



Approaches to security in Peru, 2001-2015: the securitisation of the valley of the rivers Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro

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Summary

The present dissertation examines a particular area in Peru – the valley of the rivers Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro (VRAEM) – as a relevant example of securitisation within a post-conflict and post-authoritarian context. The general argument is that, in the studied period, the political discourse has defined the VRAEM region as a security problem through appealing to narratives around the fear of reigniting ‘terrorist violence’ in alliance with drug trafficking. Thus, the VRAEM is created as a sociospatial order marked by fear and insecurity, as a result of an increasing militarisation and the use of constant regimes of exception. The paper concludes suggesting some alternatives to de-securitise the VRAEM and balance the state response.

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List of Abbreviations

VRAE	Valley of the rivers of Apurimac and Ene
VRAEM	Valley of the rivers of Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro
DEVIDA	National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ENACO	Empresa Nacional de la Coca [National Coca Enterprise]
FEPAVRAE	Federation of Agricultural Producers of the valley of the rivers Apurímac and Ene
INEI	National Institute of Statistics and Informatics
JCAF	Joint Command of the Armed Forces of Peru
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Preface

The purpose of this research is to analyse how the VRAEM region in Peru has been defined as a security problem in the political agenda. This study draws upon literature from securitisation theory and discourse analysis. The selected study case make use both of primary and secondary sources including official reports and published speeches. In this sense, unless stated otherwise all quotations from Spanish sources have been translated by the author who thus accepts full responsibility for any errors. The author is indebted to Synne Dyvik for her invaluable guidance, and also to Claudia Bielich, a critical friend.

Introduction

Located in an Andean-Amazonian valley in southern Peru, what is today better known by its Spanish acronym as the VRAEM has been in the limelight of the Peruvian political agenda since 2003, when an armed faction of the Shining Path¹ kidnapped and subsequently released 70 workers on one of Peru's largest ever infrastructure gas projects. Since then the Peruvian state's response has uninterruptedly used emergency powers to confront both armed belligerents and coca cultivation. Despite this, the VRAEM area has gradually become the Peruvian drug trafficking's axis and the last stronghold of *Sendero Luminoso*. This study claims that this region has followed a process of securitisation. By focusing on both political discourse and enacted plans of policy, it pursues to understand how the VRAEM has been politically constructed as a security problem.

In what follows, there are examined the discursive practices throughout the last three Peruvian administrations – Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006), Alan Garcia (2006-2011), Ollanta Humala (2011-2016) –, which represent the formal beginning of the post-conflict and post-authoritarian context. By doing this, it is possible to analyse the approaches to security assumed by the state's response. In addition to distinguish the narratives about the perceived threats in the VRAEM, this research discusses how specific actors are redefined under this securitisation process and how is created a sociospatial order of fear and insecurity around this particular area.

¹ According to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Shining Path is 'an organisation subversive and terrorist' that unleashed an armed conflict in Peru since 1980, which, in turn, caused 69,000 people killed. *Sendero Luminoso* was responsible of 54 percent of mortal victims. It had about 2,700 members at its peak in 1990. As described below, the dismantlement of its top leadership command in 1992 generated a break-up of its membership (CVR, 2003, vol. II: 13).

The present paper proceeds through four sections. First, it begins by describing the relevance of the VRAEM region as study case. Second, it discusses how drug trafficking and terrorism have been defined by Peruvian presidents as the main threats in the VRAEM, drawing attention to the specific context. Third, it focuses on the two enacted plans of policy deployed in the VRAEM in order to examine whether its implementation has complemented this securitisation. Fourth, it outlines the implications of the state's response on the VRAEM. And in conclusion, this paper underlines some possibilities to balance the state response in this particular region.

1. The VRAEM region as study case

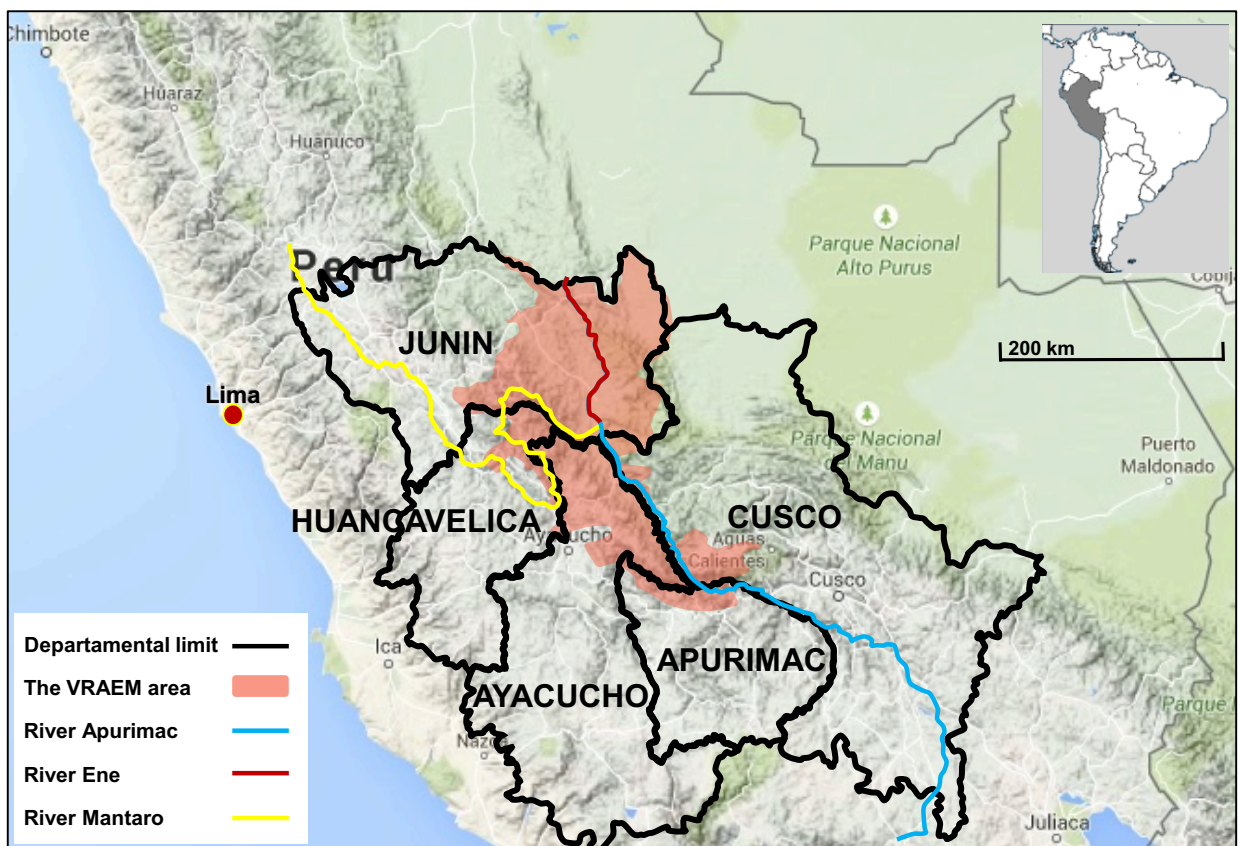
1.1. Background

Geographically and administratively speaking, the VRAEM is a heterogeneous area², besides its critical living conditions. Situated between 350 and 3600 m altitude, it comprises the valley informed by the rivers Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro, encompassing 57,568.73sq km (28 percent) of the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurimac, Junin, and Cusco (see Figure 1). The VRAEM is inhabited by 654,017 people (2.1 percent of total Peruvian population, and 15 percent of those departments' population), mainly youthful, who are considered vulnerable populations due to their living conditions (INEI, 2015: 22-28). In this sense, the percentage of the population living in poverty in the VRAEM (42.9 percent) is almost double that of the national average (23.9 percent). Likewise, its illiteracy rate (14.9 percent) is more than double the national average of six for every hundred Peruvians. With respect to access to basic services, a fourth of its population does not have

² By Supreme Decree N° 074-2012-PCM (*El Peruano*, 10 July 2012).

access to safe drinking water, while 16.3 percent lack access to electricity. It is worth noting that these figures are even more critical within Ayacucho's, Huancavelica's, and Apurímac's provinces, where poverty and extreme poverty rates are estimated to be 70 percent and 40 percent on average, respectively, while malnutrition rates reach about 40 percent (INEI, 2013, 2014).

Figure 1. Map of the VRAEM area



Source: Own elaboration with information from SD N° 074-2012-PCM (*El Peruano*, 10 July 2012).

Since the first migrants arrived, agriculture has been the main economic activity in the Apurímac and Ene Rivers valley, and coca has been extensively cultivated – especially in the Apurímac River basin (Durand, 2005). Originally inhabited by indigenous people, the

first migratory wave reached this valley between the late 1800s and early 1900s, which allowed Andean settlers to seize indigenous' fields, and to introduce coffee and sugar cane crops. By the mid-1960s, a second wave occurred around the coffee boom and cocoa crops, and by the early 1980s, a third one was started by people fleeing from the beginning of the Peruvian internal armed conflict (Pino, 1996). However, the decrease in international coffee prices, and the entry of the Shining Path into the valley in 1983 converted that initial development process – which included an autonomous organisational process among small farmers – into a profound socioeconomic crisis. In this context, coca cultivation was widespread in the VRAEM, which left open the possibility to a future involvement in drug trafficking.

