



*He who does not live safely does not live*  
Francisco de Quevedo

## Introduction

As global tensions escalate, Ecuador is currently experiencing one of the most delicate moments in its recent history in terms of security. Over the last few decades, the country has gone from being considered a territory of relative political and social stability to becoming the scene of an unprecedented escalation of violence, marked by the rise of organised crime, drug trafficking and institutional corruption.

The collapse of the prison system has been one of the most visible factors in this deterioration, with prisons dominated by criminal gangs functioning as centres of operations for illicit activities. Added to this is the penetration of drug trafficking into state structures, the strengthening of local armed groups and an increase in political violence that has even affected the ruling elites, as evidenced by the murders of candidates and authorities in 2023 (Gordon, 2023). The result is a scenario in which security is no longer a temporary problem but has become a structural challenge of national scope. This deterioration in security has transformed not only citizens' perception of the state and its capacity to protect them, but also the country's political and social dynamics (Basabe-Serrano, 2023). Violence in Ecuador should not be understood as a sudden phenomenon, but rather as the outcome of an accumulation of internal processes and weaknesses that have left the country vulnerable to drug trafficking networks. This "labyrinthine" framework reflects the state's difficulty in responding effectively, while underscoring the need for measures that combine coercion with institutional strengthening policies (De los Reyes, 2024).

The accelerated transformation of security has tested the resilience of institutions and social cohesion. Far from being confined to the peripheries, violence has spread to strategic urban centres such as Guayaquil and Quito, affecting the daily lives of millions of citizens and increasing the perception of insecurity. In this context, the government's declaration of "internal armed conflict" in January 2024 marked a turning point. This measure, unprecedented in the country's democratic history, introduced a new legal and

operational framework to address a threat that combines organised crime, prison insurgency and political violence.

The security crisis facing Ecuador must therefore be understood as a complex and multidimensional process, in which criminal actors, institutional limitations and a state response still under construction converge. Beyond the seriousness of the situation, this moment also opens up the possibility of rethinking security from a comprehensive approach that articulates coercive force with a far-reaching agenda of institutional and social reform.

This chapter proposes to examine national security in Ecuador from a comprehensive perspective that articulates the political, social, and criminal dimensions of the problem. Throughout the analysis, we will address the structural causes of insecurity, the role of the state and its institutions, recent political responses, and the social consequences of violence, and we will seek to provide a critical view that allows for an understanding of the challenges facing the country in building sustainable security.

## **Background**

The current security crisis in Ecuador cannot be understood without looking back at the structural processes that, since the end of THE 20TH century, have shaped a vulnerable and fragmented state. The financial crisis of 1999 marked a turning point: the bankruptcy of 70% of banking institutions and estimated losses of eight billion dollars triggered a deep recession and an unprecedented institutional collapse (Ganuza, 2019). The dollarisation of the economy, decreed in 2000, partially stabilised inflation but eroded monetary sovereignty and deepened social inequalities, creating a climate of mistrust towards the political and financial elites.

In this scenario of uncertainty, a succession of weak and short-lived governments emerged. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, following the overthrow of Jamil Mahuad, attempted to restore fiscal stability and regain international confidence, but his administration was perceived as a continuation of the neoliberal model that the population rejected (Pachano, 2010). The following years, marked by the arrival and subsequent removal of Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005, revealed the persistence of structural political instability and a citizenry that was increasingly sceptical of the ruling class.

The political shift came with Rafael Correa (2007–2017), whose ‘Citizen Revolution’ ushered in a period of expansion in public spending, investment and infrastructure construction, aided by high oil prices. The new Constitution of 2008 and Correa's pro-sovereignty rhetoric consolidated a strong presidential system, which succeeded in reducing poverty and strengthening the state, but also weakened institutional checks and balances and concentrated power in the executive branch (Basabe-Serrano, 2012). However, beneath this apparent stability, a silent threat began to brew: the consolidation of drug trafficking and organised crime networks in Ecuadorian territory, driven by its geographical position between Colombia and Peru—the world's two main cocaine producers—direct access to the Pacific Ocean, which facilitated export routes to North America, Europe and Asia, and the state's limited capacity to control them, as it had historically been on the margins of the internal armed conflicts that characterised Colombia and Peru in previous decades (De los Reyes, 2024).

