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Engines of autonomy: regional organizations leading Latin America's struggle for emancipation

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***Engines of Autonomy: Regional Organizations Leading Latin
America's Struggle for Emancipation***

***A Thesis
Presented in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts***

June 2020

***BY
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CONTENTS**CHAPTER 1**

INTRODUCTION	3
Conceptual Framework.....	18
Empirical Context.....	26
Methodology.....	32
Significance.....	35

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY AID OR HEMISPHERIC HEGEMONY.....	37
DCA, Bombing Ecuador.....	45
Preserving Hemispheric Preeminence: Counter-Insurgency, Drug Wars, and Anti-Terrorism	58
Conclusion.....	69

CHAPTER 3

EXTRA-HEGEMON[IC] POWERS.....	70
BRICS.....	71
Stress Tests: Libya and Beyond.....	77
Beyond The Brics: Russia And China In Latin America	83
Brazil	84
Russia	86
China.....	90
Conclusion.....	96

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION.....	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	122

CHAPTER 1**INTRODUCTION**

The relationship of South America to the United States of America has been one of disparity with South America assumed to be subservient to the dominion, power, and interests of the U.S. and its perceived sphere of influence. While true, as long as these dynamics have existed, they have been contested by South America and its allies abroad. This South American struggle towards political autonomy from its North American counterparts has not only been evident since their liberation from Spanish domination but also crosses all political spectrums. Of course, this regional struggle towards sovereignty in all its affairs has always been fraught with difficulties, obstacles, and impasses and thus uneven to seeming impossible at its most extreme.

What are the examples of political autonomy or subordination in South America? In the course of this thesis, I will show the oscillations of political autonomy and subordination. While the results of my research have been as varied as I describe above, what I can say is that autonomy is something that some South American countries want, struggle for, and sometimes obtain. At the same time, other governments are content to go down the much easier road of subservience to U.S. demands and interests.

Have there been instances in South American history that we can show that South American sovereignty and the historic sway of the United States has appreciably changed to a more politically autonomous condition? Can regional organizations or some other sources facilitate and engineer South American elites'

search for regional autonomy (a.k.a. “imagined unity”¹) and solidarity as an alternative to what Henry Michael Erisman and Norman Girvan refer to as “Washington’s NeoPanAmerican² agenda” and more broadly subservience to hegemony³/neo-imperialism (Erisman and Girvan, 2013: 255)? As we shall soon see throughout the trials, tribulations, and more recently, political oscillations seen throughout South and Latin America is nothing if not consistently tumultuous. Olivier Dabene defines the regional integration of Latin America as “characterized by a succession of waves⁴ that saw the signing of several agreements launching or reactivating several distinct integration processes” (Dabene 2012, 3).

I am very interested in uncovering if regional initiatives are creating this counter-hegemonic political space by providing another fulcrum for shifting the balance of power in the United States (U.S.) and Latin American dynamic from traditional America’s backyard to something along this IR continuum more approaching parity, reproducing the subordination to the “Washington Consensus,”

¹ “Going back further in history, we would see that the reference to an imagined united Latin America has been recurrent ever since the continent gained its independence...” (Dabene 2009, 3).

² Also known as the “Washington Consensus,” which is the imposition of ostensibly “liberal-democratic politics going hand in hand with neo-liberal economics “ (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 1). The notion of subordination and/or subservience will also be used interchangeably. Due to the involvement of the “Miami-based Cuban-American community” and principal among them within and outside of the American government, policymaker, lobbyist, etc. Otto Reich in recent times this has also been labeled as the “Miami Consensus” (Puryear and Blackmon, 2018; Youngers, 2003).

³ I refer to hegemony and counter-hegemony many times throughout this thesis in the Gramscian political sense and comprehensively defined by Thomas Muhr: “as the supremacy of a social group, which manifests itself in economic, intellectual, political and moral leadership, to which the subalterns give their active consent, while coercion is used only exceptionally as a disciplinary measure,” the consensual element in hegemony, i.e. the ‘acceptance by the ruled of a conception of the world that belongs to the rulers,’ which appears as ‘common sense,’ mystifies the power relations upon which the order rests.” Muhr continues on to write that “despite the current global crisis, neoliberalism remains the ideological common sense, counter-hegemony requires offering ‘new understandings and practices capable of replacing the dominant ones’ while ‘building up the sociopolitical base for change through the creation of new historic blocs’” (Muhr, 2013: 2).

⁴ “If by wave, we mean a historical sequence during which a similar evolution takes place simultaneously in a given set of countries, then Latin America has gone through four waves of regional integration, weaving a complex patchwork quilt” (Dabene 2012, 3).

or something else. I will seek to arrive at conclusions by studying the United States and South American international relations and dynamics (e.g., perceived U.S. international allies and enemies or influence of these allies-enemies in the region whether real or perceived), and U.S. support and policymaking towards Latin America (e.g., “Plan Colombia,” “counter-terrorism,” etc.)

Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz (2013: 6-7) delineate three common elements of Latin American integrationist initiatives after the initial wresting of “independence” from Spain: autonomy, “economic and social development,” and finally the “idea of a common cultural identity.” I broadly agree with Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz’s framing and defining of autonomy as well as their “three common elements” throughout this thesis. However, I find that the politics of the first element that they identify, the question of autonomy, underlie any discussion of political, social, or cultural formation.

Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz (2013: 6-7) define autonomy as the “aiming to transcend the subordination of Latin American countries vis-à-vis the major powers of the international system, and the region’s limited bargaining power in the international system.” Or, in other words, “to secure sovereignty from colonial powers and preserve it from outside intervention,” and in this, these regional bodies have “made important contributions to regional order,” reasserting their counter-hegemonic political autonomy (Acharya, 2014: 96-97). Taking more of a geopolitical perspective, it is also obvious that the nations of Latin America as “mostly small or middle-sized powers in a region at the margins of major conflicts in world politics...put a premium on a regulated international order that might protect the

interests of smaller nations, rather than leaving them at the mercy of the great powers” (Heine, 2012: 212). And finally, the “emergence of ‘groups’ or ‘bloc politics’ working within and without the UN, as well as formal and informal gatherings of regional states...has enabled otherwise weak states to exercise influence” in national sovereignty, international affairs, domestic interests, etc. (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 8).

Autonomous regional political organizations have embodied aspirations of many people throughout Latin America to politically and economically integrate the region at least since the “beginning of the [eighteenth or] nineteenth century” (Dabene 2009: 3). My thesis thus explores how these organizations serve as “norms leaders,” “reinforc[ing] norms on [regional] sovereignty and non-intervention” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 5). Further, these groups have “been able to consolidate, quite remarkably, a democratic process of stability and reduction of inequalities” within the region particularly considering the “well-known history of political [in]stability, inequality, and [under]development in the region” (Vivares 2014: 1). Finally, beyond stabilizing and reducing inequalities within Latin America brought on by the underdevelopment foisted on them by the U.S. and other Great Powers of old, autonomous regional organizations of Latin America may be changing the traditional balance of power and at the same time offering an example outside the understanding of conventional IR theory to date.

As “norms leaders,” regional organizations have encouraged integrationist norms that prioritize the autonomy mentioned by Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz as one of the three key elements of “integrationist initiatives” in post-independence

Latin America (2013: 6-7). Thomas Muir also refers to these counter-hegemonic integrationist initiatives by using terms such as decolonialist, counter-imperialist, and all through “South-South cooperation” (Muhr 2014: 11). I am interested in these kinds of liberationist projects over the United States dominated consolidating initiatives as with the Organization of American States (OAS). I will argue that late twentieth and early twenty-first-century regional organizations that struggle for greater autonomy mark a break in the history of Latin American integration, including NeoPanAmerican efforts. More specifically, Vivares argues that what he calls the “new South American regionalism” as the “more effective regional tool” for defending “democratic political stability, *instead* [emphasis added] of the OAS” (Vivares 2014: 2).

I will attempt to show how we can understand why organizations such as the OAS are viewed by many throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and outside as subservient to U.S. demands by a brief background. The history of the OAS is one fraught by at the very least heavy-handed influence, and at the very most, outright puppetry by U.S. power.

The history of the OAS during the Cold War and since is not an auspicious one. The OAS from its very inception in 1881, and again in mid-1888, was a U.S. creation of former U.S. Secretary of State James Blaine, whose antipathy and a patronizing attitude towards Latin America was evident and further shown by the shifting invitations of the U.S. Congress, functionaries like Blaine, and former American President Cleveland (Schultz 1998: 283). Indeed, the first official announcement of the upcoming emergent conference of states “had shifted from the

prevention of war to the promotion of trade” and during the opening session there was the U.S. declared “*six-week* recess so delegates could board an excursion train for a 6,000 –mile trip from factory to factory across the Northeast and Midwest” (ibid). Just as in the case of many other significant institutions in the world today like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the OAS was not only a U.S. instrument from its beginnings but it was also symbolically and literally “lodged within the U.S. Department of State” in its initial years, and a “U.S. citizen always served as the director, and the secretary of state always chaired the Governing Board, which determined the timing and the agenda of future meetings” at least for a good part of its history (ibid).

Reverting to its ostensible purpose later after its rebirth as the OAS in 1948, the duties of the OAS include, “promoting peaceful settlement of disputes, displaying inter-American solidarity during periods of conflict, and promoting democracy throughout the Americas” (Doleac 2015). However, its stated hopeful intentions aside, the implementation of these laudable purposes were far from true to intention, and even the rare times when applied, this application was selective bordering on the absurd. The list of OAS exceptions and contradictions is long, but include among them refusing to “fulfill these duties when the US government installed and supported strongman regimes throughout the Americas” such as the Pinochet regime in Chile, “when the United Kingdom and Argentina clashed over the Falklands/Malouines islands, in 1982” and finally in the illegal (i.e., per OAS rules) exclusion of Cuba and no implementation related to the U.S. led Bay of Pigs invasion (Doleac 2015). Fairer (i.e., towards all member states) and more regular

application of rules within the OAS only began around the 1990s and especially after the first truly democratic (i.e., not completely U.S. “pre-approved”) selection of OAS Secretary General in 2004 (ibid).

In recent years, “questioning the legitimacy” of the OAS especially for its “[mis]management” of the crisis surrounding the Honduran coup d'état in 2009, during which the USA played a lukewarm role as the protagonist in defense of democracy” has been a very popular tactic to signify a leader’s “anti-imperialist” credentials and simultaneously the bankruptcy of the OAS and its slow eclipsing by more autonomous organizations of Latin America such as UNASUR⁵ (Spanish: Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, UNASUR or English translation: Union of South American Nations) and ALBA-TCP Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA or ALBA-TCP) (Vivares 2014: 200-201). As other authors have written, the OAS “has been frequently criticized for kowtowing to Washington” (De La Barra and Dello Buono, 2012: 32-33). Current President of Cuba only reinforced the bankrupt reputation of the OAS within most of Latin America when he recently repudiated any possibility of Cuba rejoining the OAS in “solidarity” with ideological, diplomatic, etc. ally Venezuela currently being verbally and procedurally attacked by the Secretary-General Luis Almagro and called the OAS “an instrument of imperialist domination” (BBC News – Cuba Will, 2016).

The steadily declining reputation of the O.A.S. took another precipitous drop in its intervention in the Bolivian election of 2019, which helped to steer the country towards a right-wing coup, which removed elected President Evo Morales from

⁵ As of 2016, UNASUR included the member countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela (UNASUR, 2016).

power. In response to protests against the October 20, 2019 election, and an initial statement of concerns about the vote that the O.A.S. stated, President Morales invited in the O.A.S. to audit the final vote results (teleSUR, 2019; Wilgress, 2019). As we should already understand after this brief historical review of the O.A.S., this was his first mistake. Expectedly, in short order, the O.A.S. claimed that the vote contained irregularities, which consequently added fuel to the fire of protests, media vituperation, and world powers pressure (Wilgress, 2019).

