

*Economic Ideological Alignment and Increased Human Rights Violations in Ecuador 1984-1988*

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A Theoretical Framework of State Repression in Latin America

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Is there a relationship between the increase in both U.S. foreign aid and human rights violations in Ecuador from 1984 to 1988? If so, which causal mechanisms are present in the case of Ecuador? The ambition of this thesis is to contribute to the development of literature on the relationship between foreign aid and human rights in International Relations as well as the motives for state repression in democracies. To perform this investigation, first I will present a review of the different literature on the relationship between human rights and foreign aid. Then I will present the proposed explanatory theoretical model and causal mechanisms. I will present a case study on human rights in Ecuador from 1984 to 1992, with a deep analysis of 1984 to 1988. Afterwards, I will test the congruence of each causal mechanism to ascertain whether the hypotheses in the proposed theoretical framework are present. I will conclude with a summary of the findings as well as remarks on the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980's scholars have dedicated their research to the understanding of the relationship between human rights and foreign aid. Given the millions of human rights victims around the globe, and the continued use of aid as a foreign policy tool, it is important to understand this relationship. As issues in global governance become increasingly complex, knowing the potential impact of international aid on the domestic human rights situation of a country can be helpful for policy makers making decisions on aid allocation. Similarly, understanding the domestic conditions that impact human rights may help local officials create policies that prevent the causes of violations. To understand contemporary human rights situations it is valuable to first study the historical connection to foreign aid.

Traditionally, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been an important foreign policy tool for the United States (U.S.) as means of securing peace and reducing terrorist attacks domestically (USAID 2002). In the 1960's foreign aid to Latin America was the top priority for the U.S. government to ensure there were no anti-U.S. or pro-Communism movements (Taffet 2007:2). Since then, recipients of USAID in Latin America have had varying human rights conditions throughout the years. Latin America was the region where anti-Communism and human rights, two components of the U.S. identity, clashed unlike any other region(Sikkink 2004:88). As a neighbor, Latin America was a battleground for the war against Communism and the Nixon Administration, especially, was accused of ignoring the mass human rights violations and supporting repressive dictatorships to maintain influence in the region(Taffet 2007:9).

One of the frontlines was Ecuador given its tendency to elect left leaning regimes, it was considered of special interest(Carleton and Stohl 1985:223). During the Cold War era, Ecuador experienced a time of political instability with a series of military coups between 1960 and 1979 (Hanratty and Weil 1991:31-45). Although democratic rule was restored in 1979 the pattern of state-initiated human rights violations continued well after this time. In the 1980's democracy was frail and the newly elected governments faced a great challenge from Ecuador's greatest economic crisis. In 1984 León Febres Cordero, the right wing candidate, was elected president by a small margin. From 1984 to 1988 the elected Ecuadorian government utilized state repression as a means of consolidating power, gaining greater domestic authority, and establishing neoliberal policies. During this time, the Ecuadorian state led repressive campaigns

against both armed and unarmed movements or individuals opposing the government(Comisión de la Verdad 2010). From 1984 to 1988, there was an increase in human rights violations which included extrajudicial killings, disappearances, political imprisonment and torture. Despite the international public awareness of these abuses and the U.S.’ support of universal human rights, President Ronald Reagan did not denounce these actions. USAID to Ecuador increased during this time and Reagan was accused of overlooking these abuses because of his sympathy towards Cordero’s conservative government(Riding 1988).

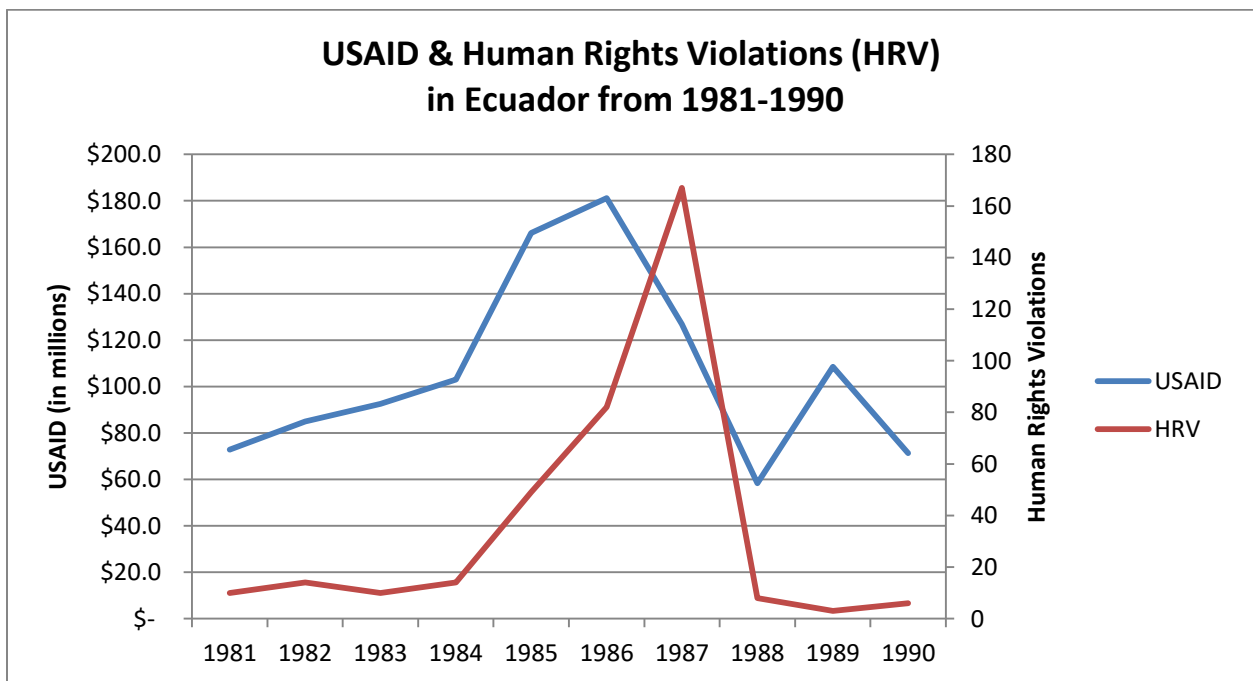


Figure 1. USAID & Human Rights Violations (HRV) in Ecuador from 1981-1990. (Sources: Data for USAID from Greenbook. Data for human rights 1981-1983 from CIRI human rights data<sup>1</sup> and 1984-1990 from Comisión de la Verdad, pg. 55).

Figure 1. displays the U.S. aid allocation and the Ecuadorian state-initiated human rights violations from 1980 to 1990. During this ten year span, there is a distinct increase in U.S. aid to Ecuador beginning in 1984 and peaking in 1986. Similarly, human rights violations increase starting in 1984 and decrease sharply in 1988. The peak of human rights violations is in 1987, sometime after the increase in U.S. aid. This temporal change indicates an empirical correlation

<sup>1</sup> Utilized because there is no data on human rights violations prior to 1984 in Comisión de la Verdad Report

between U.S. aid and human rights, however the processes and causal mechanisms remain unknown. The graph challenges conventional scholarship which asserts that democracies are less likely to engage in acts of state repression(Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1994).

If USAID and human rights violations increased in Ecuador during these four years, what were the causes? The increase in both occurrences requires an investigation into how the Ecuadorian government utilized the money, more specifically, whether it was used for repressive acts from the state that resulted in human rights violations. Academic works primarily focus on large-N research that aim to empirically prove whether foreign aid increases or decreases human rights violations in recipient countries (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Cingranelli and Pasquarello 1985; McCormick and Mitchell 1988;Schoultz 1981) . However, few works identify the causal mechanisms between foreign aid and human rights abuses in recipient countries (Regilme Jr. 2014:2). One theory which aims to identify the causal mechanisms of variances in human rights violations in the global South is interest convergence by Regilme (2014a).

The intellectual curiosity behind this thesis is to find out why there was an increase in human rights violations during this era in Ecuador's history. To this end, the research puzzle for this thesis is: Is there a relationship between the increase in both U.S. foreign aid and human rights violations in Ecuador from 1984 to 1988? If so, which causal mechanisms are present in the case of Ecuador? The ambition of this thesis is to contribute to the development of literature on the relationship between foreign aid and human rights in international relations as well as the motives for state repression in democracies. To perform this investigation, first I will present a review of the different literature on the subject matter. Then I will present the proposed explanatory theoretical model and causal mechanisms. Afterwards, I will focus on explaining the methods employed to ensure rigorous academic standards and outcomes in the research. Section 5, will present the case study of Ecuador from 1984 to 1992, with a deep analysis of 1984 to 1988. Section 6, will consist of the congruence testing of each causal mechanism to ascertain whether the hypotheses in the proposed theoretical framework were accurate. Finally, Section 7 will provide a summary of the findings as well as remarks on the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

## **2. HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN AID**

The connection between U.S. Foreign Aid and human rights practices in recipient countries has been a concern of comparative politics in the last forty years. This question has been an important aspect of global governance since the founding work by Lars Schoultz (1981) which suggested that that aid is also given to states with poor human rights records. Subsequent studies are divided in two chief camps of scholarship, those who argue that there is a positive relationship between U.S. Foreign Aid and human rights violations in recipient states and those who contend that there is a negative relationship and that the U.S. gives aid to countries that comply with human rights. Studies are conducted on the global, regional and local scales with varying results at each level.

Recently scholars have been focusing on large-N studies, with many countries, in an attempt to find a global pattern. Neumayer (2003) finds that there is no difference between donors that are committed to human rights and those that are not, meaning donor countries do not allocate more aid to recipient countries with better human rights compliance records, even those that claim to be sensitive to human rights. However, a substantial amount of literature finds that abusive regimes receive more aid (Carleton and Stohl 1985:1987; Schoultz 1981). In particular, during the 1970's, the pattern of U.S. aid was disproportionately concentrated towards countries with repressive regimes (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Schoultz 1981). Callaway and Matthews (2008) find evidence of a variety of contributing factors. During the democratization process USAID is harmful to security rights because the elites use aid to suppress the opposition (Callaway and Matthews 2008:105). Similarly, in poor recipient countries, elites have a perceived threat from the poor masses and are more likely to suppress political dissidents(Callaway and Matthews 2008:107). Additionally, the more that a country depends on USAID, as percentage of GDP, the more the rights of their citizens are negatively impacted(Callaway and Matthews 2008:110). USAID has a negative impact on the human rights situation in recipient countries because national security interests outweigh human rights concerns and countries will continue to receive aid regardless of the abuses committed(Callaway and Matthews 2008:184).