The demobilisation of the FARC in Colombia (2016) and the expansion of Mexican and European cartels reconfigured drug trafficking routes, turning Ecuador into a key logistical and financial enclave. Correa's decision to close the US base in Manta in 2009, although consistent with his pro-sovereignty policy, reduced cooperation in intelligence and maritime surveillance and increased the country's vulnerability to criminal networks. At the same time, suspicions grew about the illicit financing of political campaigns and the infiltration of criminal structures into local spheres (Ecuavisa, 2018), which eroded institutional trust.

This dual scenario—economic prosperity and state consolidation, but at the same time the emergence of new transnational threats—laid the foundations for a paradox that would mark the following years: a stronger state economically and politically, but at the same time more vulnerable to the expansion of organised crime and its effects on national security.

Lenín Moreno's takeover in 2017 marked a political break with "Correismo," but not a structural solution. His attempt to dismantle the centralised apparatus inherited from his predecessor involved the elimination of ministries and coordinating bodies, further weakening the state security architecture (Velasco and Andrade, 2024). Economic reforms and reduced public spending were combined with a collapse of the prison system and an unprecedented increase in criminal violence. The prison massacres of 2019 and

2021—with more than a hundred victims in the Penitenciaría del Litoral—symbolised the overflowing of institutions in the face of the growing power of gangs (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

During the government of Guillermo Lasso (2021-2023), the crisis reached a new dimension. Despite the declaration of multiple states of emergency and military deployment, violence continued to escalate, with more than 6,000 homicides between January and October 2023 alone (González, 2023). Institutional weakness, political polarisation and the lack of a comprehensive strategy exacerbated the sense of state collapse. Amid social pressure and corruption scandals, Lasso resorted to a 'cross death'<sup>1</sup>, dissolving the National Assembly and calling early elections that brought Daniel Noboa to power in 2023.

Thus, when Noboa took office, Ecuador was already a country caught between structural violence, the penetration of organised crime and the loss of state legitimacy. The fragility inherited from previous decades not only conditions current policies, but also explains the depth of the challenge facing his administration: rebuilding national security in an environment marked by mistrust, inequality and social fear.

## Current situation

### ***The state's response: militarisation, security policies and Daniel Noboa's leadership***

Daniel Noboa's rise to the presidency in November 2023 came in the midst of this storm. With a discourse of renewal and pragmatism, Noboa promised to restore security through a combination of social investment, international cooperation and forceful action against crime. However, barely two months after taking office, the country was shaken by an unprecedented wave of violence. On 7 January 2024, coordinated attacks were reported in several cities, along with simultaneous prison riots, hostage-taking, kidnappings of police officers and bombings. The most symbolic episode occurred when an armed group

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<sup>1</sup> Cross death is a constitutional clause whereby the National Assembly is dissolved and elections are subsequently called to renew the legislative and executive powers.

stormed the TC Televisión channel in Guayaquil and broadcast its threat to the Ecuadorian state live on television.



Figure 1. Soldiers arriving at a prison in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Source: Vicente Gaibor Del Pino/Reuters/Nytimes

The widespread violence and loss of state authority prompted the executive branch to resort to constitutional emergency mechanisms. On 8 January 2024, Noboa declared a state of emergency in response to what he defined as a "serious internal disturbance" following the escape of Adolfo Macías, alias Fito, leader of the Los Choneros organisation, whose escape highlighted the profound deterioration of the prison system and criminal infiltration of public institutions. From then on, emergency decrees became a constant tool used by the government to tackle violence in various provinces of the country, including Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabí, Orellana, Santa Elena, El Oro, and Sucumbíos, as well as in specific cantons of Quito, Camilo Ponce Enríquez, and La Troncal (Europa Press, 2025).