Again expectedly, after all of this coordinated violence (i.e., physical, mental, etc.) against the reelection of President Morales led to the 'recommendation' of Bolivia's Armed Forces Commander Williams Kaliman on November 10, 2019 "to present his resignation" the O.A.S.'s various statements, reports, etc. about "fraud" during the election were all found by multiple studies to be without any evidence whatsoever and in fact found that it was "very likely" that President Morales had won his reelection in the first round (Beeton, 2020; teleSUR, 2019; Wilgress, 2019). Ironically, the interventions and effects that the O.A.S. had on this entire affair reinforce and add documentation to my argued hypothesis on how a regional organization might exercise power (in this way being hegemonic). Without the intervention of the O.A.S., it is debatable if the protests against Morales, the governmental opposition in cities and regions of the country historically hotbeds of oligarchic hostility towards Morales, etc. would have had the same staying power not to mention a friendly hegemon in the U.S. that was very intent on removing Morales from power (thus the O.A.S. acting as an agent of the reigning hegemon). It cannot also be overstated that without President Morales rapidly surrendering

national/electoral sovereignty to the O.A.S. and the mostly middle and upper-class protesters, thus opening Pandora's Box, it is more likely than not that Morales would still be president at this time.

In a similar way that President Morales of Bolivia essentially abdicated his position by inviting in the O.A.S. to audit the election, small states can exercise their power or choose not to. Hegemony over Latin America is a ripped net with many opportunities for shrewd policymakers of small states⁶ to resist the demands of strong states or to at least negotiate the terms of their cooperation.

One scholar, Tom Long, writes that "small states' leaders might more effectively achieve their goals through either confrontation or some degree of cooperation" and that how they respond might "shape the behaviors of great powers" (Long, 2017: 15, 21). Tom Long writes that because small states do not have access to "traditional forms of power," "they must specialize in how they employ their resources and relationships" and breaks down the types of available power as "particular-intrinsic, derivative, and collective power" (Long, June 2017: 186-187).

Long defines these three types of small state powers with particular-intrinsic being the first as small states "resources [which] are a potential base of power, but these resources (less so than a tremendous military) only become salient in world politics through their exercise" (Long, June 2017: 194-195). The second type of small state powers defined is that of derivative power which says that small states "[l]acking significant material capabilities of their own [...] may derive power by

⁶ Most of the countries of Latin American could be defined as small states though a definition for this paper would not be possible with the contested nature of the definition. What we can say is that what we call small states do take place along a continuum.

convincing larger states to take actions that boost their interests” (Long, June 2017: 196). Long’s third and final small state power he calls “the fundamental base of collective power is the relationship between a small state and associated non-great powers” (Long, June 2017: 198).

One of the most interesting of this new taxonomy of small state powers proposed by Long is that of collective power. For our purposes, further showing how collective power works in the regional organizational context might be useful and illuminating. Long writes that “small states’ collective power can work in different ways: through dedicated institutionalism, via single-issue groupings, or to leverage allies for one state’s cause” (Long, June 2017: 198). I hope that future research takes into account regional organizations such as those I have focused on throughout this paper.

It is important to emphasize here that hegemony practiced by the developed world against that of the global South is not all-encompassing and omniscient. There are many holes in the nets and fractured links in the chains of hegemony worldwide. Small power states can still exercise power and relative autonomy or at least flexibility in their domination. Much more research needs to be done on the power and influence of small and medium powers in the counterhegemonic context.

Notwithstanding the gradual delegitimization of the O.A.S. and increasing chance of death by a thousand cuts to U.S. power by autonomous leaning leaders, U.S. power distinguishes regional organizations within Latin America into roughly two camps: allies and enemies. Independent⁷ groupings like and other likeminded

⁷ For initial use, autonomous groupings in this case refer to organizations such as those listed which exclude the United States of America as a member state and therefore have a greater reputation as independent,

organizations such as ALBA-TCP, UNASUR, and The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) would be within the “enemy” camp or those that the U.S. cannot “deal with.” At the same time, the OAS would be a regional organization the U.S. can “work with.” Indeed evidence abounds that U.S. policymakers fear Latin American autonomous regional organizations and countries such as Venezuela which are “viewed as a strategic threat by the Pentagon and State Department” but even where not an “unusual and extraordinary threat” and “national emergency” for the U.S. the “new assertiveness of Brazil and Argentina and the spread of leftist and autonomist politics to several other countries...also cause the Washington establishment concern” (Miroff and DeYoung, 2015; Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 93). Seen to threaten the U.S. interests, U.S. fears of Latin American regional organizations and leaders include “...ambitions for continental [Latin American] leadership [by Venezuelan President Chavez],” and “endogenous, (non-US) cultural development.” Upon further reading of the literature, one might more simply translate this as one of Lars Schoultz’s three interests of U.S. policy within Latin America, namely security, or the “fear in Washington has always been that powerful non-hemispheric powers might use a base in nearby Latin America to attack the United States” leading to the not so surprising endurance of antiquated U.S. policy such as the Monroe Doctrine (Schoultz 1998: 368). These U.S. perspectives are shown in both the unofficial, (leaked diplomatic cables), and the official, (United States congressional resolutions

autonomous, or even radical. Later within this thesis I will further specifically define political autonomy in a much fuller way.

duly passed by Congress and even in some cases indirectly implemented) (2005 Politics; Broadcasting 2008: 34; Library Bill, Kozloff 2011).

The other side of the United States' perspective of fear and uniform rejection of non-U.S.-led organizations and initiatives is how states respond to this American repudiation and dread. It might be possible that autonomous decision-makers in the global South do not need to blatantly display enmity towards the U.S. attempts to stifle and rollback autonomous initiatives. For instance, while summing up Brazil under the governments of Lula and Rousseff, Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes (2013: 36, 139) note that while “Lula and Rousseff’s administrations have not championed the cause of 21st-century socialism like Venezuela or Bolivia, their role in regional affairs has been crucial” and that both Lula and Rousseff were able to “dramatically shift Brazilian foreign policy”⁸ paradoxically because they were “willing to toe the line” of the United States at least to some extent.

The aforementioned raises the idea that decision-makers, states, and even regional organizations can choose to repudiate any subservience to hegemonic powers overtly, or they can “toe the line” (or at least appear to) but also still have a significant degree of autonomy in their decision making⁹. We should see this in the same way that the Non-Aligned Movement manipulated the great powers of the United States and the Soviet Union against each other “in ways that leverage[ed] their fewer resources towards conducting diplomacy” collectively while establishing a

⁸ According to Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes under the administrations of Lula and later Rousseff the “foreign policy paradigm” that had guided Brazil for the “last century” was broken through their support for “several regional initiatives” among them UNASUR and “countless bilateral agreements” to Latin America’s “left” governments (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes 2013: 139).

⁹ This idea may be an important one for further consideration whether later within my analysis within this thesis or in another piece.

“collective identity which defined particular social roles, rules and obligations in the international system” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 19).

I will argue that integrationist initiatives of an autonomous stripe are a departure from the past in that they focus on political integration and specifically what some have referred to as the “renewal or construction of a Latin-American identity” over the neoliberal-focused economic integration favored post-“Washington Consensus” and the varied forms of economic integration during past periods of integration (Portillo and Mesquita, 2014: 7). Indeed, as others have stated, the “launching of a regional integration process cannot be separated from superior political goals...[e]ven if the envisioned regional integration is limited to free trade and does not include a political dimension, it is always a device that is supposed to help fulfill political ambitions” (Dabene, 2009: 28). And, whatever “economic impulse[s] [have always been] inextricably linked to wider political ambitions within the South” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 160).

In tandem with Latin America’s attempt to break from past subordinate power relations, regional integration dynamics, and economic models are the “turbulent transition” post what some authors call the “demise of the United States as a hegemonic power in the hemisphere” and simultaneously the “rise and renewal of socialism” in Latin America and all of the repercussions this is having, large and small (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 1). However, even beyond this “turbulent transition” or “interregnum” is the “rise of the ‘pink tide,’ the left and left-of-center governments that were led by the likes” of President Hugo Chavez Frias in Venezuela beginning with his first election in 1998, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and

Rafael Correa in Ecuador (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 1-2). Though still part of this 'pink tide,' there have been some variations/departures within this movement, notably Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru. These outliers will be discussed more in later sections.

This "tide" was due in large part to the resurgence and the increasing influence of "social movements in Latin America" since at least the "first decade of the new millennium" (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 1-2). At the same time, unlike times in the past, Latin America's traditional overseer in the region (i.e., the United States of America) was not able to forestall or otherwise stymie these changes due to their multiple distractions with "war in the Middle East" as well as the entry of another emerging hegemonic counterweight¹⁰ in the form of China (and to a lesser but still significant – though uncoordinated – extent also the other countries making up the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa or BRICS) (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 2-3; BBC BRICS Nations, 2014). One of the important factors behind Latin America's "growing independence" was the increasing influence and cohesion of Latin American regional organizations (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 3). In no small part the increasing regional unity of Latin America, the region's political independence (i.e., autonomy), and aversion to "all forms of intervention," has not only been reinforced but also has grown since the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 185-187) but even further back to at least the very globally divisive bombing of Serbia/Kosovo in 1999. To restate,

¹⁰ Though if this hegemonic counterweight only exchanged one hegemony for another still remains to be seen. However, in the interim, there has been more benefits in terms of foreign policy dynamics (more allowance for regional autonomy), economical, etc. rather than the opposite.

the recent expansion in autonomous regional integration has been due in no small part to the increasing distraction of the traditional overseer of Latin America, the U.S., in other regions of the world to the detriment of its ability to intervene in Latin America. Given the increasing quagmires/conflagrations with which the U.S. must contend at the time of this writing (including a civil war in Syria, the “Islamic State,” civil strife in Ukraine, etc.), arguably this trend does not appear to be reversing at any time in the foreseeable future (Francis and Muscat, 2014).

For this paper, though Latin American history from Independence to the current day is referenced, I, for the most part, do not linger on the period before the rise of the Pink Tide and the soon after the rise of newly resurgent and autonomous regional organizations. However, it is important to mention that even before the start of this time, there were some forms of cooperation between governments and social movements throughout the region that coordinated actions outside of later regional groupings such as ALBA-TCP and UNASUR that I will further focus on later here. For instance, the regional cooperation of Latin America led by leaders such as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been credited by many with helping to stymie worldwide trade pacts such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Doha Development Round (August, 2015; Lendman, 2006).

To date, the literature on regional organizations and sovereignty has not fully considered the influence of Latin American regional organizations such as UNASUR in regionally bolstering “autonomy” in the sense of transcending the “subordination of Latin American countries vis-à-vis the major powers of the international system, and the region’s limited bargaining power in the international system” (Puntigliano and

Briceño-Ruiz 2013: 6-7). Put more simply, this autonomy would “strengthen the regional hand [of Latin America] in dealing with the North, especially with the United States, and thus minimize the prospects of isolation and abandonment” (Smith 1996: 307). To fill the gaps, I will study the United States (U.S.) and Latin American international relations and dynamics (e.g., perceived U.S. international allies and enemies and influence of these allies-enemies in the region whether real or perceived), and U.S. support and policymaking towards Latin America (e.g., “Plan Colombia,” “counter-terrorism,” etc.). The purpose of this thesis will be to venture some initial hypotheses within this area of study to provide a foundation for future research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

An overview of the literature on autonomy and regional organizations in Latin America is long overdue as a first necessary step in recognizing the significance of both concepts to any study of Latin America. Though in many studies the term sovereignty is more often used in place of autonomy even then this mention is usually used about ethnographic (e.g., indigenous popular movements) or international juridicial studies (Esteva, 2001: 128) or in the individual state sense. Most infrequently is the incidence of autonomy or sovereignty regionally much less with any mention of Latin American regional organizations in any connective manner.

In approximately the past two decades, there have been dramatic changes in the types of regional organizations within Latin America, and their increasing concentration on pushing forward regional integration through political rather than economic means. The process of Latin American regional integration has been described most accurately and succinctly as one of “consistency despite instability, resilience despite crises” (Dabene, 2009: 28). Adding to Dabene’s excellent summation, others have observed that “[i]n spite of crises, institutional breakdowns or stagnation, Latin American governments have never rejected the integrationist idea” and the “persistence in Latin American integration since independence has been motivated by the search of autonomy, economic development and a supranational cultural-identity space...[or in] other words...the possibility of achieving autonomy and development has to a large extent been related to the creation of a larger union of states consisting of peoples who also share a common nationhood” (Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz, 2013: 6, 8).