A seminal work on the relationship between U.S. aid and human rights in Latin America produced controversial results, but nevertheless served as a basis for subsequent studies. Cingranelli and Pasquarello (1985) conducted a large-N study that found that the U.S.

institutionalized human rights considerations in foreign aid allocation to Latin America as a result of Congress placing great importance on human rights. A growing body of literature questions the validity of this study and demonstrates that the results were either misleading or not significant (Carleton and Stohl 1987; McCormick and Mitchell 1988; Poe 1992; Poe and Sirirangsi 1994). One flaw of the study is that El Salvador was excluded from the study, a country which received 25% of USAID during 1982 and had one of the most repressive regimes at the time (McCormick and Mitchell 1988). When El Salvador was included, the results failed to demonstrate that human rights were an important consideration when the U.S. made aid decisions towards Latin America (McCormick and Mitchell 1988). Carleton and Stohl (1987) found that the results from Cingranelli and Pasquarello (1985) held true only when information from the State Department was used. When data from other entities was used there were no significant results (Carleton and Stohl 1987:1014). Further, when all outliers are included, not just El Salvador, the results are less significant than those found by Cingranelli and Pasquarello (1985).

Another body of literature focuses on the relationship between U.S. aid allocation and human rights considerations specifically during the Reagan years, 1981-1989. Several studies found that the Reagan administration allocated aid towards countries that were more human rights compliant ( Apodaca and Stohl 1999; Hofrenning 1990). However, this only applied to economic aid and not military aid for which human rights compliance was not a determinant. When national security interests played a primary role, then recipient governments received aid regardless of their human rights records (Apodaca and Stohl 1999). In contrast, Carleton and Stohl (1985) find that during the initial years of the Reagan administration, human rights concerns did not influence the disbursement of U.S. foreign assistance but rather other priorities such as improving political, economic and security objectives (Carleton and Stohl 1985:222). Human rights abuses were overlooked if the U.S. had “specific interests”, which included countries that were Soviet Union allies, contained U.S. military bases, had major resources in the U.S. or were members of Pro-Western security organizations (Carleton and Stohl 1985:223). Poe and Sirirangsi (1994) looked specifically at 1983-1988 and found mixed results on the consideration for human rights for aid allocation during this time. Nevertheless there was increased aid allocation for Ecuador, Chile and Argentina, all countries with high levels of state repression during this time (Jacoby 1986:1069).

The aforementioned studies make up a broad range of literature on U.S. aid and human rights that only provide large-N quantitative data, but no potential explanations. As such, these studies have little explanatory power and do not account for the variances in different cases such as country and year. This is evident in the contradictory results which vary depending on the scale and timeframe of the study. Furthermore, these studies have focused on the human rights situation as the independent variable and aid allocation as the dependent variable. Since these studies are unable to provide a general theory to explain the relationship between USAID and human rights, then more nuanced theories that provide the potential variances is necessary. More recently, research shifted focus towards investigating the causal processes for variations in U.S. aid and human rights violations.

A new body of literature aims to identify causal mechanisms and utilizes the human rights situation as the dependent variable. Alesina and Dollar (2000) posit that foreign aid allocation is determined by political and strategic concerns as well as the policy performance and policy needs of recipient countries. They argue that political alliances and a colonial past are determinants of foreign aid. Sikkink (2004) finds that between 1973 and 1982 there was a decade of increased human right violations in Latin America indicating that transnational forces might have influenced this trend. Sikkink looks beyond economic and military aid to suggest that worldviews conveyed by top-level policy-makers influence domestic decisions about repression. However this does not explain why human rights violations in states receiving USAID continued well after the 1970's into contemporary times. Based on the empirical evidence, there is a well-establish correlation between the increase in foreign aid and the subsequent increase in human rights abuses in Ecuador. The following section will provide a detailed presentation of the proposed explanatory theoretical framework.

### **3. PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section proposes an explanatory model for the relationship between U.S. aid and the human rights situation in Ecuador from 1984 to 1988. The suggested framework aims to identify and explain the processes that lead to this outcome. The model shows how this relationship furthered the political interests of both the U.S. (donor) and Ecuadorian (recipient) governments. It is composed of both domestic and transnational factors that are interactive and interdependent.



The independent variable is economic ideological alignment and the dependent variable is the human rights situation in Ecuador. I argue that there are three distinct causal mechanisms that resulted in the state repression: (1) political discourse appropriation; (2) expansion of military resources & capacity and; (3) removal of ideological opponents. As *Figure 1*. shows, this is a process that occurred over time, thus I argue that this specific combination of developments resulted in the outcome. Components of this theoretical framework are based on conceptualizations of causal mechanisms of state repression found in the scholarship and that are then redefined in the Ecuadorian context.

### **3.2 Key Argument and Hypotheses**

There is a well-established empirical correlation between the increase in U.S. foreign aid and state-initiated human rights violations between 1984 and 1988. However the potential mechanisms between the two remain largely unknown, requiring the building of an explanatory theory (Beach and Pedersen 2013:164). I argue that the ideological alignment of political and economic interests from the U.S. and Ecuadorian governments along with the weak authority of the Ecuadorian government and the U.S. aid were significant factors in the increase of human rights violations. First, I will conceptualize the theoretical concepts into “systemized concepts” (Adcock and Collier 2001). Then, I will conceptualize the causal mechanisms that are present in the case of Ecuador. Afterwards, I explain how through these mechanisms, increased U.S. aid most likely facilitated the rise in state repression over time.

### **3.3 Independent Variable: Economic Ideological Alignment**

In this thesis the independent variable is the “economic ideological alignment”, a term which is composed of three interrelated conditions; an increase in U.S. aid, a weak Ecuadorian government, and the radical establishment of neoliberalism. This term is a development of Regilme Jr.'s (2014a) interest convergence which is conceptualized as the mutual interests or policy preferences of donor and recipient governments and the actual policies created in the recipient country (Regilme Jr. 2014a:19). In this case, the shared interest was primarily the establishment of neoliberal policies in Ecuador. Economic ideological alignment can be conceptualized as the concerted effort of the U.S. to provide aid to countries which implemented anti-Communist or neoliberal economic policies coupled with a weak Ecuadorian government

that sought to establish neoliberal policies in a radical way. The economic interests reflect that of the Ecuadorian elites who helped the government win the elections through financial support. Domestic economic elites may support human rights violations by the state because they may profit directly (Cardenas 2004:221). Inequality is also a factor of state repression, in poor countries especially, elites are more willing to use force in order to maintain their privileges (Gurr 1985). In this case the elites benefited from the neoliberal policies which would give them access to financial rewards. Altogether these conditions make up the independent variable.

In this framework the term foreign aid or U.S. aid will be used interchangeably. The terms are conceptualized as more than just the traditional monetary component. They include political support and resources that reflect the agreement of the ideology such as financial support, public diplomacy, joint security exercises, sharing of knowledge, as well as development programs and public infrastructure etc. (Regilme Jr. 2014a:20). The conceptualization of a weak government will be assessed through the following determinants: has there been an ongoing low intensity conflict? Did the elected government win by a small margin? Does the government have weak authority internally and domestically? Is the opposition the majority within the internal government? Is the opposition influential among the public? Is there an economic crisis in the country? These are all markers that the government in power is weak and aims to use repression as means of consolidating authority (Regilme Jr. 2014a:20-21).

Radical economic reform refers to the use of authoritarian-like policies and practices to institute neoliberalism. Pion-Berlin (1989) found a significant positive relationship between free or open market principles and state repression in parts of Latin America. “Bureaucratic-authoritarianism” is a system in which the elites work with “external patrons” for their benefit at the economic and political expense of civil society (O’Donnell 1973). Neoliberalism was achieved through the imposition of economic policies and practices that had little support from civil society. To manage economic development, “ruling elites” may increasingly resort to repression as a means of maintaining the impetus of economic policies that will likely be met with dissent (Lopez and Stohl 1989:xi). Given the Ecuadorian civil society’s propensity to elect left leaning governments, the establishment of neoliberal policies was more aligned with the interests of the U.S. (donor) government and Ecuadorian elites than with the preferences of the general population.

### **3.4 Dependent Variable: Human Rights Situation**

Universal human rights are inclusive of political, security and subsistence rights(Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens 2007:7). This thesis will only include security rights because these are the focal point of this research. State repression and human rights violations will specifically include: torture, extrajudicial killings, attempted homicide and forced disappearances committed by either military or police personnel. These are chosen for validity purposes because they represent the categories covered in the sources of human rights data including the Comisión de la Verdad (Truth Commission Report), Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights (CEDHU) and America's Watch Committee. According to Regilme (2014a) human rights violations are composed of both intentional and accidental abuses from the state. Intended violations are statewide and systematic while collateral or abuses are those that are committed as part of erroneous policing methods which result in innocent individuals(Regilme Jr. 2014a:39). I will use Lopez and Stohl's (1992) "events-based approach" to measure human rights violations by tabulating the number of abuses each year. Increases in human rights violation will be defined as a large quantity of both intentional violations and collateral violations from the state. While a decrease in human rights violations will be defined as the absence of intentional violations and minimal collateral violations from the state.

### **3.5 Causal mechanisms, Processes and Explanatory Model**

Literature on the causal mechanisms of state repression in democracies covers a wide spectrum of causal mechanisms which are predominantly conflict, regime type and economic explanations. Generally the literature has treated the state's use of force as a cost-benefit analysis; when states consider that the benefits exceeds the damage done by the repression, then they will choose repression(Poe 2004; Rivera 2010:65). Studies focusing on Latin America aim to explain why the region has high levels of state repression despite most countries being democracies. Further, both domestic and transnational factors are found to generate variations in levels of state repression.

