

Transformation of the Institutionalality of International Cooperation in Ecuador from 2007 to 2017: 2017: A Case of State Identity Affirmation through Role Performance

Authors : Natalia Carolina Encalada Castillo

Abstract : As part of an intended radical policy change compared to former administrations in Ecuador, the transformation of the institutionalality of international cooperation during the period of President Rafael Correa was considered as a key element for the construction of the state of 'Good Living'. This intention led to several regulatory changes in the reception of cooperation for development, and even the departure of some foreign cooperation agencies. Moreover, Ecuador launched the initiative to become a donor of cooperation towards other developing countries through the 'South-South Cooperation' approach. All these changes were institutionalized through the Ecuadorian System of International Cooperation as a new framework to establish rules and policies that guarantee a sovereign management of foreign aid. Therefore, this research project has been guided by two questions: What were the factors that motivated the transformation of the institutionalality of international cooperation in Ecuador from 2007 to 2017? and, what were the implications of this transformation in terms of the international role of the country? This paper seeks to answer these questions through Role Theory within a Constructivist meta-theoretical perspective, considering that in this case, changes at the institutional level in the field of cooperation, responded not only to material motivations but also to interests built on the basis of a specific state identity. The latter was only possible to affirm through specific roles such as 'sovereign recipient of cooperation' as well as 'donor of international cooperation'. However, the performance of these roles was problematic as they were not easily accepted by the other actors in the international arena or in the domestic level. In terms of methodology, these dynamics are analyzed in a qualitative way mainly through interpretive analysis of the discourse of high-level decision-makers from Ecuador and other cooperation actors. Complementary to this, document-based research of relevant information as well as interviews have been conducted. Finally, it is concluded that even if material factors such as infrastructure needs, trade and investment interests, as well as reinforcement of state control and monitoring of cooperation flows, motivated the institutional transformation of international cooperation in Ecuador; the essential basis of these changes was the search for a new identity for the country to be projected in the international arena. This identity started to be built but continues to be unstable. Therefore, it is important to potentiate the achievements of the new international cooperation policies, and review their weaknesses, so that non-reimbursable cooperation funds received as well as 'South-South cooperation' actions, contribute effectively to national objectives.

Keywords : Ecuador, international cooperation, Role Theory, state identity

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