I will now begin to unpack the term autonomy and show how it is used in much of the academic literature I have covered thus far. In a helpful step forward, autonomy is mentioned directly with Latin America as “develop[ing] areas of relative autonomy from the economic and political hegemony of the United States” by Emir Sader in his polemical book *The New Mole* (Sader, 2011: 27). This direct reference to the region might be expected from Sader, who is Latin American himself, but this is a unique case, at least in English language literature. As per usual, autonomy is not defined. Another side mention of autonomy is found buried in an anthologized chapter on Venezuela’s social movements by preeminent Latin Americanist Daniel

Hellinger from the beginning of the twentieth century up until the present (Prevost, Campos, and Vanden, 2012: 138). Hellinger bandies about the terms of autonomy and autonomous about either the state as “hyper-autonomous” (2012: 138) and discusses whether social movements in Venezuela can maintain autonomy between themselves and the state, especially during and after the election of President Hugo Chavez in 1998 (2012: 144). However, again, as in many other examples, nowhere in this essay does the author exactly define what he means by autonomy, nor is the term mentioned in a regional/supranational sense.

Interestingly, the term autonomy in the context of Latin American international relations theory and concepts is very difficult to find in English language literature but seemingly much more commonplace within Latin American authored literature, often in Spanish and Portuguese. Within a paper on contemporary Latin American thinking on International Relations published in a Brazilian journal, we find an entire section analyzing the concept, methodological tool, and strategy of autonomy from Argentinian and Brazilian “outlooks” in a rarer English language version (Bernal-Meza, 2016: 6).

According to Arlene Tickner¹¹, two authors, “Helio Jugaribe (one of the founders of Brazil's ISEB) and Juan Carlos Puig (an ex-minister of Argentine foreign relations who relocated in Venezuela after the 1976 coup), were particularly influential in the analysis, dissemination and practice of the autonomy concept in the region” [Latin America] (Dominguez and Covarrubias, 2014: 78). Further, it is

¹¹ Quoting mostly from books and articles in Spanish and Portuguese.

important to understand that autonomy from its very ancient Greek origins has been “defined as an essentially political concept” (Russell and Tokatlian, 2003: 3).

According to Stephen Krasner, there are at least three different meanings of autonomy in international relations with the first being that “no external actor has authority within the limits of the state” or a government’s right to be independent of external authority structures,” the second is as a “condition that allow the nation-state to articulate and achieve political goals independently” and to independently “make decisions based on its own needs and objectives without interference or restrictions from abroad, and to control processes or events produced beyond its borders” (Russell and Tokatlian, 2003: 1-2). The third and final “sense” of autonomy, according to Krasner, would be the “objective national interests of the states,” which can be described informally as ‘life, property, and freedom’ (Russell and Tokatlian, 2003: 1-2). Finally, outside of these three meanings, Krasner further explains that, “autonomy constitutes a fundamental principle of Westphalian sovereignty and is described as ‘an institutional arrangement for organizing political life that is based on two principles: territoriality and the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures’” (Dominguez and Covarrubias, 2014: 78).

Another of the few fuller mentions of autonomy, though typically without any overt connections to Latin America¹², by way of authority and subordination, in the international relations (IR) sense would be David A. Lake’s, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Lake 2009: ix – x, 139-140). In responding to the United

¹² Again, this follows the stereotypical pattern of non-Latin American author’s neglecting to mention Latin America within their studies even when everything within the academic, historical, and cultural milieu cries out for inclusion.

States invasion of Iraq in 2002 and 2003, Lake argues in opposition to the prevailing understanding within international relations theory, which describes the international system as anarchic¹³, that the system is hierarchic and characterized by a set of dynamics in which:

...authority [is seen] as a form of international power, coequal with and perhaps even more important than coercion [and as] a political construct, authority does not exist absent the legitimacy conferred by subordinates...In turn, I recognize that authority rests on an exchange of political order for legitimacy and compliance. To give up some portion of their sovereignty, subordinate states must get something in return—usually international security—that is equally if not more valuable.

To summarize, Lake defines the international system as a set of hierarchic international relations, which is a dramatic break from previous (i.e., international system as anarchic) understandings within international relations theory (Lake 2009: x – xiii, 1-3). Relating this to autonomy, Lake argues that there are “three behaviors” that are a result of “subordinate states [SS]...submission to authority” the first of which is a “security hierarchy” which manifests as a reduction in the “level of defense effort” (i.e., of a subordinate state as compared to an “authority” state) (Lake 2009: 138).

In Lake’s understanding, SS “depend upon dominant states for political order and...protection” so these states can “divert scarce resources to other valued uses.” In this way, these states willingly ‘sell’ “some measure of their sovereignty” (Lake 2009: 138).¹⁴ The second behavior of SS is the effect of increasing “trade

¹³ “Anarchy is basic to state-centric International Relations because sovereignty is basic to state-centric International Relations” and the “absence of an external superior implies the absence of ‘government,’ which is the definition of anarchy” (Brown and Ainley, 2009: 127).

¹⁴ Of course, there are many almost comical associations that come to mind here, principally that of a something familiar to those that follow organized criminal methods of profiteering, that of the “protection racket.”

openness” that is the result of this matrix of “security and economic hierarchy” and promotes “compliance” with the “liberal¹⁵ policies of the United States as institutionalized in the various neoliberal “free trade” agreements and institutions like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO) (Lake 2009: 138). The third and final behavior of SS is that the “security and economic hierarchy induce subordinates to join wartime coalitions led by their dominant state” (Lake 2009: 138-139).

However, even given Lake’s lengthy description of “subordination” and tangential mentions of autonomy, there is yet no clear explication of autonomy within this book. We must make our definition of IR autonomy by reading between the lines throughout this paper. Perhaps the beginning of a definition of autonomy for this paper should start with the absence or active repudiation of Lake’s “three behaviors” of subordinate states by a hypothetical autonomous state (Lake 2009: 138). Thus, by exclusion, a state might be considered as autonomous if it had very little or no military ties with an authority state or cut these ties; if it had very little or no “trade openness” and economic ties with an authority state; if it had a sufficiently strong “level of defense effort” (i.e., to maintain autonomy/national sovereignty – something which will be discussed in more detail later) and finally if this state had very little or no past or present history of wartime coalitions with authority states.

This definition of IR autonomy by exclusion does have some precedence within IR history and literature. Specifically, we can relate this idea of cutting ties to the notions of “collective self-reliance” and “the severance of existing links of

¹⁵ Read neoliberal or NeoPanAmerican here.

dependence operated through the international system by the dominant countries” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 161). Additionally, limiting trade relations with an authority country could also fit under the collective self-reliance portions of “full mobilization of domestic capabilities and resources” as well as the “strengthening of collaboration with other underdeveloped countries” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 161).

Referring back to Stephen Krasner’s three different meanings of autonomy in the nation-state sense, I can add some more definition of political autonomy and counter-hegemony potential embodied within Latin America’s/South America’s regional organizations taking into context the current socio-political milieu. To the autonomous definition in this paper, we can add some other characteristics of these states that sets them apart. The first characteristic would be selecting those regional organizations that are most explicitly autonomous in the makeup of its member states (e.g., these states define their autonomy from the U.S. as a core state interest as evidenced by public proclamations of their leaders, state policy via governmental documents such as white papers, etc.). The second characteristic would be identifying one or more regional organization member states that desire autonomy from the U.S. and has some power to resist U.S. power on its own. Within the third chapter, I will look at the case studies of China, Russia, and Venezuela in fuller detail.

Of the members of organizations such as the BRICS, ALBA-TCP, and UNASUR which are outside of the orbit and sway of the U.S.A., that of Russia under President Vladimir Putin, China under President Xi Jinping, and Venezuela under

President Maduro, are the states that have been the strongest and most vociferously opposed to the domination of U.S.A. in their internal and external affairs of state with President Chavez calling out “Yankee empire” and “imperialist [mafia] politics” (Chávez Frías, 2010). Via *Xinhua* (China’s state news agency), China’s government has clearly stated that, “Territorial integrity is China’s core interests. Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Tibet are all indispensable parts of China. These facts are beyond doubt and challenge” (Cheng, 2019). President Putin has recently remarked on a common theme of, “his nation as leading a new world order [along with other BRICS member states...to] gain equal footing,” over American global unipolar dominance/imperialism that is crumbling in recent years (Reevell, 2018).

Finally, I will turn my attention to a very brief overview of the various schools of IR thought and how their approaches to the “balance of power” are relevant here and particularly how the autonomous regional organizations of Latin America might or might not be shifting this “balance” back towards Latin America in the region’s never-ending quest for “autonomy”/sovereignty. Though the concept of “balance of power,” may have different meanings depending on the context and use, I will explain and use it in the manner of “world politics in the late twentieth century” (The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace, s.v. “Balance of Power and Peace”). The concept of “balance of power” has come to be associated most closely with the “neorealism paradigm” of world politics where “international stability and peace [“defined as the absence of major-power war over system leadership”] depend on the distribution of power capabilities among major powers within the interstate system” but argue over whether this “is best achieved under conditions of ‘parity’ or

'preponderance' (The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace, s.v. "Balance of Power and Peace").

"Parity scholars argue that stability is achieved when there exists a rough equivalence of capabilities among major powers" and that "a multipolar system of more than two major powers was more stable, in that none of the powers could afford a focused rivalry on any one other" and this "diffused attention would allow for more flexible foreign policies, amelioration of tensions, and mediation than under a bipolar system" (The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace, s.v. "Balance of Power and Peace"). Meanwhile, on the other side of this IR divide neorealist/'preponderance' paragons such as Kenneth Waltz¹⁶ argues "that the increased number of major powers and diffusion of attention increases the opportunities for miscalculation and misperception" (The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace, s.v. "Balance of Power and Peace").

EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

In recent decades, at least among the "scarcity of non-Latin American authors,"¹⁷ there has been a greater analysis of regional organizations and their political dimensions. Of course, in this paper, we will strive to overcome these

¹⁶ Contemporary IR theory was tremendously influenced by Kenneth Waltz's 1979 volume, *Theory of International Politics*, which according to some "revitalized...realism" as well as their theoretical opponents (Brown and Ainley, 2009: 40).

¹⁷ "Notwithstanding the valuable intellectual contributions of foreign pundits, most of them lack the contextual historical vision or interest in integrationist processes and the forces behind them. For example, to write about 'philosophies in Latin America' is not the same as writing about 'Latin American philosophy'; and to analyze the different expressions pointing towards a common nationhood [and even when they do] they hardly take into account economic and policy issues" (Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz 2013, 6-7). We will attempt to repudiate and redress these inadequacies and inconsistencies within this thesis.

tendencies. Still, the evidence of this dearth of non-Latin American authors writing about regional integration and their “Europeanized” biases and deficiencies are rife (Dabene 2009: 3). For example, in a section entitled “Integration theory, federalism and neofunctionalism,” Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley (2009: 133) state that the “most important testing ground for ideas on integration has been Europe” with no recognition of Latin America’s influence nor for that matter any other regions of the world. Everything in this section relates only to European integration. It thus repeats all of the same observations which Dabene makes clear are not “fit to travel to Latin America,” do not “accurately help to describe” the integration process, and finally do not even “help to raise good questions” (2009: 7).

Ernesto Vivares (2014: 1) adds to this observation by stating that neoliberalism and regionalism, or for this paper, regional integration more specifically, from the 1980s until 2004, went together virtually in lockstep. However, there was a break in this progression when in 2004 during a regional summit (the Summit of the Americas) which was meant to further assimilate Latin America into this neoliberal and thoroughly American matrix, Latin America broke with this arrangement and set the stage for further autonomous and counter-hegemonic resistance (Vivares 2014: 1). Since this 2004 break with regional integration and neoliberalism under the auspices of the hegemonic authority of the United States of America (U.S.A.), “the political economy of South America has historically turned in a sort of new regional identity which does not fit the model of the dominant ideas of regionalism in either the North American, the European, or the Asian projects.” This “regional identity was marked by the dynamic of new social forces that emerged in

the last two decades of neoliberal reforms, with politics, the return of the state, democracy, and commodities becoming the central drivers of regional development” (Vivares 2014: 1).