Within this exceptional context of armed conflict, the state's response was based on the creation of 'political-military commands' under the Joint Command of the Armed Forces' (JCAF) authority in emergency zones, which generated an increasing militarisation and an indiscriminate repression that, in the end, neither disrupted the relation between *Sendero* and the poorest sectors of peasantry in rural zones, nor avoided the insurgency's expansion (CVR, 2003; Blakeley, 2009). Meanwhile, in the VRAEM, the Self-Defence Committees appeared as a new actor in the conflict³, whose result was a bloody confrontation against insurgency, with excesses from both parties.

By the late 1980s, a new strategy, not exempted from human rights violations, sought to gain the population's support, encouraging the peasantry's reaction, and to systematise collected information to improve intelligence activities. Whereas the latter facilitated in 1992

³ Given the insufficient military support in the central Andes, there were organised peasants' armed groups as a means of confronting insurgency. Initially backed by the military, in 1984 the 'Anti-Subversive Civil Defence' was formally constituted in the VRAEM, based on those germinal organisations of peasants, who were disagreed with subsistence economy proposed by *Sendero* (CVR, 2003, vol. II: 437). By 1991, these groups were officially acknowledged by President Fujimori (1990-2000) as 'Self-Defence Committees'.

the capture of the Shining Path's leader, Abimael Guzman, in the VRAEM there were the self-defence committees which militarily defeated insurgency by the early 1990s. Nevertheless, it was possible due to a temporary alliance between farmers and drug traffickers – who paid taxes for buying armament – rather than to the state support. Eventually, it seems that this alliance was exclusively used for self-defence purposes and not for particular benefits; in fact, the vast majority remained in critical situation after this period (CVR, 2003).

Throughout the rest of the 1990s, insurgency's activities lost its efficacy due to increasing desertion provoked by the Guzman's decision of negotiating a peace agreement with Alberto Fujimori's government (1990-2000). This fact caused the break-up of the Shining Path between those who were agree with Guzman –led by 'comrade Artemio', who remained isolated in the Upper Huallaga valley, in the departments of San Martin, Ucayali, and Huanuco–, and those who decided to continue the armed struggle –led by 'comrade Feliciano', who withdrew into the VRAEM. Despite this situation, President Fujimori spread the general belief that *Sendero* had been completely defeated. In October 1999, few months after Feliciano's capture, the VRAEM faction dynamited a helicopter whose military crew was holding secret peace talks with them⁴. However, the event was hidden given the then ongoing Fujimori's 're-reelection' campaign, which although ended with his victory amid fraud complaints, was followed by his fallen in November 2000 due to the exposure of corruption during his authoritarian regime.

⁴ Once 'Feliciano' was captured in July 1999, Fujimori's government sought, through the National Intelligence Service, to agree a surrender deal with insurgents in the VRAEM, in contrast to the official discourse on 'do not negotiate with terrorists'. However, after four negotiation rounds, belligerents ambushed the military delegation – five soldiers were killed, while the chief negotiator escaped. Fujimori simply said that the helicopter had been knocked down during counterterrorist operations (*La Republica*, 11 January 2012).

1.2. Case selection

After the return to the rule of law in 2001, the political agenda was focused on untangling the dense networks of corruption built by Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori's intelligence *de facto* chief. Nevertheless, two events of magnitude and great impact raised doubts among population about the continuity, and possible revival, of the Shining Path both in Lima, the capital city, and Ayacucho, where the armed conflict began in 1980. The first one occurred in March 2002 when a car bomb exploded at the US Embassy before the US President George Bush's official visit to Lima⁵. The second event occurred in the VRAEM in mid-2003 when the Shining Path's armed faction there took as hostages 71 workers on one of Peru's largest ever infrastructure gas projects⁶. Since then, whereas there was not any new major insurgent activity in Lima, the VRAEM area became the main theatre of operations for deploying the state's response, assuming a sense of urgency to confront a perceived existential threat and to reach eventually the pacification of the country. Despite this, more than a decade later, the VRAEM is the only area where the last Shining Path's armed faction remains, and the extension of coca fields seems immutable (see Figure 2). Thereby, the relevance of the VRAEM as security problem has been directly related to the continuing presence of these two phenomena.

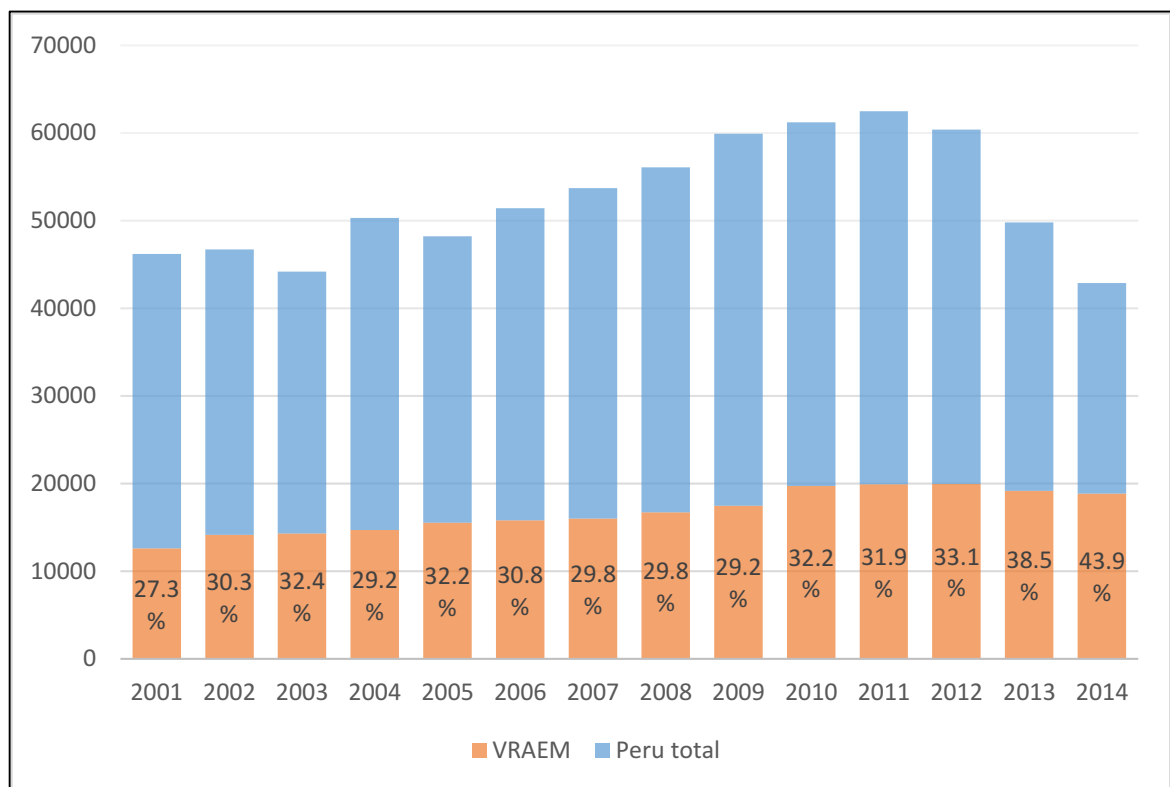
In general, addressed by journalists and partially by scholars in recent years, the VRAEM issue has been mainly explained by an intertwined relationship between *Sendero's* armed faction and drug traffickers in the VRAEM (Antezana, 2009; Garcia *et al.*, 2011). However, this assumption expressed in a narrow sense, particularly in political discourse, falls short

⁵ On 20 March 2002, an explosion happened in a shopping mall in front of the US Embassy, in which 10 people died and 20 were injured (*El Universo*, 12 June 2002).

⁶ On 9 June 2003, it was carried out by around 20 armed belligerents, in the province of La Mar, Ayacucho, on an encampment of 'Techint SAC', an Argentinian company which was building a gas pipeline that would transport gas from Camisea, Cusco, to Lima, as part of the Camisea gas project – Peru's largest energy development, and which plays a key role in Peru's economy (Sanchez, 2003).

not only in understanding the relationship's nature, but also in characterising the involved actors. This research argues that throughout the last three Peruvian administrations, the VRAEM has been securitised. In that sense, it is necessary to understand this process of securitisation in order to explore means to balance the state's response in the VRAEM.

Figure 2. Coca cultivation in the VRAEM



Source: Own elaboration with information from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's reports.

It is possible to contend that the VRAEM has acquired a security status not necessarily only because of purely specific conditions, such as the presence of insurgency and drug trafficking, but also because of discursive practices. Discourses can be understood as 'an amalgam of material practices and forms of language and knowledge where each

reinforces the other in a continuous cycle' (Jackson, 2005:19). In that sense, the analysis includes both political discourses and policy tools, given that the latter, as complement, are 'powerful strategies for harmonizing what otherwise remains highly disputed, both in terms of what is at stake and what ought to be done about it' (Balzacq, 2008: 78). Furthermore, securitisation is assumed as a dynamic process of struggle and contestation, with different actors and audiences (Salter and Piché, 2012).