Scholarship on the "conflict-repression nexus" focuses on the impact of repression on dissidents(Davenport and Inman 2012:620). Generally it is established that governments will treat any armed group that challenges them, as threat to national security (Cardenas 2004). This is in line with Davenport's (2007b) "law of coercive responsiveness", which states that when the

authorities are challenged with any form of conflict and they feel threatened, then they will respond with a repressive action. National security threats bring uncertainty, which threatens the interests of the government and the economic elites (Cardenas 2004:221). Other than responding to threats, the state may use violence as a mechanism through which it advances its interests such as political stability (Davenport 1996). Various studies have found a link between civil war or international wars and increased state repression (Davenport 2004, 2009; McCormick and Mitchell 1988; Poe and Tate 1994). In situations of war, all types of government use repression because the violence threatens the stability of the state (Davenport 2007a).

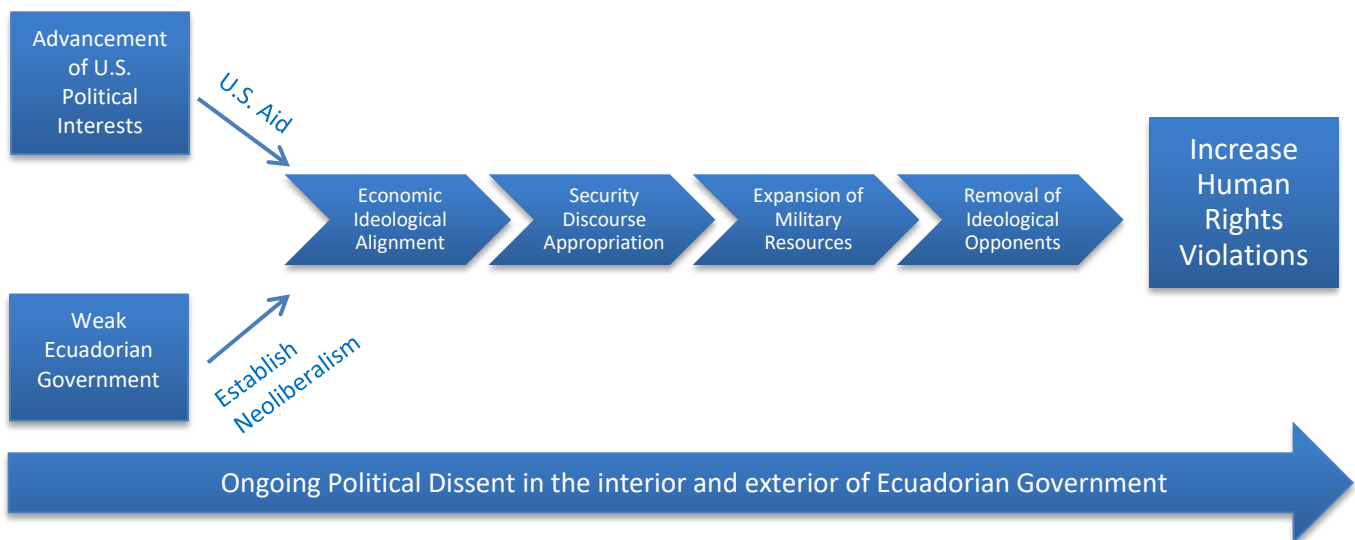
However other studies show that even in situations of less intense conflict there are also cases of state repression (Davenport 2004; Moore 2000). When there is ongoing opposition in large numbers, governments will respond more violently to organized and armed dissent than protest that is spontaneous or non-violent (Carey 2004). In particular guerilla warfare has a specific policy aim to change the regime structure, as such it directly threatens the existence of the governments and is an acute threat (Carey 2004:217). In a situation of terrorism, state repression can occur when “domestic rules of exception” are implemented and justified by leaders as the protection of a “national good” (Cardenas 2004:222). Moore (2000) analyzed the impact of dissidence on repression and found that when there is accommodation by the government followed by dissent, then the government will respond with repression. Conversely, when there is state repression followed by dissidence, then the government will decrease repression.

With regards to regime type it is generally thought that democracies lessen the use of state repression, because administrations can find ways in which to solve issues in a peaceful manner (Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1994). Furthermore the cost of implementing repression in democracies is greater (Davenport 2007a). According to the “domestic democratic peace” theory there is a decrease in state repression when democratic institutions go through rigorous examination (Davenport 2007b). These studies find that there is a negative relationship between democracy and state repression. However a more recent study found that this only applies to democracies which have reached a level of 8 in the POLITY index, which is indicative of a developed democracy (Davenport and Armstrong 2004). In 1984, Ecuador scored 9 out of 10, which would mean that it should have led to less repression, however this was not the

case(Center for Systemic Peace 2014). Munck (2003) finds that in post-transitional democracies, state repression is the result of state agencies abusing their power.

The literature attributing economic reasons for state repression, provide a variety of explanations. Studies link economic growth to increase in state repression because it causes instability and social conflict(Davenport 2004;McCormick and Mitchell 1988; Poe and Tate 1994) . To manage economic development, “ruling elites” may increasingly resort to repression as a means of establishing economic policies that will likely be met with opposition by civil society(Lopez and Stohl 1989:xi). Other studies find that structural economic reforms such as those upheld by Bretton Woods institutions aggravate low-intensity conflicts and promote human rights repression (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007). Moreover states seeking to attract multinational corporations will use repression to establish and maintain open market policies and political stability (Carleton 1989:220).

In Latin America, repression is mainly attributed to a weak judiciary system and impunity. Studies on temporal and spatial variations in human rights violation in democratic Latin American states are almost nonexistent (Rivera 2010:83). However Brinks (2008), argues that state repression of democracies in Latin America is due to the impunity of its security apparatus because of the inadequate justice systems. Most of the literature focuses on external or domestic explanations for state repression. However this thesis takes the approach that variation in human rights practices are caused by interactive domestic and transnational factors (Regilme Jr. 2014b). Below I illustrate the proposed causal framework which explains the increase of human rights violation in Ecuador from 1984-1988:



**Figure 2. Causal Mechanisms: Ideological Alignment of Economic Reform and Increased Human Rights Violations**

I argue that economic ideological alignment by the U.S. and Ecuadorian political elites was the preliminary set of conditions. As shown in *Figure 2*. The causal mechanisms and processes which resulted in the dependent variable were: (1) security discourse appropriation; (2) expansion of military resources & capacity and; (3) removal of ideological opponents. I argue that the León Febres Cordero regime created conditions of a “domestic terror war” to justify state repression. However, the actual goal was the establishment neoliberal policies and the survival of his regime. To realize these goals, the state resorted to human rights violations as a means of consolidating power. The causal mechanisms are conceptualized as follows:

### **(1) Security Discourse Appropriation**

Security discourse appropriation refers to the adoption and reconceptualization of global security discourse by the recipient government. Security discourses can either contain militaristic or less militaristic (supportive of human rights) language. The creation of a military crisis justifies increases in state repression domestically (Regilme Jr. 2014a:29). This is achieved by national leadership linking a transnational security discourse from the donor government to the domestic situation and re-defining it in local terms to further their political agenda (Regilme Jr. 2014a:29). In the case of Ecuador, the León Febres Cordero Administration used terms from Reagan’s war against Communism, terror, and drugs to create a perceived local security threat. The guerilla group, Alfaro Vive Carajo (AVC) was labeled as a terrorist organization and a threat to domestic security. When dealing with terrorists, governments use human rights violations as one of the counterterror policies (Stohl 2006:60). Through discourses Febres Cordero was able to create the impression of a widespread domestic security crisis that required “exceptional measures” (Cardenas 2004). The goals are two-fold; to align with the donor’s aims in order to increase foreign aid and justify the use of repression to eliminate the security threat.

### **(2) Expansion of Military Resources & Capacity**

The subsequent step in the mechanism is the expansion of military resources and capacity. This is composed of two progressions; first the donor government increases aid allocation for military purposes which enables the expansion of the capacity of the recipient regime’s security machinery. Once the political discourse established that the Ecuadorian government was engaged in a broader transnational war (against terrorism and drugs) at the local

level, it justified the increased request and allocation of U.S. aid for military purposes. The foreign aid was used to expand the capacities of the Ecuadorian military and police which enabled more pervasive repression. Examples that aid is allocated for militaristic purposes include joint military exercises or planning as well as sharing of technology and intelligence among others, altogether they enable the military and police in the recipient country to use repression on a wider scale(Regilme Jr. 2014a:35). The implementation of these activities is costly, especially for developing countries; therefore these security operations would not be possible without the support of the aid from the donor country(Regilme Jr. 2014a:35).

### **(3) Removal of Ideological Opponents**

This tactic is ultimately used as a means for the elected recipient government to enhance domestic authority and survival of the administration. Removal of ideological opponents refers to the acts of state repression that are used to oust political opponents. Political opponents include a broad range of dissidents including guerillas, social groups such as student and labor unions, political parties and officials as well as elites. The process is composed of internal actions within the government apparatus as well as external responses to domestic political opponents. Internally, tactics used include replacing key government personnel that are a part of the opposition, hindering the legislative process and abuse of executive powers among others. Externally it refers to the systematic implementation of state violence in order to get rid of all political opponents, even those who are peaceful dissidents(Regilme Jr. 2014a:37). This occurs when the recipient government brands both armed and peaceful protesters as a threat to the domestic security. Weak governments bolster repression with laws and policies that support the counter-terror agenda. The purpose of these policies are to provide the state with a broad and flexible scope to define the security threat, carry out violent repression against both violent and peaceful political opponents and expansion of the state security machinery(Regilme Jr. 2014a:39). Altogether these new laws and policies enable to the government to purge the opposition and consolidate power domestically to establish the radical economic reforms.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODS**

This thesis will utilize theory-building process-tracing and congruence testing to analyze if the proposed causal mechanisms are plausible. I will use a within-case study to show the

variation in the human rights situation before and after the presidency of León Febres Cordero. The theory-building process tracing method will be used take the empirical evidence and follow a “structured analysis” to identify “plausible hypothetical causal mechanisms” between U.S. aid and human rights(Beach and Pedersen 2013:16). Congruence testing will be used to evaluate whether the hypothesized causal mechanisms from the proposed framework are present. I follow Bennett and George’s congruence testing method that treats theory testing in a systematic way to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. First, I will establish the existence of the independent and the dependent variables. Then, I will examine if the causal mechanisms in the proposed theory are present and functioned as predicted. This will provide a complementary basis for causal inference(Bennett and George 2005:224). Since this a “most-likely” case, I make causal predictions about the empirical evidence that will prove if the causal hypotheses:

**Security Discourse Appropriation:** Is there evidence of militaristic discourse that result in increased security or counter-terrorism policies? Was there a transformation of the Ecuadorian security context which called for changes in policy priorities? Did these policies reflect the broader U.S. foreign policy interests? Are there actual policy outcomes which codify these convergent political interests?