An excellent step in the direction of identifying Latin American integration free of Europeanization biases is provided by Olivier Dabene. In his analysis, which covers a multitude of both “classical” and contemporary definitions, Olivier Dabene (2009: 10-11) finally defines regional integration in Latin America as a:

...historical process of increased levels of interaction between political units (subnational, national, or transnational), provided by actors sharing common ideas, setting objectives, and defining methods to achieve them, and by so doing contributing to building a region. There are three corollaries to this definition: (1) the process can encompass a great diversity of actors (private and public), levels (from below and from above), and agendas; (2) It can result from a deliberate strategy or emerge as an unintended consequence of a social interaction; and (3) not least, it can entail institution building.

The economic objectives of regional integration have been described in part as marshaling the “potential of collaborative project financing, preferential trade agreements, the forging of larger markets and taking advantage of creating the conditions for sustainable development” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 160).

No unpacking of political autonomy within the processes of Latin American regional integration would be complete without a brief covering of the age-old schism within international relations theory between scholars in the realist (a.k.a. realpolitick/conservative/nationalist/state-centered/pessimist) school and those in the constructivist (a.k.a. institutionalist, globalism, new world order, liberal institutionalism, idealism) (Rourke and Boyer, 2002: 11).

In the realist school, a scholar at the forefront is John J. Mearsheimer, who questions the entire basis of the significance of regional organizations and

integration having any significant or measurable effects on anything from regional peace to policymaking (Mearsheimer, 1994: 5-46). To use Mearsheimer's wording for what he deridingly refers to as his intellectual opposites "institutionalists" (i.e., "constructivists") throughout his article, "The False Promise of International Institutions," he "explicitly rejects" any "promise" (in this case the utter futility of institutions to affect the promotion of "world peace") of "international institutions" which would include regional organizations (in his article looking mostly at European security arrangements) (Mearsheimer, 1994: 5).

This arch-realist's point is not that international institutions/regional organizations do not matter but that they matter only as much as founding nation-states have a use for them. In an online video, Mearsheimer remarks that "because the system is anarchic, because there's no higher authority that sits above states, there's nobody that you can turn to...So you're in a very vulnerable situation, and the way to avoid that is to be very powerful" (Mearsheimer, 2014). Further, Mearsheimer says that "I do not believe that domestic politics – I do not believe that the composition or the make-up of individual states matters very much for how those states behave on a day-to-day basis in international politics" (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Mearsheimer refers to "critical IR [International Relations] theory" throughout his paper as having aimed to "transform the fundamental nature of international politics and to create a world where there is not just cooperation among states, but the possibility of genuine peace [and] directly challenges realist thinking about the self-interested behavior of states" (Mearsheimer, 1994: 7, 14-15). Further, for Mearsheimer, critical IR theory is "predicated on the assumption that ideas and

discourse – how we think and talk about international politics – are the driving forces behind state behavior” and that “ideas [of intellectuals/critical theorists themselves] shape the material world in important ways” (Mearsheimer, 1994: 15). It must be noted here that this extremely brief definition of Mearsheimer’s self-declared antithetical theory is almost absurdly brief in comparison to realism to which he devotes more than five pages not to mention that this entire passage seems to be an especially sardonic and dismissive description of ideas of intellectuals/critical theorists shaping the material world and the actions of states (Mearsheimer, 1994: 15).

However, the scholarly rejoinder was not long in coming from Yale University’s Alexander Wendt (Mearsheimer was writing from the University of Chicago) who writes that it is unfortunate that for all of the welcoming aspects of Mearsheimer’s article it is overall a loss because his work is “so full of conflations, half-truths, and misunderstandings” (Wendt, 1995: 71). However, other than scholarly vituperation, Wendt also makes quite a few incisive responses from the critical international relations theory and constructivist intellectual schools to Mearsheimer’s initial realist salvo (Wendt, 1995: 71-73).

One of Wendt’s first determinations of Mearsheimer’s inaccuracies also pointed out by many other observers was his agglomeration of what he referred to as “Critical Theory.” However, “Critical Theory,” is considerably more than Mearsheimer’s dismissive and reductionist portrayal obscures and distorts about what is otherwise known as “Constructivism” and the “English School” (Brown and Ainley, 2009: 48). The “central insight of constructivist thought” is the “notion that

there is a fundamental distinction to be made between ‘brute facts’ about the world, which remain true independent of human action, and ‘social facts,’ which depend for their existence on socially established conventions” (Brown and Ainley, 2009: 48-49). According to constructivists, a “cardinal error” that realists make with “some frequency” is the mistaking of a “social fact for a brute fact...because it leads to the ascription of a *natural status* to conditions that have been produced and may be, in principle, open to change” (Brown and Ainley, 2009: 48-49). In other words, “Identities and interests are both socially constructed – change is possible – anarchy may also change in accordance with other changes” (Dittmar, 2015).

To summarize, to realists, domestic interests, individuals within national governments, etc. have no impact on the anarchic system and brute power, and perpetual conflict is inevitable between people, governments, etc. based on these power dynamics. On the other hand, to constructivists, all of this is subject to change, conflict is not inherent, and individuals, governments, etc. can and do socially construct international political conditions based on their speech, etc. Regional organizations matter only as powerful (in terms of military power, projection, domination, etc.) are the founding states or member states that compromise the membership of these regional organizations, and that use these organizations as extensions or agglomerations of their brute power.

METHODOLOGY

To make up for the missing pieces of this autonomy puzzle, I will study commonly accepted U.S. international “allies” and “enemies” and the influence of these parties in the region on multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, U.S. financial, military, etc. support, and policymaking towards Latin America. The purpose of this thesis will be to venture some initial hypotheses within this area of study to provide a foundation for future research. Each of the pieces I will be slotting into place will be closely analyzed with regional organizations seeking to answer whether they are a factor or not and why in each case. Of course, it might very well be the case that regional organizations were not only not a factor in many cases, but even where they were their roles might run directly counter to my working hypothesis. I will pay extra attention to the cases where I think regional organizations did play a role, and if the results of my analysis disprove aspects of or my entire thesis, this will be made clear.

The first chapter is the introduction focusing on establishing my arguments and hypotheses. The second chapter will focus on U.S. military and financial support to Latin America, particularly on Plan Colombia. It will discuss the military aid that is predominant within this policy matrix, the foreign policy dynamics of this parasitic relationship between the United States and Colombia, and finally, whether and how this milieu is affected by other countries in the area and by regional organizations’ policymaking and geopolitical influence. Did regional organizations (or the member states) serve as counterweights that attenuated the implementation

of Plan Colombia and other aspects of domestic and foreign policy? In addition to the roles that military aid plays in Latin America, this chapter will also look at the roles of related foreign policy tools of the United States in Latin America, including “anti-terrorism” and “drug-interdiction” efforts in Mexico and the role of regional organizations if any. Did regional organizations founded in part by “Pink Tide” countries serve as a means to push back against U.S. reframing of counterinsurgency in Latin America as “anti-terrorism” or “drug interdiction.”

The third and last chapter will lay out the dynamics of foreign policy influence of countries and external groupings other than those of the United States within Latin America. Have more autonomous regional organizations facilitated power-balancing in the region by smoothing the way for increasing the influence of extra-regional powers (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – BRICS –), especially Russia and China? The concluding chapter will seek to not only summarize the findings up until that point but also to tie them together and offer some final observations, results as they pertain to my thesis, further hypotheses, and finally speculation as to the influence of autonomous regional organizations and member states after the death of President Hugo Chavez (a lynchpin and one of the biggest former proponents of regional integration), the decline of petroleum prices, etc. as well as the broader implications of my results.

Primary bibliographic resources I plan to include the “not-for-profit media organisation <sic>” Wikileaks online database, which publishes secret and classified information for the public (Wikileaks 2014a). Within the Wikileaks database, I plan on paying close attention to leaked and unvarnished U.S. diplomatic cables or

“Cablegate” documents, which include U.S. official comments and information on regional organizations and the U.S. and Latin American policymaking interchanges among many other things. I will use the websites of regional organizations and their archived documents as another primary resource whenever possible. Also, I will use printed and broadcast interviews, journalistic reports with representatives of regional organizations and other experts, and recorded media. Finally, the last resource will be the writings of Latin America’s regional integration architects such as Simón Bolívar.

Secondary resources I have been using include academic anthologies as indispensable sources on themes like Latin American regionalism, sociopolitical responses to neoliberalism, and social change. My mainstays in this anthological group will include *Resilience of Regionalism in Latin America and the Caribbean* by Puntigliano and Briceño-Ruiz (2013), *Exploring the New South American Regionalism* (NSAR) (Vivares 2014), *Beyond Neoliberalism in Latin America?* (Burdick, Oxhorn, and Roberts 2009), and *Neoliberalism, Interrupted* (Goodale and Postero 2013). Also, there are equally invaluable theoretical and comparative introductions and overviews that I will continue to utilize, including *The Politics of Regional Integration in Latin America* (Dabene 2009). Besides, standalone volumes like Peter H. Smith’s *Talons of the Eagle* (1996) and Lars Schoultz’s *Beneath the United States* (1998) will be used as historical and background supports. Magazine, newspaper, and websites will also supplement all of the above for past and current news events, background, analysis, etc.

SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of this thesis is to show that there is a demonstrable impetus towards regional integration for collective autonomy/sovereignty throughout Latin American history independent of time, place, governance, and other variables; that regional integration matters, and why it matters. I will strive to answer the how, why, where, and in which ways Latin American regionalism prioritizes collective sovereignty/autonomy opposite United States hegemony and political over economic matters, or conversely where subordination or some other state of being is displayed. Of course, it is certainly possible that there may be cases where there is insufficient information to decide or conflicting information, which will only serve to make a more well-rounded and understandable whole.

Invariably there will be many skeptics which pose the question, “Why is this time (i.e., historical period) any different?” Through my analysis of various political case studies, I will show that though the integrationist initiatives and the actors may vary they all fight to wrest autonomy (i.e., break the shackles of over a century of control and coercion by United States hegemonic power) in matters at all levels of state in some way. The results of my study will show in detail how, in what ways, actors’ autonomy or conversely subservience is exhibited by these rising world powers.

I will strive to clearly show autonomy that is not a rearrangement of the hegemonic shackles in more comforting ways by helpless captives but concussive blows mightily struggling to break free of these chains. This is not John Holloway’s

glacially incremental and pusillanimous “anti-power” but instead “taking power” (Wilpert 2007) from the hegemon through the assertion of national and regional autonomy. Of course, none of this “easy,” there have been many attempts in the past to integrate the region that have faltered only to linger on into the present, sometimes working alongside their subsequent iterations, and sometimes duplicating or even making sources of potential interference with their institutional brethren. At the same time, the “traditional” sources of frictions between national and regional integration and the reluctance of many leaders to willingly cede any sovereignty (even if so trivial as to be virtually indistinguishable from the status quo) towards the purpose of integration have often reared their hydra heads during the many years of trials and tribulations. Even with this being said, there are still many glimmers of hope among the points of darkness, and I will endeavor to clearly explain both the tensions and the reasons for hope in what follows.

Some authors speak of an enduring resilience of regional integration in the region. In contrast, others talk about “consistency despite instability, resilience despite crises” (Dabene, 2009: 28) but in either case, I will strive to show that the governing elites of Latin America continue to display this regularly in the infinite variety of initiatives which offer strong rebukes of Simon Bolivar’s attributed despondent quotation that unifying the region is a “fool’s errand” similar to “ploug[hing] the sea” (Dabene, 2009: 13; Bolívar 2003: 146). Even apart from elites, there is a significant portion of the other people of Latin America and diaspora who also hold this urge and without which there might not be the continued incentive for policymakers to keep integrationist initiatives at the forefront for decades. I hope to

show how and why this time is different for Latin America and particularly why this matters politically not only for the elites making policy but especially for the millions of people residing there. In many ways, this is a “second independence” for the region, and I hope that my study will clearly show this is an incontrovertible reality that even the reigning hegemons must now recognize.