It is also necessary to include a broad definition of 'the spatial' in the analysis, through which the VRAEM area can be seen as the synthesis of a whole range of elements – from geographical to symbolic ones – rather than merely as a place (Massey, 1984). Thus, it is possible to examine the VRAEM as socially constructed, where its population's identity has been particularly influenced by migratory waves, political violence and drug trafficking for long time. Hence, this paper examines how the VRAEM has been represented in official discourse, in terms of its actors, reality, and position within the country.

2. Presidential discourses over perceived threats in the VRAEM

Every securitisation 'plot', regarding the context, defines an existential threat which requires to be attended urgently and specific possibilities to reverse its impact (Jarvis and Holland, 2015: 85). By analysing presidential political discourses, this section, first, points out the political agenda in order to portray the post-conflict and post-authoritarian context in which the VRAEM issue appears. Second, it analyses how Peruvian presidents, assumed as the main actor with political power, have defined 'drug trafficking' and 'terrorism' as perceived threats in the VRAEM region and its possible solutions.

2.1. A brief outline of the Peruvian political agenda, 2001-2015

After leading the opposition against Fujimori, the presidency of Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006), an economist and independent politician, marked the formal beginning of the post-conflict and post-authoritarian context in Peru⁷, where is often a desire to reconstruct the state (Beswick and Jackson, 2011). Thereby, Toledo declared that his administration would be aimed at ‘strengthening fragile democratic institutions, clarifying past human rights violations and firmly confronting corruption’ (2001a). The latter implied to unfold some transitional mechanisms, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and to promote a security sector reform. To reconstruct a state ‘institutionally devastated and economically fragile’ (Toledo, 2001b), this administration advanced a political decentralisation process and a ‘social market economy with human face’ (2002c) to reduce poverty, which was a recurring theme in Toledo’s political discourse. On the one hand, his ‘frontal war on poverty’ permitted to achieve a sustainable economic growth rate (about 5 percent a year), and to sign several trade agreements, such as with the US, and to reduce poverty rate to 48 percent in 2006, down from 54 percent in 2001. On the other hand, this figures did not avoid a widespread discontent throughout Toledo’s presidency, which, in turn, generated several governance crises –even a state of exception was declared due to massive demonstrations and strikes in 2003–, impacting negatively on his legitimacy⁸.

Despite his campaign promise of implementing ‘the responsible change’, the following president (2006-2011), Alan Garcia, lawyer and leader of the centre-left APRA party⁹,

⁷ After President Fujimori submitted his presidential resignation via fax from Japan in November 2000, the Peruvian Congress elected Valentin Paniagua as Interim President for eight months. So-called ‘transitional government’, it organised new elections and enacted the truth commission for the period 1980-2000.

⁸ Throughout most of his administration, Toledo’s approval rating was under 15 percent (Ipsos, 2006).

⁹ As a former President (1985-1990), Garcia won the election to Ollanta Humala, a left-wing nationalist, in a second round vote. During the campaign, Garcia had to deal with the memories of his first period, in which it ‘defaulted on its debts, and hyperinflation and price controls wrecked the economy’ (*Reuters*, 20 July 2007).

continued, in general, the previous economic policy through the promotion of private investment and of free-trade agreements. In contrast, there was a weakening of the political and legal backing to those transitional measures previously undertaken (Arce, 2010), which entailed an institutional and political recovery of the armed forces (Sánchez, 2011). Based on 'austerity, decentralisation and administrative simplification', Garcia's presidency also used a poverty discourse: 'it is the time of 13 million poor that do not have anything' (Garcia, 2006a). Nevertheless, despite the poverty rate continued falling to 30 percent in 2011, and the economic growth rate achieved unprecedented levels (over 7 percent a year), popular discontent also increased particularly in response to mining concessions granted by the government. Moreover, Garcia criminalised the social protest in defence of his model (Burron, 2011) by using narratives such as the allegory of 'The Dog in the Market Garden'¹⁰ to describe those who protest and 'oppose progress', characterised as 'adversaries of modernity' (Garcia, 2007f). Although Garcia faced some governance crises, its approval rating was better than that of Toledo, particularly in urban areas, which might help to understand the subsequent victory of Humala¹¹.

In 2011 Ollanta Humala, nationalist candidate and former soldier, won the election with the promise of a 'great transformation', a political discourse focused on confronting poverty and exclusion through a different model from economic liberalisation. The election result exposed a rural-urban divide, depicting, in a way, both the gap and expectations of the Andean communities where poverty rates have prevailed despite those macroeconomic indices. Humala described the state as bureaucratic, centralist, 'stalked by corruption and overspend', which 'suffers from altitude sickness and does not want to go up the Andes and to spread over our Amazonia' (2011). However, just a half year later, what supposedly

¹⁰ Garcia used Lope de Vega's play, the same concept given in Aesop's fable of The Dog in the Manger.

¹¹ Garcia's approval rating was around 30 percent. By the end of his presidency, a national public poll showed that 60 percent of the population in provinces disapproved his performance (Ipsos, 2011).

would be a left-wing government started to change its political discourse and practice, for instance, in relation to mining concessions and to the economic model itself. As a result, demonstrations re-emerged whereas constant cabinet reshuffles negatively impacted on Humala's presidency¹². Although poverty rate has continued dropping to 22.5 percent so far – the objective was to 15 percent by 2016; Humala's political group has lost the majority in the Congress and several of its congressmen have left the pro-government bench.

In broad outline, it can be seen that the return to the rule of law in Peru prioritised economic liberalisation, through which successive administrations have consistently assumed some main strands of mainstream liberal thinking (Selby, 2008: 14). It has been remarked the need of reinserting the country in an economically globalised world, where is vital the promotion of private sector investment as a condition to ensure economic growth and stability, and to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Conversely, throughout the studied period, popular discontent and governance crises have prevailed. Additionally, several corruption complaints have emerged around these administrations. In this context, the VRAEM became a security issue.

2.2. Perceived threats in the VRAEM

Presidents can be considered the main actors in a securitisation process – as *securitisers*. Drawing upon official speeches, this subsection distinguishes those narratives used to define the perceived threats in the VRAEM. As a first layer in political discourse, it considers drug trafficking and terrorism, according to the existing literature on the VRAEM.

¹² For the last two years, Humala's disapproval rating has been about 70 percent on average (Ipsos, 2015).

2.2.1. Drug trafficking

Despite drug trafficking has been perceived as a national security issue by the last three Peruvian presidents, it has been partially defined in political discourse by appealing to two broad narratives. A first narrative, used before different audiences, emphasises the external factors' influence over the dynamics of this phenomenon. Thereby, President Toledo constantly outlined the principle of shared responsibility in drug control, which was a fostered discourse by the UN from the previous 1990s. In Garcia's case, the increase in coca crops was related to the presence of international drug cartels in Peru, specifically Mexican cartels, which in addition was characterised as 'unprecedented in the country' (Garcia, 2006b). Disregarding internal possible causes of this phenomenon, this type of discourse allowed Garcia to spread a sense of urgency: 'If we do not kill now the danger of drug trafficking expansion, Peru could face an insurgency as large as that of occurred in a brother country' (2007c).

A second narrative, used by President Humala before diverse audiences, focuses on internal factors around the absence of the state, whose effect has been the creation of illegal economies, such as drug trafficking, illegal logging, and corruption. Unlike past presidents, the VRAEM has been recurrent in Humala's discourse, possibly due to this area became the main producing area of coca in Peru by 2011 (UNODC, 2011). Humala understood this phenomenon as the main threat in the VRAEM, where farmers started to cultivate coca '20 years ago as a survival strategy', but today 'within a growing economy... it is necessary to create mechanisms to formalise those informal entrepreneurs' (2012c). In principle, this definition characterises a scarcity context as a precondition for the involvement of farmers, and does not simply criminalise them. Besides, it leads the state's response: 'we will bring the state to those zones, not just the Army or the Police... that is

our development strategy' (Humala, 2011b). The discourse of exclusion, pointed out by Humala, is linked to the situation in the VRAEM, where the population have been under *informality* since the early 1990s.

With respect to how to confront drug trafficking, the presidential discourse has appealed to well-known repressive policies designed to eliminate the illegal economy. In this regard, the defence of eradication and interdiction activities has been complemented by alternative livelihood approaches, and the shared responsibility principle. The latter has been understood in diverse ways throughout last three administrations. First, the principle has been referred to the voluntary contributions from consuming countries to producing countries. For instance, Toledo affirmed that 'consuming countries must contribute through supporting with funds a strategic alliance' (2003a). Despite this, it is worth noting that, unlike other producing countries, during the 2000s anti-drugs activities in Peru have been mainly funded by itself (Soberón, 2013). Second, it has been also related to supply reduction and interdiction efforts in terms of drug law enforcement cooperation. In Garcia's case, it was argued the need to increase the information exchange and collaboration between Police agencies (2006c). Likewise, Humala underlined to improve technical assistance, prevention measures and to share successful experiences both with the US and the European Union (2012d). Third, it has encouraged a judicial cooperation. In this sense, Garcia proposed to the US Government to extradite criminals accused of narcotics trafficking, although this figure was never adopted. Fourth, the principle itself has been questioned in terms of bilateral cooperation. Even though the international cooperation has not been denied, Humala has emphasised that 'the concept of cooperation needs to be reviewed, inasmuch as there is no a binding clause'. Therefore, it is required to include 'the notion of co-responsibility in supranational policies', which goes beyond simple cooperation or voluntary contribution (Humala, 2013a).

