

Security as a Pillar of the European Union's Cooperation for Development in Central America

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ABSTRACT

The peace-security-development nexus is present in development cooperation policies. The concept of security has changed since 9/11, consequently influencing the strategies proposed by development cooperation's major aid donors. To study the relationship between development cooperation and security, José Antonio Sanahuja recently proposed an analytical framework for the *securitization of aid*, which is based on the Copenhagen School's concept of *securitization*. This author argues that cooperation for development policies have shifted depending on the need to support strategies to combat terrorism. This is affecting the strategies and priorities of these policies, mainly, to struggle against poverty, and to defend the *democratic component*. In the Central American case, security is a priority in the European Union's new Regional Strategy Paper for 2014-2020. In this work, we will analyze and reflect on the EU's role in development cooperation in Central America's security strategy. We intend to demonstrate that indeed it is not a case of *securitization of aid*. Despite the EU's recent focus on security in its Central American development cooperation, it does not respond to the elements presented by Sanahuja.

Introduction

The peace-security-development nexus is present in development cooperation policies. In many cases, after 9/11, development cooperation has started to be marked by the interests of donors, who based on their foreign policy, aim to fight against terrorism and search for national security. Not only does this affect the strategic development cooperation proposals of major aid donors —such as the European Union (EU)— but it questions many of the principles, values and methodologies that the Global Development Agenda (GDA) and the Aid Effectiveness Agenda (AEA) defined for international development cooperation policies to fight against poverty effectively. Universidad Complutense de Madrid professor, José Antonio Sanahuja, calls *securitization of aid* to this relationship between security and international development cooperation. He has proposed an analytical framework to study this link, which is based on the Copenhagen School's concept of *securitization*. This author argues that *securitization of aid* is present in major donor's cooperation policies, among which is the EU.

In the Central American case, security emerged as the guiding principle for aid in the EU's 2007-2013 Regional Strategy period. It has been announced that it will once again be included in the EU's new sub-regional development cooperation strategy¹ for Central America (2014-2020 Regional Strategy Paper). In the 1980s, Central America overcame major conflicts stemming the dictatorship-revolution and Cold War dialectic. During that time, a great part of the aid directed towards the region was conditioned by the sub-regional conflict. In particular, aid from the United States or the Soviet Union, or each of their instrumental allies. Thus the EU and some of its member-states, in addition to Latin American countries like Mexico, played a very positive role in

¹ The EU's 2014-2020 Regional Strategy Paper for Central America has not officially been approved, but drafts are currently in circulation. In particular, for consultation processes with the Central American Integration System, which include the direct involvement of one of the authors.

helping to solve the conflict, distancing themselves from the interventionist logic, and supporting strategies for development and peace building.

Nowadays, the Central American reality is once again marked by violence, but in this case, because of organized crime. Manifestations such as gang activity, drug and/or human trafficking and corruption in State structures, to name a few, are present in their most serious form. The sub-region ranks at the top for violent death per thousand inhabitants, and on the other hand, many cities or countries appear on the lists of the world's most dangerous places. The cost of violence in Central America is 8% of its GDP (World Bank 2011).

Within this framework of violence, security has become a central matter for the development cooperation agenda in Central American countries. All of Central America's partners and friends focus their support now on security and on overcoming violence. These include the region's traditional partners in cooperation at the bilateral —USA, Mexico, Colombia and Spain— and multilateral —EU, IDB, and World Bank— levels, in addition to the new or most recent allies, like Germany, Italy, Chile or Australia. The only exceptions for now are the new stakeholders in international cooperation like Japan, Taiwan or China. Next to the United States and Spain, the EU has been Central America's most important cooperation partner in this recent period, particularly in the regional field linked to the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Central American Security Strategy.

The hypothesis of this work is that despite the EU's recent focalization on security in its Central American development cooperation, it has not *securitized its aid*, thus not responding to Sanahuja's definition or to the elements defined by the literature on the subject. The EU's development cooperation in this sub-region has been outlined according to the GDA and the AEA, from a human security and peace building angle that incorporate the dimension of sustainable human development.

Cooperation for Development and Security: the European Union and Latin America

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, the international development cooperation system, through the GDA and the AEA, has seen an important theoretical, conceptual, methodological and instrumental evolution for bilateral and multilateral development cooperation to more efficiently fight against poverty. International development cooperation can be conceptualized, then, as an international social public policy. And its aim is to search for the development of the aid recipients through their own leadership, while at the same time parting from and in direct coordination with their own development strategies. This transforms donors into stakeholders who support the development processes of the recipients who must be the protagonists of their own development.