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY AID OR HEMISPHERIC HEGEMONY

The subordinates of the American empire have always been instrumental, serving as essential bulwarks and implementers of US interests without directly tarnishing North America’s often troublesome image in the region. Though these lieutenants for hegemony may have changed over the years what is demanded of these servitor state’s remains the same, broadly speaking “to counter democratic and popular movements across the continent” [i.e., South America in this case] (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 78).

According to Diana Raby, a “linchpin” of “U.S. hegemony” and a “perfect regional ally (or client state)” to the U.S. has been and is, Colombia (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 81). As we shall see, with the definitions of autonomy and subordination I have already mentioned in mind, Colombia seems to be one of the clearest cases of subordination in the senses that I have defined it. A variety of factors have conspired to make Colombia the optimal client state/enforcer in the region including a “singular configuration of power,” the “exceptional strength of the

oligarchy over the past half-century,” its reliability as a client state, “a strategic location linking Atlantic and Pacific, Central and South America, is of inestimable value to Washington” (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 93). Colombia’s value as a strategic ally has only increased by magnitudes in the post-Cold War and “rise of anti-imperialist and/or independent-minded governments in neighboring countries” (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 93). As former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia (under George Bush Jr.) from 2003 to 2007 has stated about Colombia, “There is no country, including Afghanistan, where we [the U.S.] had more going on” (Priest, 2013).

In this chapter, the focus will be on our definition in opposition to an autonomous (a.k.a. counter-hegemonic) state as a state that cuts military and other ties with the United States of America. As one of its closest and most stalwart of ally’s, Colombia’s dealings with the U.S. will be prominent (e.g., Plan Colombia, bombing raid by Colombia against a Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia - FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - camp within Ecuadorian borders without any prior notification of Ecuador or any of Colombia’s neighbors, the “seven military bases” deal/a.k.a. Defense Cooperation Agreement DCA, etc.), but I will also analyze the influence of Latin American regional organizations on the preceding (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 34-35 and Bitar, 2013: 1-3). At the end of this chapter, I will look to conclude with the “on the ground” realities of Plan Colombia as well as the influences of regional organizations on it and its outgrowths such as the DCA through unvarnished primary sources such as leaked “diplomatic cables”

collected by Wikileaks as well as human rights organization's working out of Colombia and the United States.

The importance of, and the reason for, my focus on leaked diplomatic cables stems from the fact that they come from the main hegemon of Latin America, the United States, and were intended to be hidden from public and academic study in perpetuity. These leaked diplomatic cables along with my analysis which considers secondary academic sources, as well as the journalistic and factual accounts, help to arrive at as close as possible to the undisguised truth of realities on the ground within Latin America as these pertain to regional organizational influence, international political/foreign policy dynamics, as well as domestic political factors. My analysis of U.S. diplomatic cables and the accounts of human rights organizations seeks out mentions of regional organizations trending towards political autonomy such as ALBA-TCP and UNASUR and determines that the mentions of these organizations within these primary sources point to their increasing influence as evidenced by the corresponding rise in the frequency of their mention and the chagrin with which hegemonic powers view them. And indeed, U.S. hegemony in Colombia has been evident from the very first years of Colombian independence.

Even in comments approximately only forty years from the beginning of United States history, American diplomat and politician from 1826-1827 Beaufort Watts, described the typical Colombian citizen as little more than "an obedient animal that fawns when chastised" (Schoultz, 1998: 13). Obviously, the preceding comment is a bit more extreme example from a then still "rough at the edges" hegemonic power. Yet, many Latin American's in the present day might argue that it

would not be a complete shock if this same wording came from a leaked private conversation or unvarnished comment caught from an unexpectedly active microphone in the current day. Even two centuries after this comment was, but a historical footnote the United States policy interests in Latin America remain very much the same, or as Lars Schoultz has observed, “the need to protect U.S. security, the desire to accommodate the demands of U.S. domestic politics, and the drive to promote U.S. economic development” (Schoultz, 1998: 367).

These rigid hegemonic demands have led to increasing pressures on American and Colombian elites to continually expand military aid and American military power within all aspects of Colombia's political life. Unfortunately, in the arena of violence, Colombia has a long and gory history that does not need any “help” from their American counterparts. Even a cursory look at Colombian history will show that since independence “political differences...have tended to lead to violence” regardless of social class but always to the ultimate benefit of the “dominant elites” (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 78). Civil strife in Colombia did not begin with the outbreak of revolutionary guerilla warfare on the part of the FARC (among others) (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 78-80). Instead, there was a long list of civil conflicts soon after independence, *La Violencia* of 1948-58, and the ongoing armed conflict from 1964 to the present, “involving Colombia’s guerilla groups, the state, and right-wing paramilitary groups” (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 78-79). Even if there is not an easily discernable connection between U.S. military aid flooding Colombia and the continuing political violence, it has certainly inflamed an already charged tinderbox.

One of the strongest “flames” of this U.S./Colombia relationship has been the bilateral raft of funding and policies originating almost in tandem in both the United States of America and which has come to be known as “Plan Colombia” and all of the consequences of this bilateral entanglement including primarily Colombian attacks against neighboring countries (e.g., bombing raid against FARC camp within the borders of Ecuador) or the seven bases bilateral deal between Colombia and the U.S. (Vivares, 2014: 37). Plan Colombia has been described as a “counter-drugs strategy, but one with a clear counterinsurgency aim” initially promoted in the US around mid-1999 by Clinton administration officials and allies (Friesendorf, 2007: 130) and subsequently seconded in concert with laws and policies by Colombia under Colombian President Andrés Pastrana (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 40, 84-85).¹⁸ The official casting of Plan Colombia to Colombia’s Latin American neighbors as simply securing the country against crime and drug trafficking has not been accepted readily, if at all, by countries bordering Colombia like Brazil, and has been a “tense and delicate subject” in regional affairs from Peru and Ecuador to Venezuela (Vivares, 2014: 202).

Indeed, ostensible attempts to control drug supply or the subtextual motives of counter-insurgency have been counterproductive when they are not disastrous, and many have described it as a “failed war” (Barbu and Cincu, 2014: 115). Embedded as a hidden virus within this “drug war” are not only the counter-insurgency intents but also other hidden motives have increasingly been revealed, including spying and subversion of governments (Lefebvre, 2014 and Devereaux,

¹⁸ The timing of this bilateral raft of funding and policies coming right after the US bombing campaign against Serbia is something I will describe and analyze later in detail.

Greenwald and Poitras, 2014). The overarching intent has always been to re-impose U.S. hegemony and hemispheric preeminence¹⁹ and to forestall at all costs the “threat of a good example” or the hint of resistance to the U.S. hegemony by way of alternatives to North American hemispheric dominance (Chomsky, 1986). United States' geopolitical/strategic intents towards hemispheric supremacy have not always been camouflaged but, in some cases, unabashed.

Though the official beginning of Plan Colombia was in the 1990s, its roots go much deeper. This soup of commingled U.S. and Colombian policy is something “new” in the bilateral relations of these two countries but also something “old.” James Petras writes that it is a continuation of former President John F. Kennedy’s “counter-insurgency programme” (i.e., propagation of “internal war”) in Colombia and President Bill Clinton’s extension of said counter-insurgency program with the only differences being the “ideological justifications for US intervention, the scale and scope of US involvement and the regional context of the intervention” (Petras, 2001: 4617). During the Cold War, the threat/ideological justification was the alleged spread of international communism, and in the current context, the justifications have shifted to the drug threat. Still, in both cases, there is a “total denial of the historical-sociological basis of the conflict” (Petras, 2001: 4617). Petras’ noted differences of Plan Colombia from Kennedy’s policies also refer to the much larger

¹⁹ My intent here is not to place blame on one or the other political party this hegemony/preeminence stripe within North American foreign policy finds all power brokers equally culpable. While certain administrations such as President Clinton and President Obama were more adept at diplomacy to those they wished to sway the “Obama administration is [still] following in the footsteps of the Bush administration as it boosts the US military presence in Latin America in tandem with the promotion of free trade agreements” in only his first year in office “Obama moved to establish seven military bases in Colombia, and augmented the activities of the 4th Fleet, which George Bush had pulled out of mothballs and assigned the mission of plying the oceanic waters off Latin America” (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 34).

magnitude of Plan Colombia and that the “threats” to U.S. hegemony now have multiplied regionally to include Colombia’s neighbors of a more ideologically “Left” persuasion including Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina who directly and blatantly voice their opposition to not only Plan Colombia but also U.S. hegemonic actions and plans (Petras, 2001: 4617-4618).

With the increasing diplomatic, financial, etc. push by the U.S. behind Plan Colombia, there was a consequent rising of political tensions in Latin America with Brazil first and foremost as the acknowledged regional leader (hegemon?). Brazil takes its ownership of the region seriously. So this has naturally put the country in direct opposition against the U.S. progressively seeing the hegemon to the North as a “geopolitical interloper in a region” an “unreliable partner” and a threat to Brazilian national integrity and security (Vivares, 2014: 39). Indeed, the reasons for Brazilian animus against the U.S. in part because it supported Plan Colombia was a long list of complaints from geopolitical rivalry, Brazil feeling that it “should be the primary power and lead resolution of political and security crises,” to an implied threat of “direct U.S. military presence in a region that Brazil saw as its theater of operations, but also posed a direct threat to Brazil’s strategic objective of exerting control over the Amazon” by further de-stabilizing “an area of strategic value for Brazil” (Vivares, 2014: 39).

However, the regional opposition to Plan Colombia has not been relegated to the nascent local sub-hegemon Brazil. Still, it has been widespread through neighboring states with immediate neighbors Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia among the strongest opponents. Beyond even the counterproductive results and

hidden motives that we will describe in more detail later in this chapter, the numbers behind the massive military buildup of Colombia encouraged and directly supported by the U.S. is truly staggering.

In the span of only eight years, from 2000 to 2008, Colombian defense spending increased from \$4 to \$12 billion, and the armed forces from 145,000 to 236,000 members (Lohmuller, 2015). To elaborate on and put this in further perspective, as of 2014 Colombia currently has the largest army in Latin America and the source of this newfound martial prowess has been provided through the at least 7 billion dollars of United States money in less than a decade and of this money it is conservatively estimated that three-quarters were funneled only to the military and police (Bustelo, 2014). Further, it is important to note that North American financing has “made Colombia the largest²⁰ non-Middle Eastern recipient of military aid and the third in the world (after Israel and Egypt).” The at first hidden motives of counter-insurgency were later codified somewhat into U.S. legislation around Colombian military aid as counter-terrorism in 2003, less than five years into its implementation (Bustelo, 2014).

This funding has increasingly led to Colombian governmental and military elites increasing their control not only within the country but also as “reliable partner” for the United States which the U.S. is more and more relying on Colombia for “external operations” (e.g., throughout the continent and even worldwide) funded

²⁰ Of course, it should be noted here that U.S. military support ostensibly toward the aims of counter-drug offensives but also manifesting again in counter-insurgency in Mexico through the “Mérida Initiative” has now worked out to “nearly \$3 billion on security aid” and “direct sales of arms and other equipment, which totaled over \$1.15 billion last year [2014] alone” from the United States to Mexico in a counter-drug strategy “modeled on Plan Colombia” (Currier and Franzblau, 2015).

exclusively by U.S. funds but “under less control [i.e., governmental and non-governmental oversight] and at lower cost” (Bustelo, 2014). Truly, Colombia is no longer only a subordinate enforcer but also a proxy for U.S. power projection and hegemonic ambitions.

DCA, Bombing Ecuador

The willing subjugation of Colombian elites to U.S. largess is truly impressive. For instance, the seven military bases deal in which Colombia agreed to allow “U.S. personnel to be stationed at seven military bases” within the country and which was tied to a requirement of the U.S. moving forward with a “trade pact” (TPP) that the South American nation “wants” (CNN Colombia, U.S., 2009). Though this agreement was mooted just one year later by Colombian courts, the diplomatic bomb had already been lit, and the region was on fire.