The state of emergency involved the suspension of several fundamental rights, such as the inviolability of the home, freedom of assembly and movement, as well as the establishment of curfews in certain territories and at certain times. These measures were justified as indispensable for restoring public order and regaining state control over areas

dominated by organised crime. However, the repeated application of states of emergency has generated criticism regarding their sustainability and constitutionality, especially following the rulings of the Constitutional Court, which in several cases has warned about the legal limits of the executive branch and the need to justify the suspension of rights in detail.

In mid-2024, the Government took a further step by declaring the existence of an "internal armed conflict" in the country, with the aim of establishing a legal framework that would allow for broader and more direct intervention by the Armed Forces in internal security operations. This semantic and political change marked a break with the traditional view of criminal violence as a public order problem and redefined criminal gangs as terrorist groups or non-state armed actors. Under this premise, the Army assumed a central role in the recovery of prisons, border control and joint operations with the National Police in highly conflictive urban areas.

The militarisation of internal security thus became the main focus of Noboa's policy. The executive argued that the military deployment was a necessary response to the institutional inability to contain violence. Military operations included raids without warrants, checkpoints in residential areas, and permanent patrols in cities such as Guayaquil, Esmeraldas, and Manta, epicentres of criminal violence.

The results of these measures have been ambiguous so far. In January 2025, Ecuador recorded 781 homicides, an increase of 55% over the same month last year. Although the total number of murders in 2024 was slightly lower than in 2023—6,818 compared to more than 7,500—the country remains among the most violent in Latin America (Prensa.ec, 2025). States of emergency and militarisation have made it possible to partially regain control of some prisons and temporarily reduce crime rates in certain areas, but without yet achieving structural stabilisation.

All these measures, although understandable given the urgency of the situation, involve significant risks. The first is the normalisation of the state of emergency as a mechanism of government, which can weaken democratic controls and expand the discretion of the executive branch. The second is the reliance on a military response, without a clear strategy for institutional strengthening, judicial reform and social reintegration. And the third, perhaps the most serious, is that militarisation without political and social support

can exacerbate existing tensions and displace the problem without resolving it structurally (De los Reyes, 2024).

Indeed, as Bergman (2022) points out, intensive repression policies in Latin America have had contradictory effects: in the short term, they reduce visible crime, but in the long term, they tend to fragment gangs, encourage new violence and erode the rule of law. In the case of Ecuador, the challenge is to prevent the "war on gangs" from leading to a prolonged crisis of human rights and governance.

### ***Intelligence legislation and new security laws***

In addition to coercive measures, Daniel Noboa's administration has promoted significant legal reform aimed at institutionalising new security tools. Since mid-2025, these initiatives have taken shape with the approval of the *Organic Intelligence Law* and other regulations aimed at strengthening the legal framework for combating organised crime, in a context of high social and political conflict.

The Organic Intelligence Law was approved by the National Assembly on 10 June 2025 with 77 votes in favour, after a legislative process fraught with controversy. President Noboa decided not to object to the law, so it was published in the Official Register the following day, making it part of the current legal system. This legislation introduces for the first time in Ecuador a National Intelligence System (SNI), composed of subsystems linked to military, police, tax, financial, customs, prison and Presidential Military House institutions. The stated objective is to provide the State with modern instruments to deal with internal and external threats to national security. The law reorganises the national intelligence system through the creation of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI), a body directly attached to the Presidency of the Republic that replaces the former Strategic Intelligence Centre (CIES) and concentrates the functions of collection, analysis and coordination of sensitive information (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2025).

A central feature of the law is the creation of a governing body with ministerial status, whose highest authority will be appointed directly by the President of the Republic. In addition, the law grants powers to request information from telecommunications companies without the need for a court order, as well as to intercept, open and retain communications by administrative decision of the intelligence authority. It also incorporates a permanent fund

for confidential expenses, secret identities and the possibility of operating under cover in certain procedures.

However, not everyone is in agreement. The centralised nature and scope of the powers granted to the executive branch have generated intense controversy in both political circles and civil society.

Human rights organisations, trade unions and citizens' groups have filed multiple appeals of unconstitutionality before the Constitutional Court, arguing that several articles of the law and its regulations violate fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution and international treaties. The main criticisms relate to the lack of a precise definition of key concepts such as 'comprehensive state security', which could lead to legal loopholes; the excessive scope of the information confidentiality regime; the possibility of interceptions and surveillance without judicial authorisation; and the weakness of democratic control and transparency mechanisms.