From the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness onwards (OECD 2005; 2008), among other points, the aim has been to make the decisions regarding international development cooperation interventions, which must be concentrated according to sector and geography, more objective. And in the principles of alignment, ownership and harmonization, accepted since the Declaration, this shift is evident. Also present is the intention of improving the quality of material and human resources used in actions, which results in a much more significant impact on the fight against poverty. These actions must be the result of a social policy that looks to permanently transform situations of poverty and vulnerability through the people living in these conditions by means such as defending their rights, providing them with abilities and creating opportunities for them. All this with active political, economic and social stakeholder participation —donors and recipients— in the form of local governments, universities, enterprises, and above all, civil society. When the United Nations proposes the concept of *Sustainable Human Development* (see Sotillo 2011: 23-83), this is what it is envisioning.

This logic of long-lasting transformation places aid for development in a clearly delineated space that must be created in situations of humanitarian emergency. Extraordinary action that responds to a specific cooperation modality, for example, where what is urgent quickly becomes what is important, such as the consequences of natural disasters, epidemics, or famine. However, the policy is perverted if this cooperation modality remains in time or is separated from these emergency situations and comes to occupy the space reserved for actions that aim towards the sustainable transformation of situations of poverty. Thus, what is urgent substitutes what is important without it being especially relevant. The transformative capacity of social policy is diminished, and suspicions that it might have been put into action by interests other than the genuine fight against poverty are incited; in local code, a social relief policy. Precisely, the GDA and the AEA try to avoid the overlapping of spaces that distort the international development cooperation policies and subtract from their efficacy.

All this was promoted from the 1990s on, once the Cold War was over and the EU has actively been participating in both agendas. Under this umbrella there was also a different linkage between peace, security and development, where the objective of promoting development was not subordinated to security, but vice-versa. This spawned the concept of *human security* that —along with what has been previously stated— is countered against the classic concept of security. In the international development cooperation strategies, security is a sector that, like others, is functional to the general objective of the fight against poverty. The same as with other donors, in the post-Cold War period, as a donor the EU is situated with certain ambiguity between the concepts of human security and classical security (Sotillo 2011: 23-83). The EU is “like stakeholders who have tried to develop a comprehensive or broadened focus of security that includes human security in addition to other more classical conceptions ... maintaining peace, preventing conflict, and strengthening international security” (Sanahuja 2012: 33).

The above starts to change after 9/11 when the so-called *Global War Against Terror* once again highlighted the donor’s concern about its national security in a return to the earlier classical conception, previous to the UN Millennium Summit and the MDGs. “The concept of securitization is about an analytical focus or tool that examines how certain matters are transformed or framed by certain stakeholders, determined as a security problem or issue” (Sanahuja 2012: 19).

Under this logic, financial development aid is part of the weaponry against international terrorism. In this case, the Copenhagen School’s normative focus of securitization —on which Sanahuja is based and in which the EU participates— seems to distance the current international development cooperation policies from what is its genuine interest in fighting against poverty. This is because they have remained subordinated to the imperatives of anti-terrorism and the donor’s national security. The cooperation actions move to the terrain of what is extraordinary or emergency, in the same way that social policy becomes assistance-based. According to Copenhagen School authors², “when a matter is securitized or tagged as security, it is linked to a fact that is defined or redefined as an existential threat. With this, it is elevated to the category of emergency and it is given a sense of urgency and relevance that legitimizes the unfolding of extraordinary means to face this threat, including the breakdown of established norms” (Sanahuja 2012: 19).

Sanahuja maintains that this process is what would be considered *securitization of aid*, because “the redefinition of concepts and political frameworks can be observed through a diversity of dynamics that include the discursive logics that legitimize development aid, such as the mobilization of extraordinary resources, the changes in the guidelines used to assign aid, the redefinition of democratic governance based on security, and some growing difficulties for determined aid

² Specifically, Buzan, B., Wæver, O. and De Wilde, J. 1993. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, cited by Sanahuja 2012.

modalities and for the non-governmental stakeholders” (Sanahuja 2012: 18). Furthermore, for these same Copenhagen School authors, securitization studies what is important and what is a threat, for whom (the reference objects) and for what reason this is done. These same key questions, when applied to development cooperation policy, allow us to observe if a case of *securitization of aid* is at hand. According to this analytical framework, securitization in this case will be related to policies and actions promoted by donors according to their interests, where aid recipients are reference objects. The reason for the policy or action is to guarantee the security interests of the donors, who consider their security under threat.