**Expansion of Military Resources & Capacity:** Was the U.S. aid for military militaristic purposes increased? Is there evidence that the Ecuadorian security apparatus expanded its capacities? Is there evidence of joint-military exercises or planning or sharing of technology and intelligence or development projects carried out by the military? Is there evidence of “bilateral collaboration”, meaning did the U.S. allowed the Ecuadorian government to determine the objects of state repression because of the security threat?

**Removal of Political Opponents:** Is there evidence of extrajudicial killings torture, imprisonment, illegal arrests, forced disappearances, forceful restriction or violent dispersal of mass gatherings by the Ecuadorian military or police(Regilme Jr. 2014a:38)? Were these human rights violations inclusive of both armed and unarmed individuals?



If the outcomes are consistent with the predictions of the proposed explanatory model, then I will entertain the possibility that a causal relationship may exist (Bennett and George 2005:181).

The type of data used will be both quantitative and qualitative due to the nature of the study. A small-N analysis of statistics on human rights violations and USAID during the 1980's will be used to measure and compare the fluctuations (Callaway and Matthews 2008:65). Given that data on human rights violation may be misleading (Goldstein 1986:624), to overcome the limitations, qualitative data will be utilized to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationships and processes between USAID and human rights. Quantitative data on human behavior and motivation cannot be measured and predicted as precisely as phenomena in science (Goldstein 1986:608). Therefore qualitative data will give context and significance to the data. Both primary and secondary data will be used to substantiate qualitative data and arguments. Primary sources will include unclassified government documents, presidential speeches, a truth commission report, reports by NGOs, newspaper articles and government databases. Secondary sources include historical texts, newspaper articles, human rights reports, academic analyses from journals.

Data on human rights violations is difficult to gather since most states are not interested in disclosing this information (Duvall and Stohl 1988). Generally truth commissions provide the most comprehensive accounts of human rights abuses perpetrated by states (Sikkink 2004). Therefore, human rights violations data will be collected from the Comisión de la Verdad, a truth commission spearheaded by the Ecuadorian government. Reports from nongovernmental organizations will also be used for validation. Given that the truth commission took place under a government which is ideologically opposed to Febres Cordero's right wing administration, I utilize triangulation of various sources to corroborate the figures. Including reports by the Americas Watch, the Andean Commission of Jurists' and CEDHU cited in a U.S. report, which organizations not affiliated with the current Ecuadorian government. I will also cross validate all other facts with different historical sources that have a broad range of motivations, in both Spanish and English, for more accurate and reliable findings.

## **5. CASE STUDY: ECUADOR 1984-1992**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main aim of this section is to establish the existence of the independent and dependent variables. The main finding is that the financial support from the U.S. bolstered the regime consolidation and economic reform of the León Febres Cordero government. I argue that an increase in U.S. aid to a weak Ecuadorian government that sought to radically establish neoliberalism and regime survival (independent variable) led to an increase in human rights violations from 1984-1988 (dependent variable). For comparison, a presentation of the human rights situation from 1988 to 1992 demonstrates a decline in human rights violations. This is in part attributed to President Osvaldo Hurtado, who displayed more pro-human rights discourse and made efforts to close down several of the “special” security groups that had been accused of human rights abuses during the Febres Cordero presidency. The comparison underscores that the increase in human rights violations was a distinct feature of the Febres Cordero government and its policies.

### **5.2 Independent Variable: Economic Ideological Alignment**

This section aims to establish the presence of the independent variable, economic ideological alignment. The component parts of the term have been divided into two sections: transnational and domestic factors. Transnational factors include the Cold War impact on Ecuador and the increase of USAID. The domestic factors are comprised of a weak domestic government and the institution of radical neoliberal reforms. Altogether these factors generated the conditions for the Febres Cordero administration to choose state repression as a means of advancing its political agenda.

#### ***5.2.1 Transnational Factors: Cold War Impact on Ecuador & U.S. Aid***

During the Cold War the United States wanted to ensure that its neighbors to the South were on its side. Within the broader scope of the Cold War the U.S. was also fighting a War on Terror, in the Middle East, and a War on Drugs in Latin America. During the Ronald Reagan administration from 1981-1989, these smaller wars were linked to the broader Cold War context. In his “Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations” on January 16, 1984 Reagan stated:

“Independent nations are confronted by heavily armed neighbors seeking to dominate by threatening attack or subversion. Most of these conflicts have their origins in local problems, but many have been exploited by the Soviet Union and its surrogates.”(Reagan 1984a).

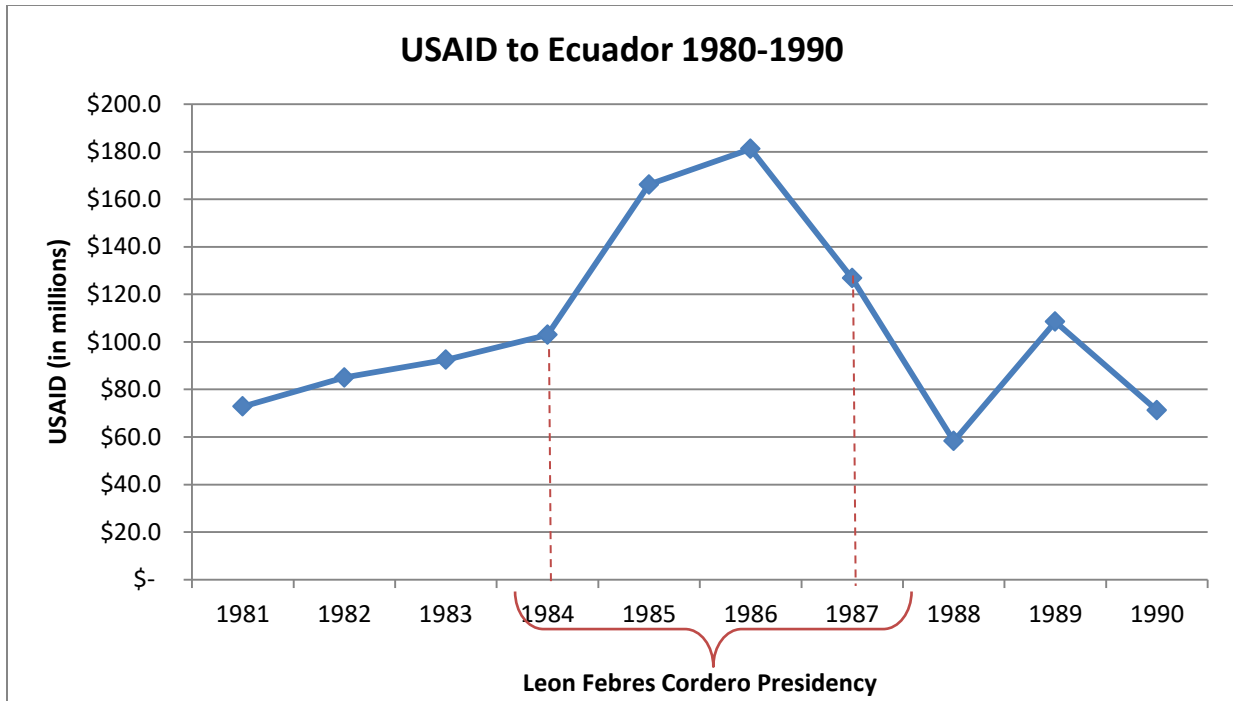
At the crux of the Reagan administration’s foreign policy was a shift towards a more militaristic approach because of the ongoing transnational wars. During his presidency, Reagan’s security discourse created a global state of uncertainty with a collection of military crises that spanned the world.

Latin America was a frontline for the war against Communism and the War on Drugs. In the 1960’s foreign aid to Latin America was the top priority for U.S. government, through the Alliance for Progress, U.S. aid was used to ensure there were no Anti-U.S. or Pro-Communism movements(Taffet 2007:2). The U.S. was accused of ignoring the mass human rights violations of the right-wing governments it supported or directly placed in power by continuing to provide those governments with aid(Taffet 2007:8-9). Despite the emphasis on human rights from the Carter administration, these patterns of aid allocation continued into the 1970’s (Carleton and Stohl 1985). Reagan purposefully sought to depart from the Carter administration foreign policy on human rights, which he accused of allowing Latin American countries including Grenada, Nicaragua and Cuba to fall into Communist hands(Kirkpatrick 1981:29).These events were viewed as Soviet expansion in the area, which was a threat to U.S. dominion and security in the region.

Almost all public statements of the Reagan administration denounced the Carter administration for being “overly sensitive” to human rights violations and decidedly announced the implementation of a less human rights oriented policy(Hofrenning 1990:523). Reagan’s policy was to adhere to the “Kirkpatrick doctrine” which contended that, “ ‘totalitarian’ Marxist regimes should be treated differently than ‘authoritarian’ dictatorships of the right, which were said to be less repressive, more susceptible to change and better for American interests.,” (Jacoby 1986:1067). One of Reagan’s first appointments was Ernest Lefever, as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, who had it made known publicly that he believed that it was not the responsibility of the U.S. to promote human rights abroad(Jacoby 1986:1066). In between Reagan’s election and inauguration there were mass human rights violations in Haiti, South Korea and El Salvador. A coalition of U.S. clerics expressed that

around the world countries with military governments had interpreted Reagan's election as having given the "green light" to commit human rights violations(Jacoby 1986:1068). Reagan's shift away from the promotion of human rights and towards more militaristic foreign policy objectives impacted the global landscape, especially in countries that served as the frontlines for these wars.