In addition to the outlined internal and external dimensions, the used narratives have included a sense of danger around narcotics through which it is spread the idea that society identity is at risk, generating a moral concern. This is characteristic of the rhetoric of *the war on drugs* (Campbell, 1998: 178). It configures a polarising discourse in which there is no grey zone or room for debating it; for this reason, there is a need to act urgently: 'Drug trafficking is a threat to our children... There is no time to discuss ideologically on this issue. We need to solve this problem first. Then we will debate politically or ideologically' (Humala, 2012g). This discourse of danger obliges the state to act: 'we are in an equilibrium position: either our country takes off towards modernity or it goes back to the drug trafficking brutality' (Garcia, 2007d). Using certain dichotomies (modernity/pre-modernity), it also allow to depict involved actors such as coca farmers: 'it is an ethical imperative... to return to producing farmers the dignity of an honourable work' (Toledo, 2001). Thus, influenced by the war on drugs' rhetoric, this narrative, first, ignores the cultural factor around coca leaf in the Andes and to what extent it impacts on the peasantry's identity in the VRAEM; and, second, spreads a rationale by which coca cultivation is the same as drug trafficking. Hence, it leaves open the possibility to portray coca farmers as traffickers.

In Peru the state's response has prioritised eradication and interdiction, given its commitment to diverse international mechanisms¹³, besides as a precondition for the US aid (Soberón, 2013). In this sense, statistics on reduction of coca fields have prevailed in political discourse inasmuch as it allows presidents to show 'visible' results, which, in turn, legitimate the state's response. Consequently, debating about partial or full legalisation of any kind of illegal cultivation has been rejected in Peru, despite an opposite trend has

¹³ Peru is committed to different tools and mechanisms linked to the UN, the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN). In 1996, Peru signed a Counter-narcotics Operating Agreement with the US (Novak, 2009).

emerged in Latin America in recent years¹⁴. However, the eradication in the VRAEM has faced several difficulties due to the strong opposition of coca farmers. Actually, forced eradication activities have been never carried out in this region so far. In political discourse, regardless of specific dynamics, Peruvian presidents have insisted on eradication activities through comparing the VRAEM with some allegedly 'successful' cases in other regions (Humala, 2014a)¹⁵.

2.2.2. Terrorism

As noted above, terrorism as perceived threat reappeared in political discourse in March 2002, when a car bomb exploded in front of the US Embassy in Lima, few days before the US President George Bush's visit. Since then, this term has been used by Peruvian presidents although under slightly different definitions and circumstances. In this regard, it is possible to distinguish three narratives on *terrorism*. A first one is related to the '9/11 attacks' and the subsequent US-led *War on Terror*, which strongly influenced on Toledo's administration and, to some extent, in Garcia's period as well. Toledo characterised terrorism as one of 'the three biggest enemies of the civilised coexistence and of the Peru's advance', in addition to drug trafficking and corruption 'in all possible combinations' (2002b). Conveniently, before international audience, Toledo's discourse compared Peruvian past experience with the context in the aftermath of '9/11 attacks': 'terrorism conspires against democracy. About this, Peru has recent experience' (2001c). Thereby the War on Terror's rhetoric was included in the Peruvian context: 'we will not allow

¹⁴ This trend was started by former Latin American presidents who claimed that the 'war on drugs' has failed. Therefore, they pointed out the need of rethinking approaches (LACDC, 2011). Related to this trend, in 2013, Uruguay became the first country to legalise the growing, sale and smoking of marijuana.

¹⁵ The department of San Martin, also known as 'the miracle of San Martin', is the most representative case. Not only coca cultivation decreased, but also alternative crops, such as cocoa, increased. Nevertheless, San Martin is geographically different from the VRAEM area, besides it has strong social organisations. In sum, San Martin followed a different process (Soberón, 2013: 116).

terrorism to revive in Peru... we will apply both steady hand and law' (Toledo, 2002a). In this political discourse, there is an intention to redefine identities: 'criminals who sow terror want to generate doubts about democracy functioning... because they are in favour of authoritarianism' (Toledo, 2002b). Hence, certain dichotomies are used to relabel possible belligerents in simple 'criminals', discrediting any political component around the use of terror as strategy.

A second narrative outlines differences between what is assumed as terrorism in Peru in 2000s and that of the early 1980s, when the internal armed conflict started in Ayacucho. It permitted Peruvian presidents to define those who use *terrorism* as simply 'remnants' whose actions, in principle, do not put at risk the state. Toledo dismissed 'a new terrorist outbreak' despite some attacks in the VRAEM; which was understood as part of the democratic recovery and the pacification process (Toledo, 2005). Nevertheless, it did not imply the absence of threat. Thus, Garcia deemed that even though there was no 'massive terrorism... as in 1985 [during his first Presidency]' (2006a), those *remnants* 'still threaten our homeland' (2009a). Likewise, Humala contended that those remnants 'today do not constitute any threat to the Peruvian State; but they are able to cause some harm' (2012a). Moreover, in the aftermath of attacks in the VRAEM, the sense of threat and urgency was categorically emphasised:

We are at war, in a situation of strife, of conflict... It produces reactions through long-range weapons and military harassments which caused wounded soldiers. (Garcia, 2009d)

It seems there are people who do not realise that we are at war. (Humala, 2011a)

Linked to the previous one, a third narrative claims that those remnants are localised in certain zones, which entails that the threat is controlled to some extent. In this respect Humala asserted that 'today terrorism does not constitute a national security problem, but it does in zones where terrorist remnants still operate' (2012g). This particular distinction

creates *imaginative geographies*, understood as a sociospatial order that allows subjects and spaces to be intelligible (Ojeda, 2013: 760). Thus understood, subjects as those 'terrorist remnants' or '*cocaleros*' [coca farmers] and spaces as the VRAEM area are included in dominant political discourse. This narrative, used specially before audiences out of these *threatened* areas, defines notions of 'we' and 'they', 'the same' and 'the other', through which a division is legitimised. Actually, for Humala, previous administrations maintained the VRAEM in exclusion, and 'as a result, this problem [of armed remnants] was encapsulated in order to avoid to know about it in Lima. Then, communities in the VRAEM became vulnerable population because terrorists blackmailed them, given that farmers are dependent on land' (2012h). This narrative reintroduces a rural-urban division, which, during the 1980s and 1990s, marked the armed conflict (CVR, 2003). Thereby, it permits to elucidate to whom and in what terms security is guaranteed. This aspect will be treated later.

A fourth predominant narrative is referred to the relationship between drug trafficking and terrorism in the VRAEM. Used by authorities in Colombia for instance (Oslender, 2010), it can be understood as a discursive strategy that links guerrillas to illicit crop cultivation and drug trafficking, redefining those belligerents as 'narco-terrorists', 'criminals', and the like. According to this narrative, the creation of alliances between these actors would explain the continuity of the Shining Path's armed faction in the VRAEM. In this way, for Toledo 'remnants of terrorist gangs operate as criminal organisations, linked to drug trafficking and corruption' (2002b), a relationship characterised as a 'perverse alliance' (2001d). In Garcia's case, indeed, that nexus was recognised, but assumed as 'controlled' because there were 'few narco-terrorists' (2010a). Garcia said that 'there might be zones where there is more criminal or terrorist presence in alliance with drug trafficking, but those zones are not liberated ones' (2007b). Under this narrative, those who threaten the VRAEM region

are portrayed as ultimately motivated by economic interests rather than political ones. For Humala, 'these terrorist delinquents, as criminal bands, are providing protection for drug shipments from the VRAEM area. Also they extort local governments and local firms' (2014b).

In terms of state's response, it is worth noting that the imperative of responding to 'terrorist remnants' was described in political discourse as a consequence of past administrations' failures. According to Toledo, there was 'a lack of attention to terrorist remnants between 1995 and 2000' when Fujimori's government used to affirm that the Shining Path had been defeated (2003c). Likewise, Humala claimed that 'after [former *Sendero* leader] Guzman's capture the state fell into some complacency. As a result, the VRAEM region was left under illegal rules, kidnapping...' (2012e). In a slightly different vein, Garcia pointed out the lack of attention to military situation in terms of equipment, remuneration, and morale (2007e). For Garcia, due to this uncertain situation, 'hundreds of square kilometres had been left to terrorists as sanctuary during many years' in the VRAEM area (2009b). This often used premise tends not only to question shortcomings of past state policies, but to dismiss them completely. Eventually, state policy on these issues remains unclear or away from being institutionalised. Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to outline some of the approaches sketched within political discourse to achieve *pacification*.