It did not take long for this firestorm of Latin American elite disapproval to “blowback” on its Colombian progenitors. For instance, immediately after the signing of the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) (or informally known “seven bases deal”) on Friday, October 30, 2009, one of Colombia’s major newsweekly’s *Semana* publicized a U.S. Air Force document known by a typically bureaucratic and seemingly benign title, “Budget Estimate Justification Data for the Military Construction Program of the U.S. Air Force” (Council, 2009). However, aside from the potential boredom inducing nomenclature, the Air Force document contained some, to say the least, troubling language for Latin American policymakers. For

example, one of the most disturbing phrases within this document “intended to defend the appropriation [to the U.S. Congress] of \$46 million to outfit and update” was the sinister “‘opportunity for conducting full spectrum operations throughout South America’ against threats not only from drug trafficking and guerrilla movements, but also from ‘anti-U.S. governments’ in the region” (Council, 2009). The official motives behind the document were justifying “massive” U.S. Congressional investment into one of the “seven bases” of the DCA, and due to the overwhelming secrecy up to that point in the international agreement, it was rightly seized upon to describe the entire DCA. Of course, this language was overly broad, damning, and sensationalistic enough that it gained a large amount of publicity in a very short time, especially among those more vigilant of the North American’s history of hegemony/power in Latin America.”

Elites in the rest of Latin America (excepting Colombia) had good reasons to be extremely skeptical of the good intentions of Colombia and the U.S. and their justifications. Indeed, it is abundantly clear that the very Colombian military base, Palanquero and its radar equipment installed by a U.S. team was the heart of the U.S. Air Force “Budget Justification” to Congress, and “indispensable in the bombing raid operation into Ecuador that killed FARC Commander Raúl Reyes” (Lefer and Aristizábal, 2010). “Full-spectrum dominance” against “anti-US governments in the region” was not just words in an obscure government archive but actions already taking place within Latin America.

The “Military Group” section of the Wikileaks cables concerning Colombia shows the reality of “full-spectrum dominance” in the region regardless of the

diplomatic and military speak of the cable. For example, Ambassador Wood while translating U.S. military and diplomatic “considerable concern” over a recalcitrant Colombian Joint Task Force (JTF) Omega Commander, General Fracica, unwillingness to “work with US trainers” and their “efforts to do training on-site exploration following destruction of a FARC camp and verify tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs)” which were in jeopardy due in part to General Fracica who “continues to cause problems” (Wood, 2005). Even supposedly devoid of any sentiment, this wording still manages to dramatically convey emotion, and the reality of what U.S. money and military support of foreign militaries really mean. No matter the vacuous wording relayed to a U.S. military trainer (much less to a U.S. taxpayer) tasked with “on-site exploration following destruction of a FARC camp” would surely see what the intent (not to mention the consequences of U.S. government policies) and on the ground implementation of these orders were through any attempted obfuscation. In ironical terms that certainly escape Ambassador Wood, the “verify tactics, techniques, and procedures,” which were in “jeopardy” take on a sinister aspect that has very unfortunate echoes of “corporate” and institutional speak, which continually mentions “best practices.”

Underlining the vociferous opposition to the deal within the region was the fact that every single president on the South American continent other than the president of the instigating country opposed²¹ the deal (Dangl, 2010). The Colombian Constitutional Courts decision may have been a way to “mend fences” between Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador which some would argue came close

²¹ Though some much more vociferously than others.

to war in the aftermath of Colombia's surprise bombing raid on March 1, 2008, into Ecuador attacking a FARC camp but it did little to assuage its sovereign neighbors in any way (Pimiento and Lindsay-Poland, 2010). Indeed, instead of calming matters in the region diplomatic relations between Colombia, the rest of South America was at all-time lows even after this court decision.

Brazil's very instructive response via Foreign Minister Celso Amorim was that:

"The situation is serious. Any violation of territorial integrity is very serious ... It is reprehensible,' he said, adding that Ecuador suspended diplomatic relations with Colombia. The information reached the Chancellor an hour before the start of the conference. Amorim repeated several times that Brazil is interested in peace in the region, and talked to several South American ministers and the secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS) on the diplomatic crisis...[and he] stressed that the OAS is the appropriate forum to discuss the impasse, since it has legal provisions 'more finished' on the topic...'We want peace in the continent,' he said, noting that Brazil has good relations with Colombia and Ecuador, and the Brazilian government will adopt a neutral stance in the deadlock." (Congressoemfoco, 2013).

Cannily playing the "neutral peacemaker," Brazil's response while obvious to many was still well laid out within this summary, "we" [Brazil's government] "feel the pain" of an outraged and violated Ecuador while not directly referring to any judgement or even observation of the rightness, wrongness, or otherwise of Colombia's actions he did say that "the two sides give different versions of the episode" and that international relations treaties document that 'self-defense' and 'hot pursuit' are in some cases allowed (at this is implicit within his comments) but that the "burden of justification [is on the] attacker" (Congressoemfoco, 2013). Former Foreign Minister Amorim tread a very delicate line in this very tense situation, and this article gives the reader an idea about the layers of diplomacy with a multitude of actors between neighboring states, within the region, as well as

internationally. This account also informs me particularly about the logic and thinking behind the decisions of not only Brazil but also other important interlocutors in taking the decisions to go to the OAS first before the still embryonic “South American Defense Council” (CDS, by its Spanish acronym and which would later be subsumed within UNASUR) UNASUR as well keeping virtually all negotiations and even official declarations “in house” (though perhaps shared with the U.S.) and/or principally amongst the states of Latin America.

Aside from threats of war and diplomatic differences, a first for the region at this time was the role of the potential autonomous vanguard regional organizations, UNASUR and ALBA. It could be argued that one unexpected result of the overall disastrous decision of Colombia and the U.S. to mount the raid into Ecuador was the beginning steps of Latin America to respond in a coordinated way to actions of its sovereign states through the creation of UNASUR in its immediate wake, and to begin to pull away from the patriarchal role that the U.S. would usually play in this situation through one of its pliant partner regional organizations, the O.A.S. (Sanahuja, 2012: 17). However, I must emphasize here that the role of the O.A.S. was by no means over, though this moment in time might have marked the beginning of a gradual move away from the preeminent role that the O.A.S. played in past political and diplomatic firestorms.

This attack which threatened the peace which the South American continent had enjoyed for several decades and which potentially brought together the region via its autonomous regional organizations began with the *ex post facto* announcement of the then Defense Minister of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, via a

press conference that there had been a military bombardment of a camp where a member of the FARC Secretariat alias Raul Reyes was present (tests of the remains later confirmed his identity and death) “near the border with Ecuador” but within Colombia²² (BBC Mundo, 2008). The first that Ecuadorian President Correa knew of the bombing of his country’s territory by a neighboring country was when the then President of Colombia Uribe called President Correa to inform of this military attack interrupting an interview in progress with an international news station CNN (BBC Mundo, 2008).

Indeed, out of the raging fire started by Colombia’s bombing raid against the FARC encampment in March 2008 came the very next day a proposal for the CDS, by Brazilian President (2003 – 2011) Lula da Silva as an emergency “crisis management” organization meant, of course, to help to mitigate (and hopefully prevent) these situations in the future (Sanahuja, 2012: 17-18). This CDS, along with UNASUR, were both officially announced and constituted at the South American Summit of Brasilia May 23, 2008 (Giovanni and Palestini-Cespedes, 2014: 1). UNASUR’s own official historical timeline goes back several years further to a series of meetings beginning “December 8, 2004, at the Meeting of Presidents of South America, held in Cuzco, Peru, the South American Community of Nations (CSN), which later gave way to the formation of the Union of South American Nations was created, UNASUR” (UNASUR, 2015).

²² Very soon after it was admitted that the bombing and multiple flyovers – not to mention previous long-running intelligence operations – all occurred in Ecuador without any prior notification, permission, coordination with the Ecuadorian government in contravention of international law, diplomatic practice, etc. (BBC Mundo, 2008).

It is important to note here that in addition to the Meeting of Presidents of South America another very important progenitor of UNASUR MERCOSUR (*Mercado Común del Sur*) presiding over this first meeting of the Presidents of South America and MERCOSUR was than Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 2000 during which time he was turning “away from...the FTAA in the wake of the financial crisis that affected Brazil to embrace a more developmentalist approach to exploiting Brazil's natural resources and agriculture” (Nelson, 2015: 7). This same author further posits that the “initiation of institutional mechanisms to facilitate the development of physical and financial infrastructure necessary to facilitate the exploitation of those sectors of the economy [natural resources and agriculture] has been a driving force in the development of the UNASUR” (Nelson, 2015: 7).

The CDS²³ and its soon after (this was the very unlikely case of the egg coming before the chicken) parent organization UNASUR were both considered innovations of Latin American regionalism in that “it has advanced deeper political cooperation and cooperation in security and defense among its member-states.” By this, the authors mean regional security and defense “outside the Inter-American” [OAS] system” and in economic matters not included trade but instead “infrastructure, energy, financial cooperation, and social issues” (Briceño-Ruiz and Hoffmann, 2015: 1-2). Emphasizing the autonomous and innovative nature of UNASUR again was the fact that the organization was primarily constituted not only

²³ Almost immediately after the first announcement of CDS it became a regular feature mentioned in tandem with UNASUR and very soon after was subsumed by UNASUR and became one UNASUR's most active subgroups (Sanahuja, 2012: 17-20).

to deal with crises at hand but most significantly on “hemispheric security architecture” based regionally (i.e., exclusively Latin America) outside of the framework of the North American dominated Organization of American States and the Inter American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) (Sanahuja, 2012: 17). According to UNASUR Secretary-General 2015, Ernesto Samper, the continuing and overriding goal of the CDS is “to preserve the region as a zone of peace, in the midst of a world ravaged by wars, religious conflicts, that revive what was the Cold War” (UNASUR/In its, 2015).

The prime mover behind UNASUR was Brazil, and its interests are clear throughout the group’s conception and later actions, structure, etc. (Sanahuja, 2012: 16-17). Many of the interests of Brazil coincided with that of its neighbors. Among the regionally shared thinking was that the U.S. was more of a “source of instability” in the region than the opposite (i.e., of course, the latter and not the former is how the U.S. would always like to be seen) and thus “using regional regimes without the US participation could contribute more and better to regional stability and the pacific resolution of conflicts” (Sanahuja, 2012: 18).

However, confounding this view of at least the glimmers of autonomous organizations rivaling their subordinate cousins for precedence on the world political scene is that virtually in tandem with frantic roll out of CDS/UNASUR to handle the crisis at hand was the Latin American leaders reaching out with their other hand to involve the clearly subordinate OAS (at least according to the predominant narrative of the “mainstream media”). Though the CDS/UNASUR may have been announced the day after the Colombian attack the first significant summit of Latin America and

United States leaders was five days after the attack and months before the RIO Group/21 Summit (a.k.a. an “Extraordinary Summit”) in which UNASUR was officially agreed upon, and the first peace hand-shake between sparring leaders happened at the OAS Summit the day before the same ceremony at the Latin American/autonomous leaning RIO Group (Forero/Diplomats, 2008 and Facts on File, 2008).

While there was a flurry of emergency summits at the OAS and soon after the still emergent CDS/UNASUR “alternative” to the North-American dominated OAS, and the more ideologically unified and radical ALBA-TCP was nowhere to be found, at least in the mainstream media reportage. Perhaps the Colombian bombing raid was not an ideal situation/set of circumstances due to the suddenness of the attack and the visceral political outrage and turbulence it immediately evinced opening new “wounds” and inflaming old ones. That said, one would be hard-pressed to find another better opportunity for Latin America and its regional organizations to simultaneously show regional unity in the face of internal schisms, political and diplomatic coordination resolving differences, and wresting some counter-hegemonic space from their North American overseers. However, this prominent opportunity was not taken up by regional organizations of an autonomous character such as UNASUR or ALBA-TCP but instead by the pilloried (i.e., by Latin American elites) OSA.

Many comments to the media and the like were made by Latin American presidents signaling their vehement opposition to Colombia’s surprise, and unsanctioned attack against Ecuador, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez declared

on a public broadcast to the country that “It must be said: They, the empire and its lackeys, are war. We are peace. We are the path to peace” (Forero/Regional, 2008). Responding to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe’s allegations of the governments of Ecuador and Venezuela secret support of FARC rebels Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa said, “I cannot accept Uribe's lies” (The Sunday/Leaders 2008). Multiple diplomatic ties were severed between Colombia and countries which took decisive actions in response to the illegal raid including Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and even militaries mobilized (e.g., by Venezuela to the Colombian border) but the leaders could not be bothered to concretize their opposition in at least an official declaration, emergency summit, or the like.