Central America’s Security Strategy

It has been almost 30 years since the Esquipulas Peace Process was held. Central American countries are now assessing the contributions by this process to development in the sub-region. The negotiation around the sub-regional conflict favored the definition of Central American development principles. Signing of the Esquipulas Peace Agreement in 1987 by five Central American countries constituted the region’s commitment to peace, but also to development. It also opened a process towards the Central American democratic transition. This created an environment of optimism that led to think in significant progress for the region’s political and economic development. However, the revolutionary processes that detonated conflict did not bring about revolutionary change in the region’s political and economic structures (Sánchez-Ancochea, Martín 2014)

The Central American Integration System (SICA) has been one of the instruments that the Central American countries defined in Esquipulas in order to respond to the threats to their development. Despite its weaknesses, Central American integration is probably the most dynamic of Latin America’s classical processes (Caldentey 2014). In need still of exploiting their potential, the region’s stakeholders and partners outside of SICA are observing their possibilities as a complementary but necessary framework for development policy. In recent years there has been numerous incorporation of countries to SICA as observer states, among which is the United States, unthinkable 10 years ago.

In 1995, the Central American countries finished the construction of SICA’s legal framework, signing the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security (FTDS). It was very well received because it was the first instrument to separate a police task dedicated to the security of goods and people from the armed forces, whose field of action was limited to the defense of national sovereignty. In order to comply with this mission, the Central American Security Commission is still integrated by the vice-ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Public Security, or the Interior. The institutionality of democratic security in the region is completed by other instances such as the Commission of Chiefs and Directors of Central American Police, the Council on the Prosecutor’s Offices in the Region, the Conference on Central America’s Armed Forces; the Regional Commission for Social Prevention of Violence; the Central American Legal Council, or the Permanent Central American Commission for the Eradication of the Production, Trafficking, Consumption and Illegal Use of Narcotics and Psychoactive Substances.

Because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, security made a forceful reappearance in the region’s agenda. But above all, it was because internally, Costa Rica proposed to reform the FTDS. Alongside Panama, they had signed the treaty with expressed reservations regarding some sections, and had not yet ratified it. An extraordinary Presidents Meeting in October 2006, in Bosques de Zambrano (Honduras), led to the activation of this new stage in the region’s security agenda. Central America’s Security Strategy was born, then, in 2007 with the FTDS in revision and Mexico and the US’s bilateral Merida Initiative in place.

The return of violence is now Central America's main regional feature. In addition to social and institutional breakdown, violence and organized crime are creating suffering, and the Central American citizens have been subjected to their consequences. At the same time, the sub-region also faces the effects of the governmental pressure against organized crime in Colombia and Mexico, and its expanding effect towards Central America. It is now a zone for operations for these groups, not only a transit area between the markets of greatest production and greatest demand (World Bank 2011).

The Central American governments came to the conclusion that their tools are insufficient to face the inexhaustible resources and destabilizing abilities of their powerful enemy, organized crime. So, the need for countries in the sub-region to join efforts became evident, as well as for the international community to accept its responsibilities and support the Central American countries. In this context, the International Conference in Support of Central America's Security Strategy was organized in order to review the Strategy adopted in 2007. It involved all sectors of society in close collaboration with international cooperation, partner countries and multilateral institutions. This allowed the Central American Security Commission to adopt the Central American Security Strategy in 2011. Security has since then occupied a greater space in the sub-regional agenda than other priorities like economic integration, social integration, disaster prevention and climate change (SGSICA 2011).

With the international community's support, the Central American countries agreed to work around four principles: *the international community's co-responsibility* in the problem; the *regionality* that demands the construction of a framework for articulated regional initiatives that respond coherent and efficiently to those developed in each country; the firm *ownership of the Strategy* by the Central American countries; and the *additionally* of the resources offered by cooperation during the process. The conference favored the development of a portfolio of 22 regional projects and initiatives around these four priorities: a) Law Enforcement, b) Violence Prevention, c) Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Prison Management, and d) Institutional Strengthening (SGSICA 2011).