In addition to the ongoing Cold War, the Reagan administration waged two other regional wars; a War on Terror in the Middle East and an Anti-Narcotics campaign in Latin America. In his first news conference, U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig announced that, "international terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern because it is the ultimate of abuses of human rights." (Jacoby 1986:1069). This statement set the tone for the U.S. approach towards human rights in the context of a battle against international terrorism. Ecuador declared it had a local terrorist group thereby joining the international War on Terrorism. Concurrently, the War on Drugs in Latin America primarily took place in countries where the majority of drug production and trafficking took place. Drug traffickers were labeled "organized domestic terrorists" and the situation was treated under principles of terrorism(Hanratty and Weil 1991:207). Despite being located in between Colombia and Peru, drug cultivation and trafficking was less of an issue in Ecuador(Hanratty and Weil 1991:243). Nevertheless, given its proximity, Ecuador participated in the Anti-Narcotics campaign of the Reagan administration. Ecuador's involvement in these wars and support for U.S. foreign policies would justify the significant increase in USAID from 1984-1987. The graph on the following page, illustrates patterns in USAID from 1980 to 1990.



**Figure 3. USAID Aid Allocations for Ecuador 1981-1990. (Source: USAID Greenbook).**

As *Figure 3* shows, during the presidency of León Febres Cordero there were significant increases in USAID. Before Febres Cordero’s presidency, U.S. aid was \$72.8, \$85 and \$92.5 million in 1981, 1982, and 1983 respectively. During these years aid increased in small increments of less than \$10 million. In 1984 U.S. Aid to Ecuador was about \$103 million, then in 1985 it jumped to \$166 million, in 1986 it peaked at \$181 million and in 1987 it decreased to \$127 million (USAID 2017). Between 1984 and 1985, aid increased by 61% in comparison to just 11.35% the year before. The aid to Ecuador was allocated for narcotics control, military support, security support, economic support, Peace Corps, title I, title II, active grants and other USAID assistance programs (USAID 2017). The importance of militaristic objectives is evident in the aid allocation for military purposes which increased from 14.8% of the total aid allocation in 1983 to 45.7% by 1987 (USAID 2017). The years after the Febres Cordero presidency both U.S. aid and the percentage allocated for military purposes decreased. In 1988 aid plummeted to \$58.3 million of which 7.8% was for military purposes; in 1989 aid was \$108.5 million and 26.1% was for military purposes; and in 1990 aid was 71.3 million of which 18.7% was for military purposes(USAID 2017).

### ***5.2.2 Domestic Factors: Weak Ecuadorian Government Establishes Radical Neoliberal Reform***

When León Febres Cordero came to power in 1984 he faced the challenge of establishing radical neoliberal reforms against the will of the majority of the country. This task was difficult given that the government was weak due to external and internal factors. Externally, Ecuador was in the early phases of reinstating democracy, Febres Cordero had a marginal victory at the polls, and there was a deep economic recession(Regilme Jr. 2014a:21). Within the administration issues included an ongoing ideological conflict, insufficient support from the elites, and the members of the opposition were the majority in Congress as well as key government positions(Regilme Jr. 2014a:21). All these challenges debilitated the Febres Cordero regime and his political party, the *Frente de Reconstrucción Nacional* (FRN). Febres Cordero responded with a, “dictatorial attitude” and instituted, “neoliberal policies that brought the executive into sharp conflict with other state powers, especially Congress,” (Ayala Mora 1991:721). Despite his authoritarian-like behaviors, these challenges would continue to undermine the Febres Cordero regime and threaten the survival of the FRN in office.

The inauguration of León Febres Cordero was the first peaceful transition from one democratic government to another in almost 25 years(Washington Post 1984:President Inaugurated in Ecuador). During the 1960’s and 1970’s Ecuador had experienced three military coups d’état which resulted in military dictatorships. Democracy was restored peacefully in 1979 with the election of Jaime Roldós Aguilera. In 1984, Ecuador was still in an early phase of restoring democracy and therefore its institutions were weak. The threat of a coup was and continues to be a feature of Ecuadorian politics, with the last attempted coup in 2010(BBC News 2010:Ecuador Declares State of Emergency). Another debilitating factor was that León Febres Cordero won by a very small margin in a close electoral race. Febres Cordero ran for the FRN proposing neoliberalism to restructure the weak economy (Ayala Mora 1983:338). In the first round of the 1984 elections, the Democratic Left and PCD candidate, Rodrigo Borja, received 24.08% votes and Febred Cordero 23.32%, prompting a second round of elections(Ayala Mora 1983:339). In the run-off election, with the support of the people in his native Guayaquil as well as Ecuador’s powerful business elites, who supported privatization and his anti-state campaign(Ayala Mora 1983:92), Febres Cordero secured a narrow victory(Ayala Mora 1983; Menéndez-Carrión 1989; Schodt 1987).

Furthermore León faced an economic crisis due to Ecuador's ongoing problem with the balance of payments, high unemployment rates and the devaluation of the *sucre* (the Ecuadorian currency). The economic problems stemmed from rapid urbanization, uneven development and a growing external debt exacerbated by the loss in oil revenue from the drop in prices. Moreover from 1962-1982, the urban population doubled every 15 years, due to rural-urban migration stemming from an increase in population and lack of employment in rural areas (Ayala Mora 1983:131). The chief economic struggle was the declining prices of oil which called for austerity measures. Adding to these challenges was the loss of oil due to a natural disaster which meant state spending was in deficit (Ayala Mora 1983:342). In Febres Cordero's view the economic crisis in Ecuador had been created by the state-led economic development and the only solution was to establish neoliberal reforms.

Febres Cordero's economic policies did not improve the situation and this strained his relationship with his constituents. In a controversial move, Febres Cordero took away foreign trade from the central bank. This was detrimental, and inflation went from 50% to 70% by 1988 (Ayala Mora 1983:345). He also quickly renegotiated Ecuador's external debt but was unable to negotiate favorable conditions. One of his first moves was to sign an investment agreement with the U.S. agency, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) to protect foreign investors in Ecuador (Hey 1996:674). This was done to increase foreign direct investment, however, results were mediocre because foreigners viewed the domestic political situation as unstable (Ayala Mora 1983:341). Ecuador's GDP continued to suffer, fluctuating between 4.2-2.2% between 1984 and 1988 (Ayala Mora 1983:87). Low-income communities were the most widely affected which resulted in 6 national strikes during the presidency (Ayala Mora 1983:93). Public discontent grew over the term of his presidency and the widespread dissatisfaction was evident in the 1988 elections.

The government was also weakened by the ongoing ideological division between socialism and neoliberalism. From the 1960's onwards the Ecuadorian state led economic planning and industrialization (Ayala Mora 1983:119). The move towards socialism was a threat to U.S. interests and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was involved in installing a military dictatorship from 1963-1966, whose main aim was to get rid of leaders of the left, unions, universities (Ayala Mora 1983:156). However in 1972 there was a left-leaning military coup, the ruling dictatorship implemented reforms for agriculture and established social benefits programs

to overcome inequality(Ayala Mora 1983:69). This dictatorship lasted until 1979 when Jaime Roldós, the left-leaning candidate was democratically elected. The tide turned again when Febres Cordero, the right-wing candidate, was elected. However, he did not have a majority in Congress and members from the opposition were also in key positions, Febres Cordero responded with coercion.

Early in his presidency Febres Cordero showed his willingness to use the armed forces as a means of exerting his will. For example when the new Supreme Court leaders were chosen by Congress, León ordered the armed forces to surround the Supreme Court building to prevent them from taking their posts(Fellner, Gimbel, and García-Sayán 1988:6). He negotiated to have Supreme Court judges of his liking assume the posts instead. With this action the Congress lost power and Febres Cordero was able to gain more control(Ayala Mora 1983:340). León's relationship with the legislative branches of government was strained for the remainder of his term. He continually fought with Congress and the judiciary over the scope of presidential powers because the President of the Supreme Court was from the opposition and Congress was controlled by the rival left-party(Fellner et al. 1988:6). Febres Cordero was accused of sending paid mobs into Congress and having the police fired tear gas into the air duct of the Capitol to force an evacuation(Fellner et al. 1988:8). Over the course of his presidency León Febres Cordero made 26 laws without the approbation of Congress, mainly economic(Ayala Mora 1983:341).

There was continual push back from various factions of the government, to curtail Febres Cordero's actions. Two years after the start of his tenure, in June 1986 the opposition party won the majority of the seats in Congress at the midterm elections(Ayala Mora 1983:346). Later that year, there was a conflict between Frank Vargas Pazzos, the head of the Armed Forces and Febres Cordero's Minister of Defense, Luis Pineiros - which resulted in a fight between the armed forces and military(Ayala Mora 1983:345). As a consequence of confronting the government, Frank Vargas Pazzos was incarcerated. This led to the *Secuestro de Taura* (the Taura kidnapping), in which León and a few of his officials were kidnapped by Armed Forces in retaliation for Vargas' imprisonment. There was a negotiation to free Vargas from prison in exchange for León's liberation(Ayala Mora 1983:346). León was freed upon the condition that he sign an amnesty agreement, however afterwards he broke his commitment and the participants were sentenced to 16 years in prison, the harshest sentence(Ayala Mora 1983:347). After the



*Secuestro de Taura*, Congress tried to initiate impeachment proceedings but was only able to pass a resolution asking for Febres Cordero's resignation. His administration struggled as his appointed officials were accused of various crimes of corruption. In 1987 Minister of Government, Luis Robles, was accused of human rights violations and Congress voted to discharge him despite objections from Febres Cordero (Ayala Mora 1983:347). The fragmentation, scandals and lack of internal support from Congress further destabilized Febres Cordero's regime.