Specifically, on 4 August 2025, the Constitutional Court provisionally suspended twelve articles of the law, eight articles of the regulations and the first general provision in response to these demands (El Comercio, 2025). This decision highlighted the tensions between the government's need to strengthen security and the guarantees of the rule of law, which opened a debate on the proportionality between operational effectiveness and respect for human rights.

Compared to other countries in the region, the Ecuadorian model is closer to the Mexican model than to the Colombian or Brazilian models. In Mexico, the National Security Law grants broad powers to the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) under the Ministry of the Interior, with little parliamentary or judicial oversight, while in Colombia, Law 1621 of 2013 provides for the existence of a specific legislative commission responsible for overseeing intelligence activities, giving greater institutional legitimacy to the process. Brazil, for its part, offers a more balanced model in terms of civilian control, as its Law No. 9883 of 1999 establishes the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN) under the supervision of the Institutional Security Office of the Presidency, but with parliamentary oversight through a joint commission.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR, 2024) has warned that the regional trend toward expanding intelligence powers without effective controls constitutes

a structural risk to Latin American democracies, as it can lead to mass surveillance and political persecution under the guise of national security.

Additionally, complementary legal reforms aimed at strengthening the state's powers to combat criminal gangs were approved this year. These reforms include harsher penalties for crimes related to organised crime and fuel theft, accelerated procedures for the confiscation of assets linked to illegal activities, as well as expanded powers for security forces in operati .

These laws seek to close the legal loopholes that criminal organisations use to operate, launder money, and evade justice.

From a critical perspective, these laws represent an attempt to modernise and equip the state with more robust tools to deal with real threats of violence, drug trafficking and territorial control by armed gangs. However, the expansion of executive power in the area of intelligence, without a clear design for effective checks and balances, poses serious risks. These include the possibility of abuse, political persecution, mass surveillance, the erosion of constitutional guarantees, and the loss of public confidence if transparency and effective accountability for violations are not ensured.

### ***Social impact and public perception of security policies***

The security policies implemented by President Daniel Noboa have had a profound and ambiguous social impact on Ecuadorian society. Although the declaration of internal armed conflict and the militarisation of large areas of the country were welcomed by significant sectors of the population as a necessary measure in the face of the collapse of public order, they also generated a climate of uncertainty, polarisation and social unrest. Latinobarómetro surveys (2024) show that 72% of Ecuadorians considered insecurity to be the main national problem, while 58% said they had "a lot or quite a lot of confidence" in the Armed Forces, compared to only 21% in the National Police and 17% in political parties. This pattern shows a growing militarisation of public trust, where the legitimacy of the use of force tends to replace that of political consensus.

The persistence of violence has changed the daily lives of Ecuadorians. In the main cities—Guayaquil, Esmeraldas and Manta—the population has become accustomed to

living with armed patrols, checkpoints and prolonged curfews. The exceptional measures, initially conceived as temporary, have led to a kind of 'normalisation of the state of emergency' ( ), in which citizens accept the permanent military presence as an inevitable part of urban life. Various human rights organisations have warned of arbitrary detentions, excessive use of force and house searches without warrants, especially in working-class neighbourhoods where the armed forces and police carry out joint operations.

Public perception is marked by a dilemma between the demand for security and the fear of authoritarianism. In a survey by the Perfiles de Opinión Institute, 64% of those consulted said they supported Noboa's policies on organised crime, although 48% acknowledged feeling less free to express political opinions or hold public demonstrations during the months of increased military control. This unstable balance reflects a citizenry that, while seeking protection from violence, fears that the price of security will be the erosion of civil liberties.

Militarisation has also had a different impact depending on social class and territory. In higher-income urban areas, security policies have been interpreted as a relief from crime and a restoration of order. In contrast, in working-class neighbourhoods and coastal communities—where the presence of criminal gangs is more intense—military operations have exacerbated precariousness and fear. Testimonies collected by *BBC Mundo* (2025) indicate that in areas such as Durán and Esmeraldas, families have limited their children's attendance at school and restricted their movements for fear of armed clashes.

