crops in the Golden Crescent could be beneficial for the local population. For instance, in Pakistan in the Tirah Valley (located in north west Pakistan), saffron (also called ‘red gold’) has become a viable alternative to opium (Rukhshan, 2018). As Faiq Iqbal, Agriculture Officer of the Khyber Agency declares: "Saffron is world's most expensive spice which is derived from stigmas of saffron crocus. It is used in cuisines of different countries and has a scarce production around the world." (Rukhshan, 2018).



Map of the Tirah Valley (The Nation, 2014).

Nowadays, the financial return of opium (also called ‘black gold’) lead farmers opt to cultivate such type of crops. Nevertheless, authorities are aiming to replace ‘black gold’

with 'red gold'. Examining some numbers may give us an idea if this replacement is possible. One acre of saffron produces one kilogram of dry stigma with the value of 600,000 rupees (Rs.) in local market (Rukhshan, 2018). In contrast one acre of poppy farming produces 10 kilograms of hashish with a market value of Rs. 300,000. This highlights the fact that final profits coming from opium production are only half of what could be earned through saffron cultivation (Rukhshan, 2018).

Indeed, these numbers seem encouraging and make viable the ideas of fostering alternative development in the Golden Crescent. Yet, farmers would first need to do a big investment, before experiencing any favorable results in their livelihoods (Rukhshan, 2018). Therefore, the promotion of saffron farming should not be taken for granted and further efforts/advancements need to be done in its favor. Officials of the Return and Rehabilitation Unit such as Fazle Imran argue that there is a need to develop market linkages for providing stable financial return besides training of local farmer about saffron farming which is also quite technical. Other initiatives such as free provision of saffron bulbs to farmers will be an essential steppingstone in promoting such type of crop culture (Rukhshan, 2018).

However, the alternative development strategy is complex to be implemented in a straightforward manner in Afghanistan because of a deteriorating security situation (UNODC, 2010). The rising insecurity that exists within the country, induces farmers to continue growing poppy, since nowadays they do not have access to the aid provided by international organizations. Concerning other strategies aggressive counter narcotic policies solely based in eradication might be counterproductive because there is a link between drug production and trafficking and the fueling of insurgent activities. If the international community puts too much pressure on Afghan authorities to give rapid results in the battle against narcotics, Kabul is encouraged to pursue eradication and punitive measures, but this may mean more internal turmoil. As stated earlier, removing farmers' source of income without some proper licit alternatives might lead farmers to join the insurgency to counter their economic loss, hence continuing the vicious cycle of poverty and insecurity (UNODC, 2010). Peru faced similar security issues because of the

activities of terrorist groups such as The Shining Path. The control of said groups was essential in being able to implement UNODC programs. Hence, the Golden Crescent members need to work together to regain state capabilities and thus, implement alternative development programs.

Nevertheless, even if there is a commitment towards battling narcotics *via* cooperation, such efforts can become ineffective if there are no certain capacities of the state for implementing the rule of law that makes enforcement possible. Corruption and bribery are two key areas that the governments of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan need to address urgently. As Transparency International suggests: “where illicit flows in finance and arms are not robustly tackled, counter-terrorist and counter-narcotics measures will be ineffective. Where bribery is the norm in business transactions, firms will be reluctant to invest in the country.” (Transparency International, 2018).

Just as Rosen (2015) posits “drug trafficking presence in a country can increase corruption and undermine political stability, while on the other hand, social and political instability may be causal factors for attracting a thriving drug industry.” Some other scholars argue that the control of a lucrative illegal drug trade in the hands of a political actor, rebel, or insurgent group can lengthen a conflict (Rosen, 2015). This clearly seems to be the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Whenever the state powers are in the hands of drug trafficking or transnational criminal organizations, kleptocracy arises and it becomes a force multiplier to enhance criminal organizations. In general, the state’s capacities (including roads, seaports, airports, warehouses, security apparatus, and justice sector) will be at the mercy of the illegal transactions of these transnational groups (Rosen, 2015).

Peru and Bolivia are not exempt from corruption or bribery, but they rank lower than Golden Crescent countries. Following the corruption perception index, Peru ranked 96th out of 180 countries and Bolivia ranked 112th meanwhile, Afghanistan ranks 177th, Pakistan 117th, and Iran 130th (Transparency International, 2018). Initiatives to fight corruption by creating institutions and advancing laws that provide access to public

information and transparency are being implemented, especially in the Andean region (Transparency International, 2018). Peru has been a role model in the implementation of such policies related to several high-level corruption cases as well as almost completely annihilate terrorist groups such as the Shining Path (Transparency International, 2018). However, the problem in Latin America remains that even if there are more policies to fight corruption, they are not always comprehensive and thus fail to address the historical and structural causes of corruption and the process is still lacking accountability (Transparency International, 2018). Overall, much needs to be done to ensure a more transparent process concerning corruption, drug trafficking and illegal crop production, but first results seem to be heading in the right direction. Alternative development looks like a promising alternative towards illegal cultivation and hopefully, the national governments of the Golden Crescent and the Andean region will opt to initiate and consolidate this strategy.