### ***5.2.3 Economic Ideological Alignment***

Even before his presidency, León Febres Cordero was a staunch supporter of neoliberalism and publicly denounced left-wing political leaders and their policies. Overall Febres Cordero's foreign policy was regarded as having, "a preference for bilateralism and closer ties to the United States," (Hanratty and Weil 1991:199). While León was a longtime supporter of free markets, his preference for closer ties meant he also supported other U.S. policies. In 1986 León was, "praised by Mr. Reagan for his endorsement of free enterprise and for standing firm against the 'violent, insidious forces' of narcotics trafficking and international terrorism," (Weinraub 1986). That same year, a partly declassified CIA memorandum demonstrated the ideological alignment, they described his leadership as having, "conservative policies that frequently have been closely aligned with U.S. interests," (1986:1).

The implementation of neoliberal policies was a commitment to Capitalism and U.S. interests. In January 1986, when León visited Washington, Reagan publicly called him "an articulate champion of free enterprise" (Zuckerman 1986:484). There was a publicly stated affinity between the two administrations which stemmed from the alignment in economic systems.

"The coincidences on many of our points of view over the destinies of our countries and of the whole hemisphere, have allowed us to leave formalities aside and enable us to have clear and frank exchange of views." –Ronald Reagan (The American Presidency Project 1986).

When describing the relationship Reagan stated, "holding high the light of liberty and freedom, the people of our two countries can and should and will stand together," (The American Presidency Project 1986). Febres Cordero's actions in opposing Communism were seen as

favorable to U.S. interests. Reagan also praised Febres Cordero for his support of U.S. foreign policy as demonstrated by breaking diplomatic relations with Nicaragua(Zuckerman 1986:484). During the visit, Reagan called León Febres Cordero a “model leader”(Weinraub 1986). Furthermore, at the meeting, Ecuadorian and U.S. officials, “repeatedly underlined their two presidents’ total agreement on economic and political matters,” (Hanratty and Weil 1991:199). However Febres Cordero’s implementation of economic reform was a process characterized by the repression of any opposition.

The presidency of León Febres Cordero marked an increase in human rights violations perpetrated by the state(Comisión de la Verdad 2010). During this time increased forced entry to homes, torture, captured books, persecution and murders were used to further economic objectives(Ayala Mora 1983:93).The following section provides supporting evidence that demonstrates the increase in human rights violations between 1984 and 1988.

### **5.3 Dependent Variable: Increased Human Rights Violations 1984-1988**

According to the U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1987* in Ecuador:

“Although mistreatment of detainees was not officially sanctioned, the government of Febres Cordero made no clear statement condemning the use of excessive force, nor were penal actions taken against police or military personnel believed to have taken part in deaths, disappearances, or torture.”  
–America’s Watch Committee (Hanratty and Weil 1991, 243).

From 1984 to 1988 state initiated human rights violation increased significantly during the Febres Cordero presidency. As *Figure 4*. displays on the following page this pattern of increased human rights abuses occurred specifically during this time period.

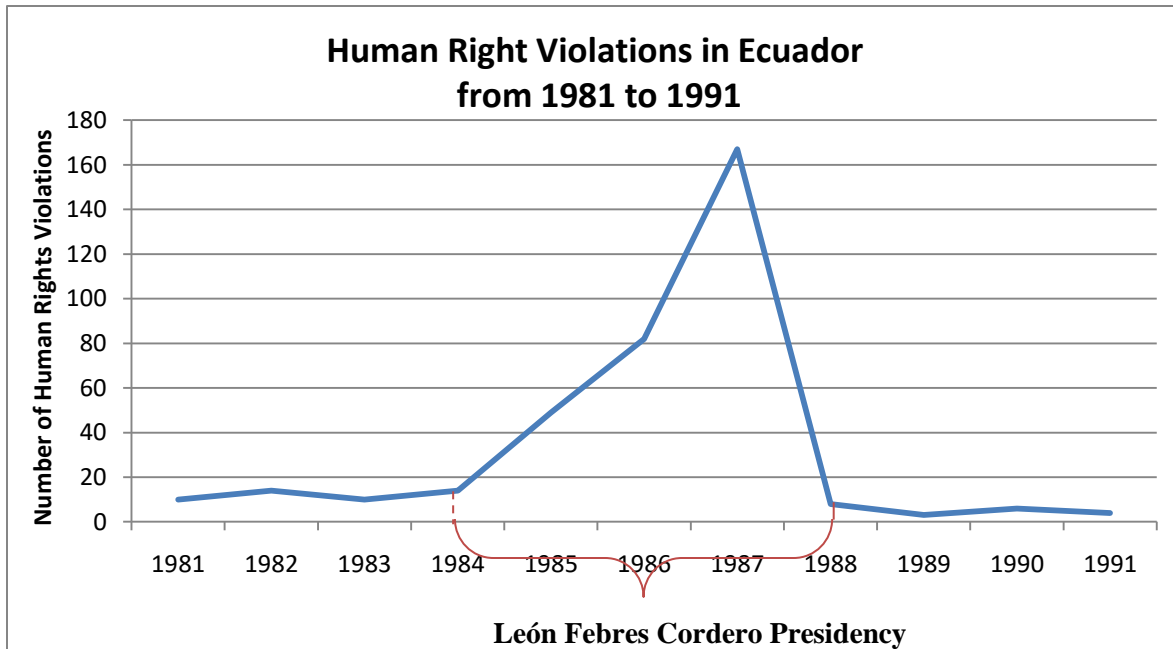


Figure 4. Human Rights Violation in Ecuador from 1981-1991. (Sources: Data from 1981-1983 from CIRI Human Rights Data and from 1984-1991 from Comisión de la Verdad, pg. 55<sup>2</sup>).

In the years before Leon Febres Cordero there were between four and fourteen state-initiated human rights violations each year. The graph indicates that increasingly the government resorted to state repression beginning in 1984. In 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 there were 14, 49, 82 and 167 violations committed respectively each year(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:55).

Human Rights Violations in Ecuador 1984-1988	
Torture	275
Extrajudicial Killings	32
Attempted Homicide	12
Forced Disappearances	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>328</b>

Figure 5. Classification of Human Rights Violations in Ecuador 1984-1988. (Source: Comisión de la Verdad:68).

<sup>2</sup> Utilized because there is no data on human rights violations prior to 1984 in Comisión de la Verdad Report

*Figure 5.* shows the total number of violations classified by type, revealing that the state primarily engaged in torture which accounted for 83.8% of the abuses committed.

Data collected by CEDHU and reported by the U.S. government in their *Country Study* publication corroborates the increase of human rights violations during this time. CEDHU maintains that the data collected was not comprehensive since it depended on victims coming forward, and its monitors believed cases were underreported (Fellner et al. 1988:20; Hanratty and Weil 1991:242). Nevertheless in 1985 there were 59 cases of torture as well as 5 individuals who disappeared and died in custody of police or military. There were 40 extrajudicial killings in 1986 and 34 in 1987- victims were primarily participants of strikes and demonstrations but also included several leaders of AVC (Fellner et al. 1988:40; Hanratty and Weil 1991:243). In 1987 there were 89 cases of brutality and 69 cases of torture, with an additional 20 cases of torture reported at the start of 1988 (Hanratty and Weil 1991:242). According to CEDHU individuals that were suspected of political transgressions were tortured as a means of extracting information and confessions (Hanratty and Weil 1991:242).

In 1988 Americas Watch in conjunction with The Andean Commission of Jurists published *Human Rights in Ecuador*, a report on the situation during the preceding years. Human rights abuses and complaints were taken from reports by the Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights (CEDHU), the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees (TGC), and the Special Commission on Human Rights of the Ecuadorian National Congress. According to the report, “critics maintain that the government has deliberately chosen to violate human rights as a method for fighting subversion, and, also nonviolent political opponents.” (Fellner et al. 1988:1). The majority of offenses were committed by the national police. It is important to note that the national police was under the jurisdiction of Minister of Government, Luis Robles Plaza, who was appointed and vehemently defended by León Febres Cordero despite being accused of human rights violations (Fellner et al. 1988:10). In 1987 Robles Plaza admitted that the police mistreated 6 individuals who had been at anti-government demonstrations and claimed to have taken action against the aggressors (Fellner et al. 1988:28).

It was reported that there were there were 186 and 124 arbitrary arrests in 1986 and 1987 respectively, of which most were held longer than legally permitted (Fellner et al. 1988:21). In 1986 there were there were 64 cases of torture and 68 in 1987, while there were 174 cases of

police brutality in 1986 and 89 in 1987(Fellner et al. 1988:24). Several victims corroborate that they received medical attention to heal physical evidence of torture(Fellner et al. 1988:25).The Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees reported 34 formal complaints for 1985-6 but there were 17 more which did not meet the formal filing requisites and 62 for 1987(Fellner et al. 1988:24). According to CEDHU there were 6 disappearances although Amnesty International reported an addition 11 cases(Fellner et al. 1988:35). Furthermore Febres Cordero targeted human rights organizations and accused them of being linked to AVC, denouncing that human rights defenders were protecting drug traffickers and terrorist(Fellner et al. 1988:65-69). This was to discredit the independent human rights organizations that were gathering data and reporting to the international community. According to critics, the human rights situation was part of a broader pattern of disregard for the law maintained by Febres and his administration(Fellner et al. 1988:3).

#### 5.4 Human Rights Situation in Ecuador 1988-1992

For comparison, I will provide the human rights situation in Ecuador during the presidency of Rodrigo Borja Cevallos, which exhibits a significant decrease in state-initiated abuses. This time period was chosen because it immediately follows the Febres Cordero presidency and challenges studies (Brinks 2008), which attribute numerous human rights violations in Latin America to a weak judiciary system.

Term	President	Number of HRV Cases	Number Of HRV Victims
10/ 1984- 10/1988	León Febres Cordero	65	310
10/1988 - 10/1992	Rodrigo Borja	10	15

**Figure 6. Total Human Rights Violations during Ecuadorian Presidencies 1984-1992 (Source: Comisión de la Verdad, pg. 66).**

*Figure 6.* compares the human rights violation from 1984-1988 and 1988-1992. During the Borja presidency there were 10 separate cases of human rights abuses with a total of 15 victims. These were classified as 7 cases of extrajudicial killings, 8 of torture and one case of a forced disappearance(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:69). Seven of these cases were the result of

military and police operations against AVC and public security(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:114). These were residual acts of state repression and not on a scale comparable to the León Febres Cordero years.