In this context, the psychological impact of violence is a growing phenomenon. The Ecuadorian Institute of Mental Health (ISAME, 2025) reported a 34% increase in cases of anxiety and post-traumatic stress during the first half of 2025, especially among young people between the ages of 15 and 30 in the coastal provinces. Fear of violence and the loss of institutional security references are generating a feeling of " r structural helplessness" that translates into social withdrawal, self-imposed isolation and, in some cases, internal migration to rural areas or abroad.

The reactions of civil society have been mixed. While some citizen movements such as Ecuador Sin Miedo (Ecuador Without Fear) and Guayas Unido por la Paz (Guayas United for Peace) support the emergency measures, human rights organisations and university groups have promoted campaigns denouncing abuses of authority and demanding the

restoration of civilian control over military operations. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) has also expressed concern about the expansion of the concept of the "internal enemy," which could be used to criminalise social protest or political mobilisation.



Figure 2. Police guard a march against Noboa in Quito. Source: EFE/ABC

Social mobilisation has escalated, as evidenced by the announcement of a referendum in November to decide on the presence of foreign military bases in the country, which places the security debate not only in the operational arena, but also in the constitutional and political arena. This announcement has sparked a wave of protests in various cities across the country, led by student groups, indigenous organisations such as CONAIE and human rights groups, who denounce a threat to national sovereignty and fear that the installation of foreign bases will reactivate forms of geopolitical control and internal repression. The demonstrations have been particularly intense in Quito, Cuenca and Guayaquil, where marches, sit-ins and public forums have been held in rejection of what many consider to be a "covert militarisation" of the territory. For large sectors of the population, the referendum not only raises a foreign policy issue, but also symbolises a breach of the 2008 constitutional pact, opening the door to a redefinition of the state's

role in defence and security. At the same time, other social groups—especially in areas affected by drug trafficking—have expressed their support for the measure, seeing it as an opportunity to strengthen the fight against organised crime through international cooperation. This polarisation shows that citizens' perceptions of security are no longer limited to the effectiveness of operations, but are intertwined with deeper notions of national identity, autonomy and democratic legitimacy.

In institutional terms, Noboa's policies have led to a reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and its citizens. The expansion of the security apparatus has reinforced the figure of the president as the guarantor of order, to the detriment of the role of intermediate and control institutions. This phenomenon is reflected in the growing personalisation of politics and the tendency to link the effectiveness of the government with the coercive capacity of the state. According to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2025), this shift in the axis of legitimacy from welfare to order is one of the most profound transformations of the Ecuadorian political system in recent decades.

In short, Daniel Noboa's security strategy has reconfigured not only the institutional architecture of the state, but also the collective psychology of the nation. Ecuador in 2025 lives in a permanent tension between fear and hope: between the urgent need to restore peace and the risk of sacrificing fundamental freedoms in the name of that same security. This new balance, sustained by militarisation and a citizenry increasingly accustomed to exceptionalism, represents one of the greatest political and social challenges for the country's immediate future.

### **Role of external actors**

The security crisis in Ecuador is part of a regional and international context that not only provides technical and diplomatic resources, but also raises tensions over sovereignty, cooperation and shared responsibilities. Actors such as the United States, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the European Union and neighbouring countries—Colombia, Peru and Mexico—are involved to varying degrees, which directly influences the formulation of the security policies of Daniel Noboa's government.

The United States plays a key role in technical, financial and intelligence cooperation with Ecuador. Joint projects supported by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law

Enforcement Affairs (INL) seek to strengthen the National Police, modernise prisons, improve border controls and facilitate extraditions. However, such cooperation also raises debates about dependence, transparency and conditions that could undermine Ecuadorian institutional autonomy.

The OAS has launched the Multidimensional Security Programme for Ecuador, which includes support for strategic intelligence, maritime and port control, the fight against money laundering, the recovery of illicit assets and the improvement of the judicial and prison systems. Similarly, legislative cooperation agreements between the Ecuadorian National Assembly and the OAS aim to strengthen democratic oversight and ensure accountability in extraordinary security measures.