First, it was prioritised a severe response due to the influence of the war on terror and the depiction of belligerents as simple criminals. Before diverse audiences, Toledo declared his 'steady hand position': 'when democracy confronts again organised crime, whatever its origin, there is no truce... Against them there will be steady, determined and sober hand'

(2002b). After kidnapping events or ambushes in the VRAEM, or the new trials to those accused of terrorism¹⁶, this rhetoric was used to emphasise no ambiguities, inflexibility:

Narcoterrorism in Peru shall not pass. (Toledo, 2004)

We need to exterminate those terrorist remnants, but I think it requires patience. (Garcia, 2009c)

We will not allow terrorists to be released; we will not dialogue with terrorists; we will eliminate terrorism. (Humala, 2012i).

With respect to punishment for terrorism offences, whereas Toledo proposed sentences of lifetime imprisonment both for terrorism and for drug trafficking, Garcia proposed the death penalty for treason and terrorism. Actually, after some events in the VRAEM, Garcia constantly repeated his proposal, declaring that the National Congress should grant the Executive Power special faculties to issue the death penalty in order ‘to definitely end those terrorist remnants’ (Garcia, 2006d)¹⁷.

Second, in general, all Peruvian presidents identified the state absence as a cause for the presence of remnants in affected areas as the VRAEM. Nevertheless, it is possible to remark two approaches. On the one side, Toledo and Humala put emphasis on deploying measures based on a security-development nexus. For Toledo, the so-called ‘perverse alliance’ tended to ‘scare away investors’, and the best way to defeat it was through ‘achieving development and eliminating poverty’ (2003a). Thereby, driving social programmes in sensitive zones was deemed ‘the most powerful weapon to fight against terrorism’ (Toledo, 2006). In a similar vein, Humala claimed that in the VRAEM ‘the war is against underdevelopment’, in which ‘malnutrition, illiteracy, poverty, and inequality are the

¹⁶ In 2003, the verdict by which *Sendero*’s leadership was tried in 1992 –by a secret military court and sentenced to life in prison– was ruled unconstitutional (*BBC*, 27 September 2005). The return to the rule of law also permitted the possibility to re-try the Shining Path’s central committee.

¹⁷ President Garcia repeatedly appealed to his proposal both for violations and terrorism offences. Garcia argued that ‘those who violate and kill, those who destroy the homeland, Peru should punish them with severe force. Peru should be seen as a fair, broad, and tolerant country’ (2007a). In 2010, Garcia warned: ‘If we do not take action on this matter, terrorism will return’ (2010b).

enemies hidden behind mountains' (2012j). Besides being agree with 'bringing the state with development [to the VRAEM]: roads, water, sanitation, police stations' (2012b), Humala included a discourse on inequity and social inclusion. According to this rhetoric, poverty is not the problem, but inequality in zones such as the VRAEM (Humala, 2012f), whose departments of Huancavelica, Apurimac, and Ayacucho are known as 'the poverty triangle' (Humala, 2012k).

On the other side, Garcia announced a strategy in which the Armed Forces had a predominant role. In addition to the creation of military detachments in the VRAEM, it was promoted the acquisition of military equipment. The latter was continued by his successor with the objective to replace obsolete military material, especially in the VRAEM (Humala, 2013b). Nevertheless, President Humala intended to change the strategy in the VRAEM region: 'This war is not just military, but also economic. Achieving the VRAEM social inclusion is vital to win... We will defeat narcoterrorism through social inclusion, not only with arms' (2011a).

This section has reviewed how two phenomena have been defined as threats in the VRAEM area in presidential political discourses. While the VRAEM area as such was gaining in relevance, Peruvian presidents gradually emphasised a sense of emergency and risk around those phenomena. In this regard, the VRAEM has been socially framed under the influence of *war on drugs*' and *war on terror*'s rhetoric. In a post-conflict context, the fear of reigniting violence prevailed in political discourse which was particularly directed at an audience different from that of the VRAEM. The memories of the armed conflict were fundamental in the mobilisation of fear around the VRAEM, whose actors, in turn, were depicted in negative terms – insurgents were assumed as simple 'criminals' with just economic interests, and coca farmers were portrayed as drug traffickers.

3. The policy tools deployed in the VRAEM

In addition to mapping out political narratives aimed at configuring a securitising move that, eventually, is accepted or rejected by an audience, it is necessary to examine how and to what extent issued policy instruments help on that purpose. Focusing on the two policies undertaken in the VRAEM so far, this section describes and discusses the process of securitisation followed in that area, regarding the involved actors, interests and discourses that are competing for political, social, economic and bureaucratic support (Salter and Piché, 2012: 935).

3.1. 'Plan of Peace and Development 2003-2006'¹⁸

President Toledo enacted this policy few months after the kidnapping event in Ayacucho department, politically pressured by both the lack of results from the military operations in the area and an intense media coverage about a possible return of terrorism. However, the plan was strongly influenced by the TRC's recommendations¹⁹. In fact, Toledo presented the plan in an address to the nation in which he apologised on behalf of the state for the political violence between 1980 and 2000 (2003d). Thus, the plan was inserted in a context in which transitional measures were undertaken. In this sense, as background, it is relevant to underline the created position of *Commissioner for Peace and Development* –within the Interior Ministry, responsible for internal order– as an example of the attempts to recover

¹⁸ By Supreme Decree N° 092-2003-PCM (*El Peruano*, 22 November 2003).

¹⁹ Whereas its Final Report was presented in August 2003, its Peace and Reconciliation Commission recommended this plan as part of a reconciliation policy. In this sense, subsequently, another 'Plan of Peace and Development' was enacted for the departments of San Martín, Huanuco, Pasco, Junín, and the province of Padre Abad (Ucayali department), but for the period 2004-2007 (by Supreme Decree N° 070-2004-PCM, *El Peruano*, 18 October 2004).

civil control over security services (and security policies), but also of some difficulties that would face the plan in the next years.

This Commissioner position was created at the beginning of Toledo's presidency as part of the political strategy on pacification 'in zones where terrorist groups' remnants survive', with the objective of, inter alia, co-ordinating with authorities responsible for counter-narcotics activities and alternative development policies²⁰. In practice, the commissioners' performance faced two basic difficulties. First, it was complicated to define the real scope of the direct area of influence in question. There were appointed two commissioners according to two river basins, with the understanding that there were two different situations and places – one in Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and a province of Cusco (Aurimac basin), and another in Junin (Ene basin). Subsequently, changes in the VRAEM spatial order will be constant. Second, these commissioners lacked of legitimacy in practice, due to both the weak political support and the military's resistance to civilian control. A meaningful event happened after the above-mentioned kidnapping, when the appointed commissioner for Junin demanded to have never been summoned to co-ordinate and planning operations in the River Ene against the Shining Path's armed faction (Pariona, 2003: 20).

Returning to the plan, as its title indicates, its objective was to promote development and social peace in the areas most severely affected by the past violence – departments of Aurimac, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and provinces of La Convencion (Cusco) and Satipo (Junin). Funded almost entirely by public funds²¹, it was conceived as a management tool led by the National Council of Decentralisation, under the formal direction of the Prime

²⁰ By Supreme Decree N° 008-2001-IN (*El Peruano*, 6 November 2001). This position was created in zones such as the departments of Huanuco, San Martin, and some provinces of Amazonas; besides the departments of Piura and Puno. The Commissioner position is still valid.

²¹ It was allocated US\$ 813 million for the plan in total, from which just only 9 percent was funded by international cooperation such as USAID and the European Union (CND, 2003).

Minister's Office. The main criteria for the selection of districts was its high poverty rates. Among three priority levels, the direct influence area was defined now by the two river basins noted above, called by the Spanish acronym VRAE. However, in addition to those 13 districts which inform originally that valley as such, it was considered, without a particular explanation, Pacobamba in Andahuaylas, Apurimac. At that time, this district was a sort of limit of the agricultural frontier for coca fields. Hence, it shows that the presence of coca cultivation was another criteria for the selection. According to the plan's diagnostic, the fundamental problem in the VRAE area was 'citizen security', given the relationship between 'drug traffickers and terrorist remnants' (CND, 2003: 53). Despite this, the plan did not include any particular programme related to confronting armed belligerents, although it did underline the need to intensify interdiction operations and to control more strictly illegal coca cultivation (CND, 2003: 10).

Toledo's plan encompassed four courses of action, from which it is worth highlighting the promotion of private investment, and the strengthening of 'local institutionality'²². With respect to the former, it was said that USAID drove the participation of private sectors as a means to make possible the international cooperation in the VRAE, especially in eradication activities and alternative development programmes (Belleza, 2004). This policy framework allowed USAID to promote eradication hand-in-hand with the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA)²³ in several Peruvian regions²⁴. As a result, during this term, there were constant demonstrations by coca

²² The other two were the implementation of basic services and territorial integration, and the optimisation of the public expenditure (CND, 2003: 60).

²³ DEVIDA is the Peruvian rector entity responsible for the fight against drugs. It was created by recommendation of the US Department of State in 1996, and was named Commission for the Fight against Drug Consumption (CONTRADROGAS) (Law Decree N° 824). It was renamed as DEVIDA in 2002 (Supreme Decree N° 032-2002-PCM).