In 1988 Rodrigo Borja won the presidency, the majority in Congress and the support of many municipalities(Ayala Mora 1983:349). Borja represented the Democratic Left party which brought forth an economic agenda of “Ecuadorian Socialism” (Ayala Mora 1983:93). Upon taking office the Borja administration publicly announced its, “unequivocal opposition to official use of abusive measures,” (Hanratty and Weil 1991:243). First his government negotiated an agreement with AVC which resulted in the disarmament of the group in 1991(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:69,93). During Borja’s presidency, the Attorney General, Fidel Jaramillo attempted to prosecute León Febres Cordero for human rights violations, but it remained a fruitless endeavor with no follow up action, showing a lack of political will(Tamayo 1984:3). Critics say that there was no genuine cohesive action taken to dismantle the apparatus of repression or punish those that had committed the violations(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:38). However, the Service of Criminal Investigation (SIC) and the *Escuadrones Volantes* were discontinued during the presidency of Borja as a result of their human rights complaints(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:235). The Unit of Special Investigations (UIES), which had been established in 1985 by Febres Cordero to fight against insurgents, remained although the methods utilized were different(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:227). Borja also forgave and released the individuals who carried out the *Secuestro de Taura* (Ayala Mora 1983:350). Although these efforts were criticized for not being sufficient, the government made several concerted efforts to improve the human rights situation. As the data shows the number of state initiated human rights violations dramatically decreased when the conditions for economic ideological alignment were no longer present.

## **6. CONGRUENCE TESTING**

### **6.1 Security Discourse Appropriation**

I argue that appropriation of global militaristic discourse was utilized as a strategy by the León Febres Cordero government to garner additional resources from the prospective donor country- the U.S. Febres Cordero effectively achieved this by borrowing the terms “terrorist” and “subversive”, commonly used by Ronald Reagan in his global foreign policy and adapting it to

the local context. By labeling AVC as well as anyone who opposed his policies as “terrorists” and “subversives” he linked the domestic situation to the international war on terror in order to justify the measures of state repression.

During the Cold War years, the U.S. was fighting another battle - the War on Terror. In 1983, U.S. President, Ronald Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 138, which de facto declared war on guerillas(Arquilla 2012). This document, which primarily remains classified, was the administration’s campaign against the Abu Nidal Organization , “the al Qaeda of the ‘80s”, which was conducting terrorist attacks on behalf of countries in the Middle East (Arquilla 2012). This war was linked to the Cold War by declaring that the terrorist organizations were possibly receiving guidance and support from the Soviet Union(Reagan 1984b:2). By linking terrorism to the Soviet Union, it created another transnational dimension to the Cold War. While Directive 138 is primarily concerned with the protection of American citizens it also stated, “We must also seek to ameliorate the subversive effect of terrorism on foreign democratic institutions and pro-Western governments”(Reagan 1984b:1).

In his first presidential address in 1984, León Febres Cordero announced a war against Terrorism. In addition to his commitment to free market reforms getting rid of “all forms of terrorism”, was a priority (DeLorean 1984). The scapegoat and perceived threat was the leftist guerilla group, Alfaro Vive Carajo! (AVC). At the time, AVC was poorly organized and had mainly taken symbolic actions, there was no real threat to justify the widespread anti-terrorism campaign declared by the new regime(Krupa 2013:179). In 1986 a CIA memorandum defined AVC as a “growing subversive threat” and an “active terrorist group” of about 300-1500 members(3). However the report clearly states that “it has not attracted widespread popular support” and that no political parties were directly associated with the group(CIA1986:3). Febres Cordero magnified the presence of a heightening AVC terrorist threat domestically to create a state of war and justify special measures. Febres Cordero labeled AVC and any of its supporters as an “enemy of the State”.

Febres Cordero further expanded the “enemies of the State” to include all those against the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. In the context of the economic and social crisis, labeling political opponents as terrorists was a strategy to legitimate penal action against them(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:245). This ambiguous conceptualization enabled more individuals to fall under those who could be targeted by the state. In fact, of all the victims

during this period only 18.6% were AVC members(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:269). Even when most of the leaders of AVC has been killed or imprisoned, the state continued to exaggerate the danger of the insurgent groups, to justify the continued persecution of leftist political dissidents. With the creation of a terrorist threat, the government was able to legitimate the authoritarianism of the armed forces and national police(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:32). This terrorist situation provided a context of crisis that would identify a common enemy and unite the civil society to support the government. The administration frequently declared states of emergencies in provinces or the nation, when responding to opposition demonstrations(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:41).

The discourse of crisis and terrorism was institutionalized through the establishment of laws and security organizations to combat national terrorism and drug trafficking that were modeled after Reagan's anti-terrorist policy. The Unit for Anti-Subversive Investigations (UIAS) was first established in September 1985(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:225). However in February 1986 it was established as a formal organization, the Service for Criminal Investigation (SIC), through executive order N° 1601(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:283). The same decree also created the Unit for Special Investigations (UIES), a unit within the SIC that was designated for the sole purpose of combatting "subversives" and "terrorists"(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:226). Although its activities and personnel were clandestine recently declassified archives demonstrate that investigations and special operations included not only insurgents but also social groups, labor unions, social leaders, political opponents, and human rights groups under the purview of the UIES(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:227). While the UIES conducted the investigations and schemes for operation, the Group of Interventions and Rescue (GIR) carried out the actual physical implementation of the plans created by the UIES(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:228). A broad range of groups and individuals were labeled as "subversives" and as such this enabled León Febres Cordero to retaliate to any opposition with repression.

The Febres Cordero administration repressed a broad spectrum of dissidents through the *escuadrones volantes* established under Executive Decree N° 763 in 1985(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:229). These were special groups of police officers whose purpose was to support efforts against militant political organizations such as AVC- they were the primary groups accused of abuses. *Escuadrones volantes* also repressed student demonstrations, workers strikes, and dislocated people from their homes and persecuted insurgents - the police denied their



existence( Comisión de la Verdad 2010:10;Tamayo 1984). Altogether the SIC, UIES, GIR and *escuadrones volantes* made up the state apparatus that committed the human rights violations, and were all formally accused of these abuses by various organizations.

León was able to increase U.S. aid by creating the misconception of a widespread drug and terrorist problem in Ecuador. By declaring from the onset of his presidency a war against Terror it enabled him to declare states of emergency which legitimated the use of excessive force by the state. This strategy was successful in gaining support from the U.S. which would eventually translate to financial assistance for these efforts. According to the U.S. embassy in Ecuador, “the political and economic policies, its counterterrorist efforts, and its strong actions in drug eradication and interdictions,” showed support of most features of U.S. foreign policy(CIA 1986:6). Advancing the interests of the U.S., León was given free rein to broadly define “subversives” and “terrorists” to include any dissidents of neoliberalism. The U.S. supported these efforts which is corroborated by the U.S. Department of State which on March 25, 1988 communicated to the Government of Ecuador: “Your successful campaign against terrorism has kept Ecuador an island of peace in South America...we are proud we could be of assistance against subversion,” (Krupa 2013:169). These shared interests resulted in the security and economic policy outcomes on the national level. Since there was the initial economic ideological alignment, the security discourse appropriation and supporting policies, justified increases in U.S. aid.

## **6.2 Expansion of Military Resources & Capacity**

Having successfully persuaded the Reagan Administration that Ecuador was fighting against terrorism and drug trafficking, U.S. aid allocations for military purposes increased. I argue that these additional funds were ultimately used to increase the resources and capacities of the state security apparatus, which enabled the administration to intensify repression efforts on a wider scale. There were also joint-military exercises, training and sharing of technology between the two countries. The bilateral collaboration was demonstrated by the Reagan’s administration permitting Febres Cordero to freely determine the objects of oppression.

The appropriation of security discourse took time to disperse on a local and international level, therefore increases in aid took place over the course of several years, as the following chart illustrates:

Year	Percent of USAID for Military Purposes
1981	20.3%
1982	19.2%
1983	14.8%
1984	19.1%
1985	19.7%
1986	40.2%
1987	45.7%
1988	7.8%
1989	26.1%
1990	18.7%

**Figure 7. Percent of Total USAID Allocated for Military Purposes. Military Aid includes: Narcotic Control, Military Assistance, and Economic Support Fund/Security Support Assistance program. (Source: USAID Green Book).**

As *Figure 7*. indicates, the percentage of total aid allocated specifically for military purposes doubled in 1986 and 1987. In the years before and after, military aid allocation was roughly 20% of total aid. According the USAID Greenbook, in 1985 there was the introduction of a new funding program called, “Economic Support Fund/Security Support Assistance”(USAID 2017). The year after, USAID allocated for military purposes doubled from 19.7% to 40.2%. The increase in total aid was significant because the Ecuadorian economy was in crisis and the state consistently had a budget deficit.

There is evidence that there was joint-training between as well as requests by the Ecuadorian government to increase military funds. For example the UIES, dedicated to fighting “subversives”, received training at the International Congress on Methods for Scientific Investigation and Antiterrorist Fight in the U.S.(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:226). In 1987 military aid included Military Apprenticeship Program (MAP) grants for \$3million and \$650,000 in International Military Education & Training (IMET), and there were Ecuadorian requests to double this amount(Fellner et al. 1988:83). The 1988 budget requested an additional \$4.5 million in MAP grants and 300,000 in IMET(Fellner et al. 1988:83). Additional material resources also

included assistance with controlling the Northern border from terrorist groups and drug traffickers. Technology and intelligence shared primarily consisted of, “vehicles, medical equipment, communications items, small arms, and support,” as well as the sale of an At-33 trainer aircraft (Hanratty and Weil 1991:234).