The more than 100 delegations of countries and multilateral organizations that participated in the 2011 Conference, committed their support to the complete portfolio and translated some generic offers to be funded, totaling more than two billion US dollars. As usually happens in these types of forums, the concretion of aid has been much smaller, and the effective commitments have not gone above 100 million US dollars (SGSICA 2013). Moreover, the Conference ignited two very interesting processes for the debates on development, security, integration and cooperation. On the one hand, it encouraged Central American countries to define a strategy that truly articulated national and regional policies and interventions. On the other, it constituted an alignment, ownership and harmonization process for donors that have had the group of friends as a determining instance in the Strategy's execution.

The EU's Development Aid in Central America: a Case of Aid Securitization?

Security has become an important sector in the EU's cooperation with Central America since 2007. In the previous multiannual regional cooperation budget for 2007-2013, the EU dedicated 23 million euros to security and justice, focused on three complementary components —support to police and forensic institutions, strengthening of justice systems, and support of social cohesion through prevention activities dedicated in particular to youth. For the 2014-2020 budget plans, in a total 120 million euro sub-regional budget, the numbers have increased to 40 million euros for the priority sector that addresses the security-development nexus. In the current program of the EU's cooperation with Central America, this sector is called *security and the rule of law*, and there are two more priority sectors: *regional economic integration* and *climate change and disaster*. In planning for future years, the EU envisages to continue aggressively promoting a comprehensive and balanced approach to security issues in Central America. This will be implemented in a

context of several challenges that need to be addressed by Central American institutions, like criminal violence that results from drug trafficking, and organized crime groups that are reinforced by the lack of comprehensive policies and the scarcity of decent job opportunities (European Commission 2014).

We once again take up Sanahuja's systematization (2012: 28-32), which is based on the analytical framework provided by Balzacq in order to understand securitization (2005) and to appraise if the increase in the EU's cooperation for security with Central American countries responds to the sub-region's securitization tendencies. For comparison purposes, we will mention how these categories are in development in the Central American relationship with other partners, in particular the United States.

- a) As far as the *return to national security as a justification for foreign aid and guiding principle for the cooperation narrative and rhetoric*, it is true that following the Lisboa Treaty, the EU has established links between security, foreign policy and development cooperation. However, the bases for violence in Central America and their connection to organized crime do not have a direct effect on their security, which is why they are not arguments that support cooperation. In the United States, for example, it is possible that the argument for national security supports its cooperation with Central America. It is not this work's objective, but the positions of the US Department of State and US Agency for International Development (USAID), would be an interesting object of study, to differentiate between Hillary Clinton's tenure and her immediate predecessor and successor.
- b) As far as the *redefinition of peace and human security building in a framework of prevention and fight against terrorism, and for post-war stability*, the EU's relationship with Central America is based on pre- 9/11 interpretations. Evidence that this is the case can be found in the selection of topics that have been supported by the EU for the portfolio projects. The background of the EU's cooperation with SICA, as well as the decision to center on interventions focused on institutional strengthening and the prevention of violence, does not suggest a subordination of programs and their logic of fighting against terror.
- c) As far as the *mobilization of extraordinary resources*, we can confirm that the EU has increased bilateral and regional funds towards Central America. As we have previously mentioned, in the current 2014-2020 regional program, 40 million euros are directed to *Security and the Rule of Law* programs, which means an increase of 17 million euros compared to the previous period, and places this sector as first priority. The reason for these increases in regional cooperation is twofold (Caldentey 2014). First, SICA's increasing relevance as an area for development policies and cooperation programs, and second, the dynamic surrounding the violence crisis and the 2011 International Conference.
- d) As far as the *changes in geographic priorities*, the threat of organized crime and the effects of violence and instability have placed Central America on the agenda once again, despite the tendency to reduce Latin American cooperation funds. Manifestations of the Central American crisis, like those related to violence against Central American migrants in their transit through Mexico, or the large numbers of unaccompanied migrant minors attempting to enter the US, have been added to previous episodes of political instability. For example, the *coup d'état* in Honduras or the concern about the alliance of some governments with the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America (ALBA), and in particular with Venezuela. Central America is back in the cooperation priorities, then, despite the fact that its small size will never allow its presence in absolute cooperation volume rankings.
- e) The *cornering of democratization, human rights and good government agenda* does not seem to directly influence the EU's cooperation with Central America. However, the weight of these traditional objectives present between these two regions loses relevance in the new cooperation framework. There are not, at least in the area of regional cooperation, clauses

or agreements that define the EU's new conditionalities centered on security. The recent agreement between the EU and Central America —whose pillars are political dialogue and cooperation— is still pending European ratification, is also an area for analysis of the tendencies that this category points to in the securitization process.