Interestingly enough, there was an ALBA-TCP “I Extraordinary Summit” held in Caracas, Venezuela on April 23, 2008, more than a full month from the Colombian military attack, at which there was a “Food Sovereignty and Security” Agreement and a “Declaration of Solidarity to Bolivia” but not a mention of the Colombian-Ecuadorian crisis during this April meeting or after (Statements and Summits, 2010). Perhaps ALBA-TCP was deferring to its larger sibling in the Latin American regional organization familial milieu and did not want to overlap discussions facilitated by UNASUR though even a cursory overview of ALBA-TCP’s list of meetings seems to contradict this assessment as topics of UNASUR meetings are often duplicated by ALBA-TCP and vice versa (Statements and Summits, 2010). Maybe, continuing with the familial metaphor, the member countries of ALBA-TCP did not want to inject more “bad blood” into a very incendiary topic in this always bonding and breaking Latin American “family” (hoping that UNASUR, OAS, etc. would soothe these

festering wounds) though, again as in the previous duplication possibility, the grouping has interjected multiple times and vehemently on quite contentious issues in the past. ALBA-TCP's absence from this fractious issue is especially perplexing because it seems a tailor-made and clear cut issue of "neo-imperialist" involvement (i.e., by the U.S.), and its "lackey" Colombia in Latin America, an issue that one of ALBA-TCP's founders and fiercest proponents President Chavez was unlikely to pass up in his orations. This anomaly, if it is indeed one, bears further investigation.

Though the absence of ALBA-TCP is perplexing, it could very well be that while ALBA-TCP did not want "air their dirty laundry" in public, they might have very well been do so in private. Evidence towards this could be found in secret leaked U.S. documents publicized through Wikileaks. Towards this end is the very interesting series of published U.S. diplomatic cables produced by the United States Ambassador to Ecuador Heather M. Hodges, which detail her "behind the scenes" views on meetings of UNASUR. The UNASUR meetings that Ambassador Hodges (appointed by President George W. Bush and served from approximately October 2008 to September of 2011) observed and reported on came almost exactly one year on from Colombia's bombing of the FARC camp on the border with Ecuador in August and December of 2009 and were also some of the very first UNASUR meetings.

In Ambassador Hodges first August diplomatic cable she recounts President Hugo Chavez's remarks concerning what she refers to as the "U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA)" [the seven bases mentioned above deal] or what President Chavez described as, "[the] installation of U.S. bases in Colombian

territory” (Hodges, August 2009). During this August UNASUR meeting, it is reported by Ambassador Hodges that President Chavez “asserted that Venezuela felt threatened, calling the March 1, 2008, Colombian bombing of a FARC camp in Ecuadorian territory a precursor (to future Colombian action) and complaining that Colombia justified its extraterritorial attack as a preemptive strike” and that the “winds of war had begun to blow” all while President of Ecuador Rafael Correa wholeheartedly agreed (something relayed with great worry and hesitation by the Ambassador) with these characterizations (Hodges, August 2009).

By the time of the next major UNASUR meeting in December of the same year, Ambassador Hodges again attended and reported back to her overseers that matters initiated in the first August meeting was continued and expanded upon in this December meeting. Chief among the accomplishments/developments out of this conference according to Hodges was what she refers to as agreement and implementation of “confidence building mechanism[s], with provisions designed to improve transparency and information sharing, provide guarantees regarding the use and/or threat of force, and define South America as a region of peace” (Hodges, December 2009).

It now becomes more and more apparent, through no less than the unvarnished and unfiltered third party viewpoint of Ambassador Hodges cables, that regional organizations were involved concurrently with the outbreak of (verbal and emotional) hostilities in response to Colombia’s bombing of Ecuador as well as the related issues of seven bases agreement/DCA and more broadly the incestuous and subversive financial/military relationship between the United States and Colombia

brought about by the institution of Plan Colombia. Even more importantly, UNASUR built on this first involvement to diminish hostilities and prevent any outbreak of direct military or financial (through the use of tit-for-tat economic sanctions, etc.) confrontations post-crises.

However, while emotions and tensions between Latin American countries were running very high during this and subsequent meetings according to the Ambassador, and as reported by the mainstream media, this vehemently voiced rhetoric and actions did not result in the concluding “Declaration of Quito” having any official condemnation of the “U.S. military presence in Colombia” (Hodges, August 2009). Finally, the former President of Brazil Lula da Silva’s much more diplomatic comments called for the countries meeting as a group with President Barack Obama “this will only be resolved with dialogue and debate, speaking the truth; and people will have to hear things they don’t like...We need to agree on the future of UNASUR” (Hodges, August 2009).

The lack of any official mention, much less condemnation of the DCA, and by broader definition Colombia’s bombing of Ecuador, as well as the very diplomatic comments of President Lula da Silva, now all seem to be much more understandable and even logical. Heated but unofficial comments by Latin American leaders in vociferous opposition to the DCA and Colombia’s bombing were broadcast powerfully and far and wide. Still, an official record of this opposition was so insignificant as to be invisible. It appears, the Latin American governing elites did not want to add more “fuel” to a “fire” that was already threatening to lead to direct combat between states and not solely a “war of words.” Instead of leading to a

conflagration of disastrous results Latin American policymakers used their regional organizations without any direct presence, involvement, or influence of traditional hegemon the United States of America, and in so doing, catastrophe was averted. Supranational mechanisms were put into place within the same year to hopefully prevent matters from coming to the precipice in the future. The “behind closed doors” nature of the debate and actions taken to resolve disputes over the DCA, Colombia’s bombing of Ecuador, and Plan Colombia by the countries of Latin America through their regional organizations rather than summits and official/public declarations of the heads of state, and the fact that even this hidden debate was only revealed through the leaking of U.S. diplomatic (no less a Bush appointee) documents, I think only testify to the veracity, significant, and even momentous nature of these historical moments.

Preserving Hemispheric Preeminence: Counter-Insurgency, Drug Wars, and Anti-Terrorism

Lars Schoultz has written that there are “three interests” that have determined the content of United States policy toward Latin America for over two centuries (at the time of this writing)

...the need to protect U.S. security, the desire to accommodate the demands of U.S. domestic politics, and the drive to promote U.S. economic development. Each generation’s specific policies have changed with the times and the circumstances, as one year’s fear of communist adventurism yields to next year’s dismay over human rights violations, as the Big Stick transmutes into Dollar Diplomacy and then Good Neighborliness, as democracy and free trade vie for attention with drug trafficking and immigration. But although the precise mix of reasons explaining United

States policy changes continuously, these three interests remain ever present (Schoultz, 1998: 368)

I have reproduced this entire passage because I believe that these three interests still precisely and comprehensively describe the entirety of U.S. policies (i.e., the unvarnished heart of the matter) towards Latin America up until the present with very little elaboration needed. These three interests are apparent in everything from U.S. policymaking to military aid to the U.S. spurred “regime change” from the start of U.S. intervention in Latin America. These three motivations have all been in the service of hegemonic “security” and “officials in Washington quickly concluded it was important to retain control for a symbolic reason: hegemony over the region became an indicator of U.S. credibility in international relations” and any ‘loss’ of hegemony over the region “would be interpreted around the world as a sign of U.S. weakness” (Schoultz, 1998: 368-369).²⁴

Though not overtly a part of Schoultz’s tripartite interests of U.S. policymaking Schoultz writes that no explanation of U.S. policymaking would be complete without realizing that the mindset that governs the thinking of U.S. officials is the belief that pervades the entire political establishment that Latin Americans “are an inferior people” (Schoultz, 1998: 374-375). Ethnocentrism and prejudice have been facts of U.S. politics since the founding of the country and are so pervasive to be considered nearly universal and part of human nature (Schoultz, 1998: 375). At the time of the inception of political links and subsequently between the U.S. and the region historical events in Latin America conspired to reinforce the reflexive racism of

²⁴ These last thoughts hearken strongly back to a variation of the threat of the Chomskyian idea of a “good example” (see page 27) yet again.

American politicians into the enduring discrimination that exists until today to tarnish all thought and actions and justify the continued hegemony (inc. military intervention, etc.) and neglect that has characterized all interactions between U.S. officials and their counterparts in Latin America (Schoultz, 1998: 375).

An essential part of maintaining U.S. security has been the control of the region/hegemony by the United States of America, and counterinsurgency has been an essential part of this at least since the beginning or mid 20th century. Still, the ancestral roots of this strategic policymaking go back much further. Beyond the North American context, Beatrice Heuser traces counterinsurgency (COIN) to almost the beginning of written human history or what she calls “classical COIN literature” in the writings of Sextus Iulius Frontinus (a.k.a. Sextus Julius Frontinus) circa 35 AD a Roman Empire soldier, senator, and governor (among other things) who “listed examples where the generous treatment of populations of conquered regions, including even rebel cities, had led to winning their allegiance” (Heuser, 2012: 4). However, more will be familiar with the infamous and innumerable U.S. history of military and political interventions in Latin America over the past century with counterinsurgency and hemispheric wide containment and rolling back (where possible) of “democratic and popular” moments and movements throughout Latin America prominent²⁵ (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 78).

²⁵ Of course, counterinsurgency is a tool of foreign policy of the United States still in use in the current day far outside the confines of Latin America. For example, in the South East Asian Philippine context at the time of this writing a The International Peoples’ Tribunal is being held to “[focus] on cases of torture and extrajudicial killings in counterinsurgency operations” in the hope of drawing attention to and broadening this “no binding power” investigation into holding the “U.S. and Philippine governments accountable for alleged human rights violations” (teleSUR/bh-CM, 2015).

United States intervention in Latin America includes the most recent (as of this writing) executive orders declaring a ‘national emergency’ and ‘an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States’ by Venezuela smacking of domestic and international politics²⁶, to the atrocious “policy of supporting dictatorships and death squads under the aegis of the School of the Americas,” through counterinsurgency training including torture and psychological warfare, to the regional such as “Operation Condor, which was set up in 1975 by Latin American governments, in collaboration with Washington, to hunt down and assassinate [thousands of] left-wing politicians and activists” (Grandin, 2015; Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 44). Counterinsurgency is just one of the many foreign policy tools at the disposal of the United States of America to serve its overwhelming interest in retaining its “undisputed supremacy” in the “global military arena” propped up by “the equivalent of half the world’s defense spending,” a ‘revolution of military affairs,’ “military presence without precedence on a global scale,” and the “maintenance of the criteria of unilateral military intervention in cases that affect the interests of national security” (Vivares 2014: 183).

I think that one of the better theoretical understandings of this regional hegemonic control in the current day is that of the “American World Order”²⁷ [AWO] and a “claim about the sweeping and as-yet-unfinished U.S. hegemony in world

²⁶ Timing and political context was very significant in both instances as this was immediately following U.S. Republican Party gains in mid-term elections and virtually simultaneous with the U.S. push for normalization of ties with Cuba. Of course, this severely bungled declaration of Venezuela (meant to signal the initiation of sanctions by the U.S. on Venezuela not to mention “intensely concerned about demonstrating their own and the nation’s toughness”) backfired almost immediately with massive diplomatic fallout in the region against the U.S. (though by this time the already patchwork diplomatic quilt was reduced to tattered and fragile remnants) and did not have its intended results (Miroff and DeYoung, 2015 and Jay, 2015).

²⁷ Almost interchangeably also as the ‘American-led liberal hegemonic order’

politics” and “built around a world of territorially bounded nation-states, although its respect for state sovereignty can be overstated” (Acharya, 2014: 2). Going further in describing this, AWO Amitav Acharya (by way of John King Fairbank’s) amusingly compares and contrasts it to the “Chinese World Order” writing that both have an ‘...abiding sense of superiority and hierarchy’ and that the international system was ‘given order and unity by the universal presence’ of the leading power, and one of the final, but one of the most important parts of this understanding, was a constructed and propagated “narrative of peacefulness and [hegemonic] benevolence” providing “global public goods such as trade, security, and multilateral cooperation and the hegemon’s sacrifices from incurring trade imbalances to shedding blood for foreigners” (Acharya, 2014: 2-3).