²⁴ Designed to be deployed in Ayacucho, Cusco, Junin, San Martin, and Huanuco departments, it was aimed at supporting farmers who had voluntarily eradicated their fields by providing economic compensation (180 US\$/ha eradicated) and alternative development support, including assistance to develop the social

farmers' organisations²⁵, protesting against possible eradication of coca fields. Despite this tense situation, to some extent, there was a dialogue will from coca farmers and government, although their agreements tended to fail²⁶. In this context, state actors shaped the existential threat in a powerful way, as Interior Minister declared: 'if coca farmers' demands were admitted, Peru would become a 'narco-state'. What they want is to legalise coca cultivation to become Peru a country dominated by drug trafficking' (Rospigliosi, 2004). Furthermore, there was a constant influence of the US government aimed at dismissing possible changes in drugs policy through either the US Department of State's reports or remarks by the US Ambassador to Peru (Soberón, 2013). In a similar vein, given the linkage, DEVIDA guaranteed no changes, claiming that 'nobody can argue that cultivating coca in certain zones permits to overcome poverty, as some *cocalero* union leaders say' (Erickson, 2005).

On the other hand, the plan sought to improve institutional strengthening of municipalities, as well as local organisations. However, there were constant delays in the implementation of the training workshops. For instance, 7 months later, regional authorities from the VRAE demanded that there had been nothing done for its situation until then (*El Comercio*, 13 June 2004). Despite the plan's diagnostic made visible some ethnic communities affected by past violence, such as *Ashaninkas* and *Machiguengas*, there were not specified plans for victims' reparations (Oelschlegl, 2006: 1346).

infrastructure of the areas. During this period, however, only in the VRAE were eradicated less than 10 percent of total eradicated area (UNODC, 2003; 2006).

²⁵ Such as the Federation of Agricultural Producers of the valley of the rivers Apurimac and Ene (FEPAVRAE), which is one of the most important social organisations there. It was created in 1995 in the midst of the crisis of coca leaf's prices, although they were backed by international cooperation. By 2000, as FEPAVRAE, they eliminated the term of 'coca farmer producers' included in its original denomination (Durand, 2005).

²⁶ For instance, during Toledo's presidency, there were signed 36 agreements with coca farmers' organisations from different coca basins (IDEELE, 2005: 106).

With respect to the VRAE's armed faction, although the plan did not design any programme as such, given that it was focused mainly on poverty and coca cultivation in the VRAE, it did include some guidelines for the self-defence committees, whose role was decisive in the confrontation against the Shining Path in the past. However, whereas the plan proposed to organise those committees as a complement of public forces in the pacification and the control of coca cultivation, the implementation was limited to give them new armament and ammunition. It seemed a return to past strategies, when the state was not able to guarantee security in the region. Moreover, during this presidency, there was never a clear policy on this issue, only isolated proposals such as that of the Defence Minister on the creation of 'bases of development'²⁷.

Overall, Toledo's plan had a very limited performance. Despite the attempts to promote state building by supporting local organisations, its top-down design hampered the active participation of those actors in the VRAEM. By the end of Toledo's presidency, terrorism and drug trafficking were perceived, in general, as controlled issues (Ipsos, 2006). This probably due to there were not important events related to *Sendero* in the VRAEM. However, it was well-known that the Shining Path's armed faction in the Upper Huallaga, led by 'comrade Artemio', had threatened to reignite the armed struggle unless Peruvian government accepted a political solution (*Terra*, 7 January 2004).

²⁷ Proposed by the Defence Minister, Roberto Chiabra, it would include a first-aid post, a school, and a police station, all of them inside a military base (*Terra*, 15 October 2004). Indeed, an extreme vision of a securitised development.

3.2. 'Plan VRAE: An Option for Peace and Development for the VRAE'²⁸

President Garcia enacted this new plan after an ambush on a Police patrol in Ayacucho department²⁹. This first event perpetrated by *Sendero's* armed faction caused that the Ministry of Interior was questioned by the Congress Defence Commission. However, according to Garcia's government, the interest in the VRAE preceded this ambush when, a month before, seven ministers visited the area, invited by the Ministry of Defence. In any case, it is important to bear in mind some aspects in this context. First, since the beginning of his presidency, Garcia assigned a predominant role to the Armed Forces, not only in terms of security and defence, but also in terms of political support, given the legal proceedings against military personnel as a result of the investigated cases of human rights violations by the TRC (Arce, 2010). Second, due to the described event in the VRAE, the term of 'pacification' was included in the political agenda, which was absent in Garcia's inaugural address. Third, beyond using the rhetoric on state absence, there was not reference about neither achieved results, if any, nor a balance of the previous Toledo's plan in the VRAE.

Formulated as an integral intervention scheme, Garcia's plan VRAE was aimed at 'achieving the pacification, fighting drug trafficking and other illegal activities, as well as the promotion of a socioeconomic development in the valley'. It is possible to contend that, to a large extent, the design of this plan emphasised a security-development nexus, which, in turn, predetermined the predominance of a military-led strategy in the area. It was assumed that development is only possible within a security environment. Hence, as long as security conditions were ensured in the VRAE, short- and long-term measures would be undertaken

²⁸ By Supreme Decree N° 003-2007-DE (*El Peruano*, 23 February 2007).

²⁹ On 16 December 2006, a *Sendero's* column, led by 'comrade Alipio', killed five Police members in La Mar province, Ayacucho. Intelligence sources had warned about the possibility of attacks in that area two months earlier. However, nothing was made to protect the Police base (*Caretas*, 21 December 2006).

in order to overcome the acute socioeconomic situation there. In that sense, it was based on three axes. A first one related to the promotion of alternative programmes, improving health services and education, and infrastructure; and the other two related to police and military activities against drug trafficking and belligerents, respectively³⁰. This new plan created a top-down co-ordinating mechanism, called 'Multi-sector VRAE workgroup', which was directed by the Prime Minister, and formed by seven ministers and the DEVIDA's director. Those local and regional authorities from the VRAEM were excluded as principal members. Nevertheless, the pivotal change was that this plan was issued, unlike the previous one, by the Ministry of Defence – responsible for public security. In practice, this ministry, whose implementing body is the JCAF, was responsible for managing and executing an instrument initially conceived to confront a non-military threat (Arce, 2008). In addition, the issued plan lacked of a delimitation of the influence area. It left open the possibility to consider those areas under state of emergency as the VRAE region.

Conceiving the VRAE situation as a security issue of national interest was the premise to securitise the region during the plan's implementation. With respect to confront the VRAE's armed faction, it is possible to distinguish two broad stages, both characterised by a strong militarist bias. A first one was marked by what seemed to be a return to past strategies based on military intervention. Regarding Garcia's discourse on the lack of military capacity to ensure security, this stage was focused on strengthening and increasing the military counterinsurgency bases. Nevertheless, it was not until a year later that the Armed Forces intervened, when *Sendero's* VRAE faction carried out a new significant event³¹. Thus, there was created the 'Special Command VRAE', a military group of almost 800 soldiers directed

³⁰ The plan was funded at US\$ 117 million, from which 40 percent was allocated to military activities, 15 percent to police activities, and 45 percent to alternative programmes (Arce, 2008).

³¹ On 24 March 2008, an anti-drugs Police patrol was ambushed in Pampa de la Quinua, Ayacucho. As a result, one Police member was killed, and other fourteen were wounded. Due to this new event, the Interior Minister, Luis Alva, was questioned by the Congress (*IDL Reporteros*, 15 October 2010).

by the JCAF, which deployed a military operation without capturing any belligerent. What is more, subsequently, an interview with 'Comrade Jose', the VRAE faction's leader, was broadcast on national TV³². It allowed insurgents to show their daily routine, as well as to portray themselves as actors with political ends. At the end of this stage, after 20 months, the VRAE area was finally delimited in 32 districts.

A second stage was marked by the reform of the plan in 2009, which implied to create the Executive Secretary, formally directed by the Prime Minister's Office³³. This was a vain attempt to articulate the different state institutions present in the VRAE under civil control. Indeed, in practice, not only the Police was subordinated to the Armed Forces, but also the civilian management in the VRAE was undermined, even by state actors such as the Vice President and former Admiral, Luis Giampietri:

'What are civilians doing in the VRAE? They difficult the work and allow NGOs to demand military officers due to human rights violations. It is impossible to fight in this context... It has been just appointed a person... I do not know why, because he does not direct neither the Army, nor the Navy, nor the Air Force'. (2009)

Despite the increase of counterinsurgency bases³⁴, and constant military operations, the plan lacked of relevant results. Actually, the Shining Path's response capacity seemed to remain consistent. Meanwhile, in order to legitimate the strategy, Cabinet ministers argued that Sendero's activities of harassment on military bases were desperate responses to the state intervention in the VRAE. Garcia's presidency registered the largest number of casualties among military and police personnel within the studied period³⁵.

³² There were two previous interviews to the VRAE armed faction' members, but they appeared in regional media.

³³ By Supreme Decree N° 020-2009-DE (*El Peruano*, 13 August 2009).