5. Results

This section will discuss the empirical relation between the comparative study of the Golden Crescent and Andean region, link them to the hypotheses and understanding how this study contributes to the existing theories of the elements triggering regionalism.

The first hypothesis contends that regionalism can be enhanced by the means of shared geographical space, challenges, and cultural commonalities. For both regions this statement seems to be true, however, to a lesser extent in the Golden Crescent area. In general, the Andean Region and the Golden Crescent share respectively borders, cultural heritage, and face the challenges of being emerging countries. However, a war was waged in Afghanistan, and the difficult historical past of Pakistan and Iran are crucial factors to explain the delay in the creation of supra-governmental institutions to curb with the opiates crisis. This contrast with the Andean case were the institution building and cooperation efforts via supranational cooperation were easier to enact. Yet, the relations among the Golden Crescent nations seem to be improving in the aftermath of NATO troops withdrawal and change of governments in

the three countries. Most important, identity has been the most recurrent driver used to unite the countries via a shared Islamic or Persian identity.

The second hypothesis states that the presence of a hegemon in a region becomes the most effective driver for cooperation / integration. This argument is more debatable. Certainly, in Latin American case, the United States has acted as the regional hegemon and has helped in the development of cooperation by the means of institutional creation. The OAS is a clear example of this. However, other regional institutions have been founded without the help of the American hegemon. This is the case for the Andean Community, which seeks to deal with regional challenges while following a Pan-American agenda and depend less on the United States. In short, the hegemon may be instrumental in creating institutions or at in least in showing the path to countries on how to solve problems using multilateralism and cooperation. On the other hand, the Golden Crescent case would show that cooperation in the absence of a regional hegemon is more difficult to start and sustain. The fight to control Afghanistan among the various powers in Asia (Saudi Arabia vs. Iran and Pakistan vs. India), as well as the mutual distrusts among Golden Crescent neighbors (that existed until quite recently), made cooperation almost a daunting task. Yet, current changes in the region with the improvement of relations, the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan and the creation of more multilateral institutions would posit that a regional hegemon may not always be necessary to foster cooperation. Nevertheless, both regions share in common the idea to distance the combat to opioids and coke from an excessive American involvement.

The third hypothesis followed both IPE's claims which posited that alternative development is a good alternative to overcome illegal crop production problems and the need to strengthen state capacities to control internal security issues. The UNODC is helping to develop alternative means for farmers to subsist. The effects are quite promising and further expansion is viable. Nonetheless, the creation of such bodies has not been an easy task. Factors such as political stability or security can become a burden for cooperation. The Afghan case poses more challenges due to the direct presence of a terrorist group whereas in Latin America although transnational organized crime exists and at times groups like the FARC or The Shining Path posed a huge threat to the state power, they are now under

control. Nowadays terrorist groups or drug cartels in the Andean Region are still operating, yet, in a smaller scale. This show the regaining of state capacities to control territories that were under the control of rebel forces or terrorist.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the research question: “To what extent do regional factors shape cooperation efforts displayed by IOs in two regions that face similar illegal crop cultivation problems?”. Several hypotheses about the relation between regional factors, regionalism and narcotic policies were derived from the theory. This study hypothesized that even if similar circumstances exist in different regions, regional factors are an important element that can either foster or hinder regionalism. The final findings of this study support the assumption that the ways states trust their neighbors, their geographical proximity, their shared history and cultural similarities may somewhat condition how they coordinate to deal with problems that affect them jointly. Hegemons can foster cooperation and integration, yet, their existence is not a precondition for triggering regionalism. Despite the challenges witnessed in both regions, institutions are a useful mean to overcome cooperation. Positive outcomes can be drawn from joint action to deal with narcotics.

7. Discussion

Notwithstanding, this study has its limitations and weaknesses. Comparing two diverse regions is extremely challenging, and by narrowing down their similarities or differences, the researcher starts selecting and omitting elements which could explain how regional factors affect regionalism. For example, the study on how the Cold War confrontation was handled in both regions deserves a closer look, since it influenced the rise and fall off groups like the Taliban. In addition, further attention could have been brought on the relation between political stability, security and corruption since these are factors that could explain the absence of regional cooperation. Moreover, the study of other regions that face similar issues could be useful in drawing empirical conclusions on whether or

not the research findings of this study are applicable to other cases such as West and Central Africa, the Middle East and North Africa or Central Asia. Finally, it would be interesting to explore if cooperation is enhanced under a stable or rising single hegemon or when the power of the single hegemon is dwindling.

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