The European Union has also been strengthening its participation, with assistance programmes in criminal justice, the fight against drug trafficking and multilateral financing, aimed at prevention and institutional strengthening, not just the coercive component.

As for neighbouring countries, Colombia has reactivated bilateral border agreements with Ecuador to combat transnational drug trafficking networks and the movement of criminal groups; patrols are coordinated and intelligence information is shared in border areas such as Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos. Peru has signed, together with Ecuador, a border security plan that prioritises cooperation on river drug trafficking, smuggling and illegal mining.

Mexico, under the presidency of Claudia Sheinbaum, although it has no operational presence in Ecuador, participates indirectly in the transnational dynamics of organised crime, given that Mexican cartels such as Sinaloa and Jalisco Nueva Generación have proven links to Ecuadorian gangs such as Los Choneros and Los Lobos (Insight Crime, 2024). Sheinbaum has proposed a security policy based on several principles: prevention, respect for national sovereignty, international collaboration with clear limits, strengthening intelligence, and no return to indiscriminate shock strategies. , the Mexican leader has stated that agreements with the United States must be based on mutual respect, sovereignty, and action within each country's territory (Expansión, 2025). She has also rejected proposals for direct foreign military involvement in Mexico, even when put forward by the United States.

Cooperation between Mexico and the United States continues to be relevant for Ecuador, not so much because of direct participation, but because of how it changes the flow of drugs, weapons, and illicit financing towards the south. When Mexico strengthens operations against cartels, displaced cartels may move to alternative routes that pass through Ecuador or use Ecuadorian ports. Therefore, Mexican security indirectly impacts Ecuadorian strategy.

The external framework has concrete benefits: equipment, training, support for extraditions, institutional strengthening, improved logistical capabilities, and international intelligence sharing. But there are also risks: loss of autonomy for the Ecuadorian state, imposition of external agendas, the possibility that cooperation will be used to justify human rights violations or opaque interventions, and dependence on external financing that can condition internal policies.

The challenge for Noboa and his administration is to manage this balance: to take advantage of external support without ceding sovereignty or weakening democratic controls, and to ensure that security policies do not replicate authoritarian or unaccountable models. In short, the role of external actors in Ecuador is twofold: they offer essential tools and support, but they also introduce demands and risks that must be managed with institutional care, transparency, and citizen participation.

## **Conclusions and outlook**

National security in Ecuador is a complex, multidimensional and constantly evolving challenge, the result of historical, economic, social and political factors that have accumulated over decades. The financial crises of the late 20<sup>TH</sup> century, dollarisation, the expansion of drug trafficking ( ) and institutional erosion laid the foundations for persistent insecurity, which has been exacerbated in recent years by violence, the growth of criminal gangs and the fragility of justice and control institutions.

Daniel Noboa's administration has responded with militarisation measures, declarations of states of emergency and legal reforms, including the classification of organised crime as an internal armed conflict and the expansion of powers to seize illicit assets and detain suspects. These actions have had some impact on operational control, but they have also

generated social tensions, protests and questions about the limits of civil rights and democratic governance.

As this chapter was being completed, news broke of the "assassination attempt" on President Noboa on 8 October. Inés Manzano, Ecuador's Minister of Economy, explained how the president's car, after being attacked by a crowd, showed bullet marks, although he emerged unscathed from the incident.

The security crisis in 2025 shows that violence is not limited to the coast, but has spread to Amazonian and border regions, consolidating Ecuador as a strategic hub for transnational organised crime. The sustained increase in homicides, the expansion of foreign cartels and the weakness of social prevention indicate that purely coercive responses are not sufficient.

Looking ahead, the sustainability of national security depends on a comprehensive approach that combines police and military action with social prevention policies, institutional strengthening, prison rehabilitation, and regional cooperation. The Ecuadorian state must balance operational effectiveness with the protection of human rights in order to rebuild legitimacy and social trust and prioritise territorial cohesion in the face of the *de facto* fragmentation of power by criminal groups.