³⁴ According to the Defence Minister, Rafael Rey, during this term the number of counterinsurgency bases increased to 68, while in 2003 there were 34, and in 2000 there were 74 (*Terra*, 31 August 2009).

³⁵ The greatest number of casualties occurred between 2006 and 2011, in which 93 people were killed (67 percent of the total registered) and 147 people were wounded (Gorriti and Valle Riestra, 2015).

On the ground, regional and local authorities reacted in diverse ways to the Plan VRAE. Whereas some regional authorities approved the military presence at the beginning, several local authorities of municipalities demanded government to implement those important works that the VRAE really needed (*La República*, 7 January 2011). Related to the referent object of this plan, a very significant fact was that, until the plan's reform, its head office was based in Lima and not in the VRAE. Even then, as an evidence of centralisation and that plan's participation mechanisms were very limited, those authorities used to go to the capital city to make their demands felt, asking for *distritalisation*, involving and supporting self-defence committees, and complaining about the violation of their rights³⁶.

In terms of the anti-narcotics strategy, DEVIDA's position remained the same as during Toledo's period, assuming the 'narco-state' discourse as the main existential threat, and eradication as the most effective measure against drug trafficking (Ericsson, 2006). In parallel to Plan VRAE, DEVIDA issued its national strategy 2007-2011, which estimated to eradicate 8,000 ha of coca cultivation per year among all coca basins. It was strongly influenced by the US government and the ongoing negotiations with Peru for ratifying the free trade agreement signed in 2006. The US aid was direct to San Martin department, which then would be taken as 'a model' for the VRAE. During this term, DEVIDA opposed to the industrialisation of coca for licit uses, arguing that it would favour drug trafficking. For instance, the possibility of producing coca flour was described as 'extremely detriment' for the country (Pizarro, 2009).

³⁶ With respect to *distritalisation*, Garcia created the district of Samugari, in Ayacucho, in 2010. Subsequently, some local authorities and social leaders pressured government to 'distritalise' some zones, as a way to gain enough autonomy to confront threats in its areas (*La República*, 4 May 2011). Regarding self-defence committees, they claimed to be included in the plan, given the type of information available to them. In addition, some local authorities demanded certain complaints because they were accused of supporting *Sendero's* armed faction (*La República*, 16 March 2011).

Even though Garcia's government distinguished between two groups of Shining Path, regarding coca farmers, there was never a distinction. It permitted to criminalise the coca farmers' union protests and to undermine its proposals alleging a relation between them and *Sendero's* economic interests. Thus, despite there were proposals for updating the National Coca Agency (ENACO) register³⁷ of coca farmers, those peasants from the VRAE were excluded. Even, there was an Agriculture Minister who had to resign after he authorised a temporary suspension of eradication in San Martin department (*Terra*, 22 March 2007).

Garcia's plan securitised the VRAE area through reinforcing the political discourse on an ongoing war only in that area. Pacification was understood in a military sense, which entailed an increasing deployment of military forces on the ground, in contrast with the exclusion of the actors in the VRAEM, such as the self-defence committees. By the end of Garcia's presidency, there was certain consensus that the situation of terrorism and drug trafficking had deteriorated, in addition to corruption (Ipsos, 2011). In the end, after several military operations no one was captured.

3.3. 'Plan VRAEM'³⁸

President Humala enacted the Plan VRAE's readjustment a year after the beginning of his presidency. As noted above, Humala's first year in office was marked by a sudden but significant political shift, which also implied to impede a change in anti-drugs policy. With respect to the VRAE, despite it was not mentioned as such in Humala's inaugural address, there were efforts to continue focusing on the VRAE as priority – especially after the capture

³⁷ ENACO was created in 1949 as the only Peruvian Company authorised to commercialise coca leaf and derivatives, which regulate production for the traditional and licit markets.

³⁸ By Supreme Decree N° 074-2012-PCM (*El Peruano*, 10 July 2012).

of 'comrade Artemio' in the Upper Huallaga valley³⁹. On the one hand, both political and economic support was kept high⁴⁰, as well as the military deployment, which reinforced intelligence activities on the ground⁴¹. As a result, according to official sources, there were captured about 130 'terrorists' in the first 8 months, among collaborators, informants and two middle-ranking members (ATV, 12 March 2012). Furthermore, the Artemio's capture legitimated the kingpin strategy as the pattern to be imitated in the VRAE, with the understanding that the pacification presupposes a strong military component, and 'negotiating with terrorists is not an option' as the Justice Minister declared (Jimenez, 2012). On the other hand, neither *Sendero*'s actions stopped nor those military operations were exempt from acute problems occur. This armed faction perpetrated an event almost every month in this term. In fact, they carried out another kidnap for ransom event in Cusco department, which was understood as a sign of their new movements⁴². In addition, serious complaints emerged in relation to military corruption and to human rights – such as forced displacement of some indigenous communities, civilian casualties and disappearances, and the recruitment of children by both the Armed Forces and *Sendero*'s group.

Humala's plan established two main changes. First, it returned to operate under the formal direction of the Prime Minister's Office, and also redefined the intervention area, including territories around the Mantaro River. Related to the new organisational structure, the former workgroup was renamed as Multi-sector Commission for the Pacification and Socioeconomic Development in the VRAEM (CODEVRAEM), whose main configuration

³⁹ During Garcia's presidency, 'comrade Artemio' insisted on requesting a political solution using media outlets in September 2008 and April 2010, without success until his capture in February 2012.

⁴⁰ In order to continue Garcia's Plan VRAE, state actors backed the VRAE as priority. It implied to transfer more than US\$ 25 million to reinforce the VRAE Command (*La República*, 12 March 2012).

⁴¹ It was created an 'Intelligence Fusion Centre', which subsequently allowed to confirm that *Sendero* had occupied new areas, as a way of expanding its control. The latter also permitted to create new military bases in the VRAE, such as in Urubamba, Cusco.

⁴² In April 2012, the Shining Path demanded a US\$ 10 million ransom for the return of 40 gas workers kidnapped in Kepashiato, Cusco. It was the most serious event since 2003, when insurgents kidnapped 70 workers for Techint (*The Independent*, 13 April 2012). Apparently, now the Shining Path wanted to extort a new company operating in the VRAE (*La República*, 13 April 2012).

included all ministers but not regional authorities. With regard to the new delimitation, it was allegedly motivated by an interest in getting more efficient the state's intervention. To make this possible, there was established a criteria based on what was assumed as the predicament in the VRAEM – 'terrorism, drug trafficking, poverty and inequality'. As a result, there were defined 49 districts in total, from which 23 districts were considered 'direct intervention area' – that is 9 districts less than before. Thus the VRAEM was officially born. Like the previous one, it seems that the renewed VRAEM area followed a security-development nexus criteria, which allowed government to concentrate 'the most dangerous zones in that region' such as the Mantaro river area (Humala, 2012f). To some extent, this delimitation was linked to the new territorial planning policy driven by Humala to establish a rational use of territory. However, in the following years, it did not only permit government to create new districts within the area, but also that local authorities from neighbouring districts demanded to be part of the VRAEM.

At the beginning, in practice, the VRAEM area was perceived as a 'freed zone'. In this respect, Humala requested to the JCFA: 'Notify me when I am able to hoist our national flag in Vizcatan' [Huanta, Ayacucho]; to which the Defence Minister, a former military general, answered that 'our great goal is to clean-up the VRAEM area before this administration ends' (Mora, 2011). On the one hand, it shows misunderstanding of the VRAEM's situation, given that Vizcatan was 'recovered' during Garcia's presidency. On the other hand, it illustrates how security was narrowly understood in terms of occupying places with military presence. With respect to local authorities, certainly most of them approved the military deployment, but they also demanded security and social projects as a means to make development feasible (*La República*, 20 September 2011). Again, local authorities and social organisations were never invited to generate the Plan VRAE's readjustment. In a similar vein, those self-defence committees were not included, which, in turn,

demonstrated the extent of mistrust among military as a consequence of the political discourse on the relationship between *Sendero* and the VRAEM's population – assumed completely as coca farmers. Even though those committees repeatedly attempted to take part, statements from military personnel, such as the following, emerged:

It would be very strange that a VRAEM's inhabitant, who survives because of the drug trafficking economy, joins a self-defence committee to back the Armed Forces in its mission to destroy Sendero, supporter of drug trafficking in the area. (Hurtado, 2012)

Regarding the anti-narcotics strategy, the Plan VRAEM's implementation was preceded by an event that demonstrated the strong influence of the US position on this issue, and, indeed, a lack of political will to back new proposals for coca farmers' situation. Appointed by Humala, the first DEVIDA's director, Ricardo Soberon, decided to stop eradication activities for the first time in the Peruvian history⁴³. Throughout the five months he was as director, Soberon underwent US diplomats as well as press ganging up on him, affirming, for instance, that Peru showed a slow progress in fighting drug trafficking. In the end, Soberon resigned as director. The following two directors emphasised again eradication, although there was not carry out any eradication activity in the VRAEM so far. The latter was influenced by the strong opposition of FEPAVRAE to eradication, which, in turn, requested to readjust those alternative programmes.