In 1986 a CIA memorandum mentions the possibility of Colombian traffickers linking with Ecuadorian terrorists groups. Febres Cordero’s establishment of an anti-narcotics campaign and appointment of the Army colonel to oversee implementation, showed its importance(CIA 1986:4). The National Directorate for Control of Illegal Narcotics reported directly to the Minister of Government Luis Robles Plaza, who oversaw other security agencies that committed human rights abuses(Hanratty and Weil 1991:242). The Ecuadorian government requested aid specifically for their anti-narcotics activities(CIA 1986:4).The U.S. also provided training by the U.S. navy and powerboats for the port of Guayaquil to monitor drug-trafficking(Hanratty and Weil 1991:244). According the U.S. coca production was eradicated by 1987 with the help of two U.S. helicopters that were lent for the efforts(Hanratty and Weil 1991:243).

In 1986 León Febres Cordero approved "Operation Blazing Trails", a project funded by the U.S. for the repairment of roads and bridges. The project consisted of 600 U.S. troops which rotated every 2 weeks(Hanratty and Weil 1991:199). Even though it was non-militaristic project, other branches of the government were not consulted until after the troops arrive. This decision was made solely by the executive branch, Febres Cordero and the Minster of Defense officials, when Congress became aware they passed a resolution that called for the withdrawal of the troops(Hey 1996:678).

The U.S. viewed anti-neoliberal opponents as separate threats from terrorists but nevertheless supported Febres Cordero in his designation of both as enemies of the state. The Febres Cordero government freely labeled all opponents, potential objects of state repression, as “subversives” and “terrorists”. A U.S. report states Ecuador had a, “successful drug enforcement campaign,” and that, “efforts to counter the terrorist activities of the fledgling guerilla organization, Alfaro Vive Carajo, have lately met with some success due police penetrations... but he faces growing opposition from leftist political groups,”(CIA 1986:1). The U.S. was tolerant of León labeling all dissidents as terrorist since they were also concerned by the presence of neoliberal opposition. After the aid and resources of the state security apparatus were expanded, the removal of all ideological opponents was achieved in a variety of ways.

### 6.3 Removal of Ideological Opponents

León Febres Cordero was able to successfully advocate for increased U.S. military support, which I argue was used to increase the capacity of state repression to remove any and all opposition. More specifically this included any individual or organization that threatened his regime both internally within the government as well as externally. At times the excessive force also resulted in collateral victims who were mistaken as dissidents.

From the beginning Febres Cordero had an antagonistic relationship with Congress, which would deteriorate over the course of his presidency. As mentioned, in 1984 Febres Cordero had the Supreme Court building locked down by the police until Congress chose individuals of his liking for the posts. In September 1987, Congress initiated impeachment proceedings for Minister of Government, Luis Robles Plaza, accused of human rights violations and abuse of authority. The National Police, which was under the jurisdiction of Robles Plaza, issued a manifesto to impede the proceedings and Febres Cordero also publicly denounced the impeachment(Fellner et al. 1988:10). Hours after León's statement, socialist block leader in Congress and one of the individuals who interrogated Robles Plaza, Diego Delgado, was kidnapped and battered violently by unidentified attackers(Fellner et al. 1988:10). Delgado accused the government, however the administration denied the allegations and vowed to open an investigation.

The refusal of Robles Plaza to step down and Febres Cordero's refusal to dismiss him caused widespread disapproval from civil society. After the impeachment proceedings, people took to the streets to protest, culminating in a nationwide strike on October 28(Fellner et al. 1988:11). The government responded with censorship of the radio and declared a state of emergency. The Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees ruled that the impeachment proceedings were valid. The national police responded by bombarding the Tribunal's building with tear gas and Robles Plaza remained in his position four months, even after losing the constitutional legal battle(Fellner et al. 1988:11). Key officials appointed by León Febres Cordero were formally accused of supporting human rights violations. This included Robles Plaza and Governor of Guayas, Jaime Nebot, who was accused of witnessing torture(El Telégrafo 2012: El Discurso). When the *Escuadrónes Volantes* were inaugurated, Nebot made the following speech:

“You, policemen, have precise orders, clear, you have the moral, legal and economic support of the Government. Use the arms because they are made for that purpose. The parrots will come out again to call for human rights, but for the human rights of murderers, criminals, terrorists, rapists and kidnappers...” (El Telégrafo 2012:El Discurso)<sup>3</sup>.

Febres Cordero was present at the meeting and did not contradict this statement, which was interpreted as his support for the use of force that may have been classified as human rights violations.

Any form of civil dissidence whether armed or unarmed was suppressed by the authorities. The main targets were the armed members of AVC as well as anyone affiliated with the group. In 1985 there were a series of kidnappings and attempts at mobilizing by AVC, however most of these efforts were thwarted by the Ecuadorian national police and resulted in the torture and execution of AVC members as well as civilians(Krupa 2013:184). In 1985, when referring to members of AVC Ecuadorian Secretary of Public Administration, Joffre Torbay Dassun, stated “the Subversion has to be killed like turkeys the night before the feast,” (El Telégrafo 2012:El Discurso)<sup>4</sup>. In 1986 AVC’s leader was killed as well as many of its members, nevertheless, human rights violations increased from 82 that year to 167 in 1987(Comisión de la Verdad 2010:55). Less than 20% of the human rights victims were members of AVC, the other 80% were from the civilian population. Many of the civilians tortured were falsely accused of being members or affiliated with AVC, this included family members of AVC(Comisión de la Verdad 2010).

León Febres Cordero had a combative relationship with social groups. In 1984, he told unions to stay out of political life in his acceptance speech from his political party, the FRN (Ayala Mora 1983:245). This was supported by the repression of strikes, demonstrations and protests. In the beginning of 1985 there was a general strike organized by FUT that was shut down violently and according to reports resulted in hundreds of arrests and the death of at least five individuals(Zuckerman 1986:487). Febres Cordero deemed the strike illegal and later that year in March another general strike was also suppressed. In October 1985 two students were

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<sup>3</sup> Original quote in Spanish: “Ustedes, policías, tienen órdenes precisas, claras; tenéis el respaldo moral, legal y económico del Gobierno (...) Usad las armas porque están facultados para ello. Ya saldrán las cotorras nuevamente a clamar por los derechos humanos, pero por los derechos humanos de los asesinos, de los delincuentes, de los terroristas, de los violadores y de los secuestradores (...)”

<sup>4</sup> Original quote in Spanish: “...a la subversión hay que matarla como a los pavos a la víspera”.

killed by police at a demonstration against transit increases and at a peaceful continent-wide protest against debt, protesters were assaulted with batons and teargas by the police(Zuckerman 1986:487).

The administration removed political opposition through covert or extralegal methods both internally and externally. These tactics ultimately led to an increase in the human rights violations between 1984-1988.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

A number of conclusions can be derived from the case of Ecuador, which elucidate but also raise further questions on the relationship between human rights and foreign aid. The increase in U.S. aid to a weak Ecuadorian government that sought regime consolidation and radical economic reform led to an increase in human rights violations in Ecuador from 1984-1988. This finding contests scholarship on state repression which finds that democracies are less likely to repress or that weak judiciary systems in Latin America allow for increased human rights abuses. Conversely, it challenges studies that assert that the U.S. considers human rights compliance when making aid allocations. This thesis supports what Apodaca & Stohl (1999); Callaway and Matthews (2008); Carle and Stohl (1985); and Carleton (1989) argued- political, economic and security objectives are prioritized over human rights considerations. If the human rights situation in a recipient country depends on transnational and domestic factors how can policy-makers prevent an increase in violations?

The proposed explanatory model provided a series of causal mechanisms to explain this deviant case, with the aim of identifying the combination of conditions which led to increased human rights violations, in order to prevent such an occurrence. The empirical evidence confirmed the existence of each hypothesized causal mechanism, demonstrating congruence with the proposed explanatory model. The increase in U.S. aid led to a rise in state-initiated human rights violations because the Ecuadorian government was weak and sought to institute neoliberalism, an economic ideology that aligned with U.S. interests.

The Ecuadorian government chose state repression as a means of consolidating power and ensuring the survival of the regime. Concurrently, the U.S. turned a blind eye to the human rights situation and continued to increase aid because a neoliberal Ecuador advanced its foreign policy objectives. By appropriating the international discourse on terrorism and drugs, Febres

Cordero created a state of terror that justified repressive measures and convinced the Reagan administration that Ecuador needed more military aid. The increase in military resources and capacity was then used to implement repression on a broader scale. Febres Cordero's removal of all political opposition, within and outside the state apparatus resulted in the human rights abuses of both armed and unarmed dissidents. This series of processes ultimately resulted in increased human rights violations between 1984 and 1988.

It is important to bear in mind that these findings are limited on various dimensions. One challenge was accessing a greater breadth of Ecuadorian primary sources, given the sensitive nature of clandestine organizations and operations, these documents were mostly inaccessible. Information provided by the U.S. government was greater, although the U.S. Department of State only has digital archives starting from 1990. A more extensive time frame would be useful to track the variations in the human rights conditions in Ecuador. A comprehensive comparison of the Febres Cordero Administration with the preceding and subsequent presidencies, who faced many of the same challenges but did not commit human rights violations, would be informative. Especially with Rodrigo Borja, 1988-1992, who denounced the human rights violations and promoted a less militaristic agenda. The proposed theoretical framework is meant to explain the case of Ecuador but has the potential to be generalizable if more cases are used for comparison. This would help assess which components are peculiarities of this particular case and which could apply to a more general model. Another limitation, is that rival explanations have not been suggested which has been a result of limited space.

The findings of the explanatory model suggest recommendations for further research on foreign aid and human rights. More generally, additional studies can propose causal mechanisms for cases in which increase in aid may have led to increased violations. Cases that deviate from conventional findings demonstrate the vicissitudes in human rights conditions and it is important to identify the specific catalysts of change. Future research should address the multi-scalar conditions under which aid increases violations given that large-N analyses have found contrasting results. A theoretical framework is important for structuring and analyzing complex processes that are multi-scalar and interactive. Further research can bring forth new models and explanations to detect problematic patterns and suggest solutions to prevent the continued human rights violations of millions of victims around the globe.

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