Finally, Ecuadorian national security cannot be conceived solely as a public order problem, but rather as a political and social- y challenge that requires strategic leadership, long-term vision, and consensus-building among society, institutions, and international actors. The possibility of a more secure and stable Ecuador depends on the country's ability to transform the current crisis into an opportunity for institutional strengthening, social cohesion, and democratic governance.

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**Timeline of the conflict**

<b>TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENTS</b>
2000	Political crisis following the fall of Jamil Mahuad; institutional instability and weakening of state control in border areas.
2002	Rafael Correa begins his political rise; debate begins on military autonomy and the need for a new security model.
2007	Correa's government and the 'Citizen Revolution' begin; security is centralised in the executive branch and the intelligence system is restructured.
2008	New Constitution creates the Public and State Security System (SSPE) and introduces a citizen-centred approach to security, replacing the traditional military doctrine.
2009	Closure of the Manta Base (end of anti-drug cooperation with the United States) and dissolution of the Special Investigations Unit (UIES), weakening internal intelligence capabilities.
2013	Expansion of drug trafficking and illegal economies on the coast; consolidation of the presence of gangs such as Los Choneros.
2017	End of Correísmo and arrival of Lenín Moreno, beginning of a shift towards international cooperation on security and the depoliticisation of the armed forces.
2019	First prison massacres and spike in homicides; the government acknowledges the penetration of organised
2020	The COVID-19 pandemic worsens the prison situation; the murder of alias "Rasquiña" (leader of Los Choneros) provokes violent realignments among gangs.
2021	Unprecedented prison crisis (more than 300 deaths in riots); state of emergency declared in the prison system and military sent to prisons.
2022	Increase in homicides in Guayaquil, Durán and Esmeraldas; creation of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces for Conflict Zones and the Joint Task Force "Guayas".

2023	Guillermo Lasso's government decrees several states of emergency; the Law on the Legitimate Use of Force is approved and military participation in tasks is intensified.
Nov 2023- Jan 2024	Daniel Noboa assumes the presidency and declares an 'internal armed conflict' against twenty-two criminal groups following the attacks of 9 January. Article 158 of the Constitution is activated.
2024 (June- November)	Priority Security Zones are consolidated; Congress debates and approves reforms to the Public and State Security Act and the Intelligence Act.
2025 (January-June)	High levels of violence persist (more than 4,000 homicides in six months); Plan Fénix 2025 is launched, focusing on border militarisation, prison control and cooperation with the United States.
2025 (October)	Social protests over economic deterioration and allegations of military abuses; the government maintains its focus on comprehensive security and defence of internal order.

The tables below show data as of 17 September 2025, unless otherwise stated.  
 Source: CIA The World Factbook

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Area	283,561 kilometres
GDP in billions of dollars	252,728 billion (2024 est.)
GDP structure	Agriculture 9.5% (2024 est.)
	Industry 26.5% (2024 est.)
	Services 57.2% (2024 est.)
GDP per capita	13,900 (2024 est.)
GDP growth rate	-2% (2024 est.)
Trade relations in billions of dollars (exports)	38,468 billion (2024 est.)
Trade relations in billions of dollars (imports)	33.97 billion (2024 est.)
Population	18,309,984 (2024 est.)
Age structure	0–14, 26.8%
	15-64, 64.1%
	Over 65, 9.1% (2024 est.)
Population growth rate	0.94% (2024 est.)
Ethnic groups	Mestizo (mixture of indigenous and white) 77.5%, montubio 7.7%, indigenous 7.7%, white 2.2%, Afro-Ecuadorian 2%, mulatto 1.4%, black 1.3%, other 0.1% (2022 est.)

Religions	Roman Catholics 68.2%, Protestants 19% (Evangelicals 18.3%, Adventists 0.6%, other Protestants 0.2%), Jehovah's Witnesses 1.4%, others 2.3%, none 8.2%, don't know/no answer 1% (2023 est.)
Population literacy rate (aged 15 and over who can read and write)	94% (2022 est.)
Population below poverty line	26% (2023 est.)
GINI index	44.6% (2023 est.)
Military expenditure, % of GDP	2.2% of GDP (2024 est.)

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