As noted above, the VRAEM's cartography continued changing during its implementation. There were created new districts inside the direct influence area, such as Inkawasi and

⁴³ Whereas his nomination was approved by some municipality authorities in the VRAEM, given his backgrounds on the issue, his proposal was backed by the then Prime Minister, Salomon Lerner, who claimed, during a meeting with the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, that 'Eradication is a bad word for us. Eradication and Military are words that frighten coca farmers' (Lerner, 2011).

Villa Virgen districts, in Cusco⁴⁴. Furthermore, during this period, state entities have started to work in the area as a means of reinforcing the state's presence.

This section has reviewed the two plans implemented in the VRAEM, with the understanding that policy instruments (and its implementation) may be complements of the speech act in a securitisation move. All these plans have followed a top-down design whose mechanisms of participation have worked in a very limited way. As a result, local actors have been excluded from the implementation stage of these plans. Ultimately, these plans have prioritised a military approach on the ground, which has generated tensions between civilian and military, as well as a feeling of mutual mistrust between military and the VRAEM's population. If the VRAEM was depicted in relation to two phenomena in political discourse, the examined plans defined a spatial order, which has been constantly modified throughout the studied period. Although the criteria for the selection of districts was based on high poverty rates and the presence of coca cultivation, the main factor was the presence of 'terrorist remnants'.

4. Implications of the securitisation of the VRAEM

This section examines to what extent the VRAEM has been securitised and how some involved actors have been depicted within a particular space defined by terror and fear.

The VRAEM has been securitised through a political discourse based on fear, which has two different audiences. A first one can be a national audience, although mainly urban and

⁴⁴ It was according to the National Plan of Demarcation and Territorial Organisation 2013-2016 (Ministerial Resolution N° 289-2013-PCM).

from Lima, in which narratives on a potential reignite of 'terrorist violence' have prevailed. It was possible due to the influence of the armed conflict, which only was 'felt' in Lima in the early 1990s, when the Shining Path unfolded its strategy in the capital city⁴⁵. To great extent, just in that moment, the most important Peruvian city was eventually conscious about *Sendero's* capacity. Subsequently, in the middle of a new context, at least formally, the 'terrorist threat' in addition to the 'narco-terrorist threat' (Sánchez, 2011) was used in political discourse in order to spread fear among this particular population. As a result, the budget for 'the fight against terrorism' was increased throughout the studied period, and the VRAEM's militarisation was started. In contrast, a second audience, integrated by the VRAEM's population, was rarely taken into account, especially within the 'democratic debate' on the increasing militarisation. Therefore, in relation to this second audience, rather than a proper acceptance of the narratives of fear, there was an imposition through policy instruments, such as the creation of a military region or the constant regimes of exception in the VRAEM.

The VRAEM's securitisation has implied a profound shift in the Peruvian population's perception in general. Whereas the departments that today form the VRAEM area were separately included into the cartography of the armed conflict in the 1980s, currently part of those territories are included in political discourse as a renewed cartography named the VRAEM. Thus, as noted above, the VRAEM emerged as *imaginative geographies*, where memories from past political violence besides the confrontation between armed actors today, consolidate a renewed space of terror and fear. Assumed as a threatened area by drug trafficking and 'terrorist remnants', the VRAEM became 'a militarised sociospatial

⁴⁵ If the armed conflict started in 1980 in Ayacucho, just since mid-1989 *Sendero* focused on Lima. Its strategy was emphasised in 1992, when only in six month 37 car bombs were exploded in the capital city. The most representative event occurred on 16 July 1992 when a car bomb exploded in the middle of Miraflores, an upper/middle class district in Lima (CVR, 2003).

order' (Ojeda, 2013: 760), which, in turn, legitimated a division of violence and exclusion. On the one hand, it is worth noting that 'cultures of fear' as a result of the application of terror as a tool of social control has a long history in Latin America societies (Oslender, 2010: 120), and now in the VRAEM its fields and roads become spaces of fear, given the possibility of forced eradication activities, the military checkpoints, and the insurgent incursions in small villages. On the other hand, to assume that 'potential risks are encapsulated or controlled' in this area underlines a notion of exclusion, which President Garcia linked to a geographic factor: 'if Peru was a flat plain such as Argentina or France, development would be achieved faster or immediately in all sectors' (2007). Even though it depicts certain complex reality, it also remarks the historical gap between rural and urban zones in Peru, which influenced on consolidating a fragmented society (CVR, 2003).

Regarding this legitimated exclusion, it is necessary to outline how subjects have been constructed within this sociospatial order. The VRAEM's inhabitants have been often defined as coca farmers, an activity highly contested, even among Peruvian presidents. In this sense, Toledo and Humala had a similar approach to coca farmers, considering coca cultivation as a result of particular economic circumstances rather than a direct interest to be part of drug trafficking network⁴⁶. Conversely, Garcia constantly questioned the activity and the social movement around it:

The Andean fundamentalism mobilises large ethnic crowds which, in several cases, are related to coca cultivation. That fundamentalism may have important consequences such as Muslim fundamentalism, and it may be a danger of instability in South America. (Garcia, 2006c).

⁴⁶ According to Toledo, 'peasants who farm coca... are not drug traffickers but they are an expression of poverty and unemployment' (2003b). For Humala, 'cocaleros are not the first link in the drug trafficking network, but they are the first victim because this activity is the only source of income (2012k).

Throughout the plans' implementation, a negative perception about coca farmers prevailed among military. In this sense, the boundaries between insurgency and civilians became increasingly blurred. What is more, the VRAEM securitisation has dismissed other actors within this sociospatial order, such as the self-defence committees or coffee producers, who face different situations. For instance, according to a coffee producer: 'The VRAEM is demonised. In media outlets there is only news about terrorists and drug trafficking, but here there are people against that. The next year I aspire to have my own brand and to sell directly my coffee production to exporters' (*La República*, 10 August 2011).

The self-defence committees' situation is also significant in the VRAEM. Even though it appeared in the mid-1980s as a strategy of resistance and survival to face the terror unleashed by armed actors, today's context demands a different approach in principle. However, in practice, the issued plans have not considered feasible alternatives to channel their own will to participate in the pacification process. In this respect, one problem is the pervasive mistrust among military personnel. Another issue is that their participation, in a similar way as in the past, would entail to assume the risks of being an armed actor; as a former member claimed while he asked to participate: 'I am not afraid of death, but I would ask guarantees for my children and wife, who works as teacher in the area where subversion may attack her' (*La República*, 16 March 2011).

Conclusion

In a post-conflict and post-authoritarian context, the VRAEM has been socially constructed as a national security issue considering a particular political discourse which has emphasised a sense of emergency and risk around the relationship between drug

trafficking and insurgent remnants. This process of securitisation has been based on the fear of reigniting past political violence. However, the mobilisation of this political discourse was not aimed at achieving the acceptance of the VRAEM audience. Conversely, the securitisation of the VRAEM was imposed there through a militarisation of the area and the normalisation of emergency – as a result of constant states of emergency.

In a way, the VRAEM's securitisation reflects the lack of a clear security policy to reach pacification after the belligerent groups were defeated in the early 1990s. In practice, this securitisation has failed, not only because the presence of those phenomena remains, but also because it has generated a generalised sense of mistrust and insecurity among the local population. Around this process of securitisation, the VRAEM has been created as space of fear and terror, where, in turn, actors' identities have been redefined: whereas insurgents are characterised as simple criminals and terrorists motivated by economic interests, coca farmers are seen as drug traffickers. Furthermore, the VRAEM as sociospatial order reintroduces a rural-urban division, in which its population has been historically excluded.

If it is considered that the VRAEM has been securitised, it might also be de-securitised at some point (Huysmans, 2006), which would imply a process of unmaking the constructions of security in order to treat threats as less exceptional than they may at times seem (Jarvis and Holland, 2015: 217). This is not to say that the VRAEM should not be seen as a security problem, but rather that it possibly needs to be contextualised and well-defined in its very nature. Therefore, considering the main findings of this paper, it would be possible to propose two pathways in parallel.

A first one is related to discursive practices. Even though Toledo and Humala shared similar positive approaches to the VRAEM's situation, other state actors on the ground continued using discrediting narratives to refer to local actors. Hence, it is necessary, first, that all state actors assume a comprehensive approach to the VRAEM and its actors, in order to rebuild trust bonds, for instance, between public forces and the VRAEM's population. Second, the demilitarisation of the VRAEM can help in that purpose. In this regard, it can be positive to maintain (and legitimate) a civilian control over the military, and to explore new mechanisms aimed at replacing those constant states of exception, which spread a sense of insecurity rather than security.

A second one is related to policy tools and its implementation. It includes, first, to reform the plan's top-down design to involve local actors as permanent members leading the plan. It supposes to create and legitimate spaces of dialogue for channelling coca farmers' demands, but also small producers', and ethnic communities' issues. Second, even though there are proposals aimed at conforming a sort of VRAEM's community of municipalities, a previous step should reinforce the governance capacity of local and regional governments. Third, given that agriculture is still the main economic activity in the VRAEM, the plans and programmes may be redirected or implemented following the (natural) delimitation of the three river basins that inform this area.

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