- f) None of the Central American countries respond to the category of *Fragile States*, but the vulnerabilities of some of them (especially the Northern Triangle: El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) highlight that the aid is conditioned by security, that would point to the *securitization of aid* in Central America from the main donors, including the EU. However, this does not close the door to security viewed from a mostly developmental approach (human security).
- g) There are no signs in Central America that *humanitarian aid is subject to a growing politicization and militarization*. The effects of violence in Central America today do not demand humanitarian aid, but more complex responses.
- h) The *redefinition of the securitized development agenda as key* is particularly noted in proposals regarding Central American migration to the US. In particular, these focuses affect US cooperation more than EU cooperation, which is less concerned by this problem.
- i) There still is no evidence that allows affirming the existence of actions directed towards *control and reduction of autonomy for civil society organizations*. However, civil society's options to participate in the management or design of development cooperation policies against insecurity are limited by the traditional distrust in them by Central American states (Tager 2012). Nevertheless, civil society does not have an intermediary role between the states and violence generators. Organized crime does not offer options in the matter, except perhaps in some related episode concerning the gangs in El Salvador and in other countries. The only conflict that is produced between civil society and government regarding this crisis is the dialectic between repression and prevention. Some civil society organizations insist on abandoning repression or *crackdown* strategies that have been implemented, especially in the Northern Triangle countries.

Conclusions

The *securitization of aid* is a consolidated phenomenon among development cooperation's most recent tendencies since 9/11. Although this phenomenon's levels of intensity vary according to each donor, it is still apparent in the EU. When the main donors *securitize aid*, the key implication for Latin America is that the aid becomes an additional factor in the reduction of cooperation flows to the region. Currently, its geographical distance from those conflicts closely related to the war against terrorism, places the region as a secondary stakeholder.

In anachronistic terms, in the 1980s, the Central American countries could be an example of the *securitization of aid*, when the Cold War was infused into its national and regional conflicts. Presently, the sub-region is a special case, given the effects of violence provoked by organized crime and drug trafficking; especially in the Northern Triangle countries. After the 2011 International Conference, which supported the Central American Security Strategy, security and overcoming violence and impunity in organized crime are now the main focus of Central American international development cooperation. The Conference was a very important moment for development cooperation policies. It offered a relevant exercise, in light of AEA, that has allowed donors to align to and harmonize with the sub-regional strategy. And so the Central American countries, as an integrated group of countries, exercise effective leadership (ownership).

Particularly, in Central America, the EU has concentrated its development cooperation on the severe problems of insecurity and violence that are a direct consequence of organized crime and its resulting activities. Using the analytical tools offered by Sanahuja, based on the Copenhagen School, the analysis presented in this work has enough elements to conclude that the EU's Central

American development cooperation is not a particular *securitization of aid* example. These elements are:

- a) The type of insecurity suffered in the sub-region is not linked to terrorism but to organized crime;
- b) The consequences of this type of insecurity do not affect the EU. They do affect the Central American countries, places that are as dangerous as current battlefields or zones in conflict. For Mexico and the United States —as areas of transit or destination for migrants and drugs— the situation is different, however. Insecurity could have a significant effect on these countries through the direct exercise of violence in the form of exploitation, human trafficking and murder of north-bound migrants, in addition to the indirect exercise of violence over all the sub-region's inhabitants.
- c) The Central American countries are not relevant as sub-regional development cooperation partners, nor in the ongoing cooperation programs that are part of the overall international development cooperation system, especially when compared to other countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Syria or Libya, for example.
- d) The EU's focus on these matters, that despite having opted for a normative approach to security, is still linked to security issues. The aid for development that the EU offers towards security and the rule of law is still subordinated to the goal of fighting poverty with a focus on sustainable human development, and is governed by the AEA principles. That is, development cooperation in security prevailing under the UN's conception of *human security*.

The relevance of the security crisis in Central America is without question, as is its direct impact on the United States and other nearby countries. The destabilizing effect of organized crime is tipping several of the sub-region's countries to become fragile states. Their vulnerable rule of law is unable to face the effects of insecurity, resulting in tragic consequences for its citizens, with even more severe security implications for their neighboring countries. Therefore, at present, the EU's Central American development cooperation, with its particular focus on security as per the 2014-2020 strategy, is more an example of *human security* than of *securitization of aid*.

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