However, this “hegemonic benevolence” (a contradiction in terms if ever there was one) was never as “benevolent as its supporters presented it to be” (Acharya, 2014: 3). As the human rights organization Amnesty International wrote in 1996, “[t]hroughout the world, on any given day, a man, woman or child is likely to be displaced, tortured, killed or ‘disappeared,’ at the hands of governments or armed political groups. More often than not, the United States shares the blame” (Blum, 2000: Opening Quotes). Or, said in a more understated but still powerful way, for the U.S. to “provide military aid [a.k.a. support for counter-insurgency] to a government that bases its existence upon the repression of its citizens’ human rights is to support the repression of human rights” (Schoultz, 1981: 247).

The history of counter-insurgency in Latin America by the United States starts at least as far back as 1939²⁸ in the “Panama Canal Zone” (created by U.S. military seizure) at a “variety of military bases” where the United States “trained Latin Americans [military personnel]” in anti-communist stridency, resources, and very soon after a re-dedication (and re-naming as the School of the Americas) to counterinsurgency training to both military and police forces of Latin America in 1963 as a reaction to the Cuban Revolution (Gill, 2004: 26). The successful Cuban Revolution resulted in the U.S. becoming “increasingly concerned with political

²⁸ Classified leaked documents from the United States Congressional Research Service (CRS) actually give 1946 as the official start of what would become the School of the Americas and currently known as Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) (Grimmett and Sullivan, 2001). According to the CRS, in 1946 the School of the Americas was called the “Latin American Center—Ground Division” (Grimmett and Sullivan, 2001).

Of course, beyond counter-insurgency there is the broader issue of military assistance as a United States tool of foreign policy something which Lars Schoultz has studied at length. According to Schoultz military assistance to foreign militaries began at the time of the Spanish American War by training “Cuban soldiers following that nation’s independence in 1902” (Schoultz, 1981: 212). In terms of military assistance to South America that more actively started to blur any lines between military assistance in general and that going towards counter-insurgency began in 1920 when “Congress granted the executive branch broad authority” to assist various governments of South America in ‘naval matters’ by ‘detail[ing] officers’ to advise the navies of these governments (Schoultz, 1981: 212).

It must also be noted here that the United States penchant for supporting counter-insurgency abroad is demonstrable this is not to say it is completely uninterrupted. Perhaps, there were times during U.S. history when there was an ebb in this push by policymakers to support dictators, despots, and war criminals due to what some policymakers called an “attenuation” of relations between the U.S. and their “usual suspects”/recipients of military aid/counter-insurgency because of the Carter administrations pulling back from previous commitments due to an aversion to be associated with U.S. former allies because of their newfound focus on “strong human rights policy” (Schoultz, 1981: 362-363). However, though there may have been moments of flux in U.S.’s stream of weapons and military advisors to some of the worst Western hemispheric actors this did not lead to a sudden “greater respect” for the “physical integrity of the person” but instead any seeming decrease in “gross violations” of human rights could be traced to a preceding decline in “threats to the established structure of privilege” or simply because there were “too few people left to intimidate [disappear, slaughter, etc.]” (Schoultz, 1981: 355). In addition, there was a list of U.S. domestic factors during the late 1970’s period including the collapse of the Nixon administration who were primary authors of “discredited beyond redemption” governments/actions of the Pinochet regime in Chile and a newly elected “liberal Congress” to punish U.S. conservatives also tied to these now briefly reviled support for human rights violators (Schoultz, 1981: 372). The final factor in this list that “influenced the success of the human rights movement” during this period in North American history was simply that “there was no credible threat to United States security in Latin America (Schoultz, 1981: 372).

mobilization of the masses and political movements that might...become radicalized as they struggled to break away from the stultifying economic and social structures that had condemned the vast majority of Latin Americans to poverty and suffering” (Vanden, 2002: 61). And, to that end, “military training in places like the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone and aid to Latin American militaries was greatly increased” very soon after 1960 in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution (Vanden, 2002: 61). Of course, U.S. support for foreign military personnel (especially of Latin American origin) goes far beyond this one significant uptick in military training and aid after and 1960. Also, it is far larger than the formerly named School of the Americas now, including over 100,000 foreign soldiers from over 150 countries at the cost of tens of millions of dollars in over 275 military installations across the United States (Amnesty International, 2015).

These foreign (i.e., Latin American) soldiers and police are trained in everything from “counter-insurgency, infantry tactics, military intelligence, anti-narcotics operations and commando operations” as well as being taught to “hate and fear something called ‘communism,’ later something called ‘terrorism,’ with little, if any, distinction made between the two” (Blum, 2000: 61). As Lars Schoultz explains, during the post-World War II era (specifically between the end of WWII and the late 1950s) threats to the U.S. have been perceived as the menace of “extrahemispheric communist aggression” and after the Cuban revolution turned strongly towards helping Latin American countries to defend against the ‘danger of internal subversion,’ and then gradually transforming from the 1960s on “beyond rural counterinsurgency to a more generalized internal security capability” (Schoultz,

1981: 217-219). Widespread public opposition led to pressure on the U.S. Congress for action and consequent legislative maneuvers threatening at least five different funding cuts in as many years to the SOA/WHINSEC. Still, all were unsuccessful in 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, and 1999 (Grimmett and Sullivan, 2001). However, while legislative financial support survived with very little change, ostensibly public outcry led to the infamous name change of the embattled SOA to WHINSEC October 30, 2000,²⁹ which while a small gesture did at least acknowledge the long-running opposition and horrendous publicity of this military training facility (Grimmett and Sullivan, 2001).

Plan Colombia and related programs of financial and military assistance to other countries by the United States are all about serving U.S. foreign policy agenda by making way for and growing “access” to foreign country allies which results in an enviable mix of “personal connections, personal information [of foreign military personnel], country databases – indispensable assets in time of coup, counter-coup, revolution, counter-revolution or invasion” (Blum, 2000: 64). Further, as Lars Schoultz makes clear, the purpose of military assistance “has always been to assist friendly governments to defend themselves against threats to the national security of the United States” another definition of counter-insurgency if ever one is needed (Schoultz, 1981: 216). This “winning” mix explains the Pentagon’s continuing strong momentum towards continuing and even expanding these programs “in the face of decades of terrible publicity [mass slaughter of unarmed civilians], increasingly more militant protests, thousands of arrests, and sharply decreasing Congressional

²⁹ This timing came only a few weeks from the large annual protest/vigil against the school led by the activist group School of the Americas Watch

support” (Blum, 2000: 64). As other rationales for military assistance (which should now be conflated with counter-insurgency) disappeared, “only the goal of maintaining access and influence with Latin America’s military establishments remained” (Schoultz, 1981: 221).

So what is the “reality” in Colombia through the layers of diplomatese, the distorted lens of counter-insurgency, and the pernicious, vicious, and even more hidden other end of this sword? According to human rights and activist groups, like Witness for Peace, the reality of Colombia with counter-insurgency still going strong through U.S. support is “violent non-state actors to effect mass displacements...freeing up land for multinational corporations in the name of ‘development,’ a proposal tacitly supported by the Colombian state” (Taylor, 2014). In Mexico, according to another similar advocacy group, the School of the Americas Watch, the on-the-ground reality of the counter-insurgency focused ‘drug war’ is similarly “to create violence, confusion, and disorder so as to destroy the social fabric and organized people that stand in the way of profits for multinational business – whether legal or illegal, whether drugs, gold mining, organs, silver, guns, or other profit-making enterprise” (SOA Watch, July 2015). Innumerable other examples from other states similarly destabilized by the consequences of *coup d’etat*’s (though this terminology is of course contested by those currently in power) and their supposedly now legitimate governments (e.g., Honduras and Paraguay), drug trafficking and of course U.S. influence through close military ties, financial support, neoliberal trade deals, and counter-insurgency (or a mix of all these things) where the patterns seen in Colombia and Mexico are also apparent and need to be

academically analyzed in much further depth (where they have been analyzed at all) for their potential causes, actors, etc.

While these activist groups do not act in a concerted way and are supranational regional organizations in the way of UNASUR or ALBA-TCP, they are perhaps “cousins” that still can “set the stage” for the current realities that many people throughout Latin America are living whether or not their stories are told, listened to, and analyzed. However, what roles and influence do regional organizations such as ALBA-TCP play in any of these messy realities?

When regional organizations are inserted into this mix of hegemonic control through military aid and direct counter-insurgency training of foreign soldiers both abroad within subordinate countries and domestically within the U.S., this concoction becomes even more murky, convoluted, and interesting. Further study of U.S. diplomatic cables makes clear again (as in my previous discussion of the DCA, Plan Colombia, and the influence of Latin America’s regional organizations) that the influence of more autonomous regional organizations of Latin America is acknowledged even in the mealy-mouthed ways of the U.S. diplomatic corps.

It could be argued that any mention of Latin American regional groupings in U.S. diplomatic cables bodes well as an indication of their influence on regional affairs and even for their political autonomy vis-à-vis the United States of America. Particularly of note for my hypothesis, would be negative mentions of regional groupings in diplomatic cables (and related primary documents) in some ways transmitting everything from annoyance to outright fear and hostility towards these groups and in this way ironically further signifying these groups autonomy from the

U.S., their influence to the detriment of the U.S., and the significance of their regional and international relations recognized by the U.S. in its role as regional and worldwide hegemon and unipolar power.

Many of the mentions in diplomatic cables of UNASUR have tended towards concern on the part of diplomatic staff to veiled annoyance. In this vein, there is the summary of the August 28, 2009 UNASUR meeting in Argentina. It is very important to note the timing and context of this document only a few months removed from a dramatic increase in tensions throughout Latin America caused by the Colombian government's decision to attack a FARC encampment in neighboring Ecuador, with the pending DCA base deal still winding its way through the Colombian judiciary, and the longstanding and huge increase in U.S. military and financial support to Colombia by the U.S. under the auspices of Plan Colombia not only arguably emboldening and provoking Colombia towards much greater military aggressiveness regionally but also exacerbating regional political tensions.

This diplomatic summary of the mid-2009 UNASUR meeting seems relieved when its author mentions that their former stalwart ally in Colombia former President Uribe was able to "prevent the group from condemning the DCA" but evinced concern that "many South American Presidents expressed reservations about the regional implications of the agreement" and especially the final UNASUR declaration that "included language that foreign military forces cannot 'threaten the sovereignty or integrity of any South American nation and the peace and security of the region' (Nichols, 2009).

CONCLUSION

I have covered a lot of ground throughout this chapter describing the hegemonic versus subordinate dynamic exemplified by the United States of America in the traditional hegemonic role and the subordinate “enforcer” and laboratory of U.S. military and economic experimentation. The second major section of this portion of my thesis focused on the military and diplomatic fracas that ensued with Colombia’s aerial bombing attack of a remote border area of Ecuador that the Colombian guerilla/terrorist group had encamped at and the role of autonomous LATAM regional organizations in defusing the crisis apart from those traditional interlocutor regional organizations such as the O.A.S. which are viewed as “compromised” and “subordinate” by many of the LATAM states.

Other than Wikileaks releases from U.S. diplomatic staff, what is the evidence is that Latin American regional organizations had any impact on hegemony in one way or another? Admittedly, there has not been a wealth of evidence in one direction or another that is readily obvious. Journalistic accounts show little if any mention of regional organizations directly, and when they do, often undercut their significance and emphasize negative examples (Ghitis, 2014). The Wikileaks releases have also not had any clear corroboration of the impact of autonomous regional organizations.

CHAPTER 3:
EXTRA-HEGEMON[IC] POWERS

Up until this point I have been arguing for and seeking out evidence that regional and other supranational international organizations are collectively coming together in some ways to try at least to offset/resist, and at most to start to counteract, U.S. hegemony and all that entails militarily, economically, etc. worldwide. I will continue further along this road by now questioning the role, if any, of external (i.e., outside of Latin America and the Western Hemisphere; a.k.a. extra-Western) regional organizations and any impacts of their interventions within the international political and policymaking arena. For my purposes, we will focus on states and organizations outside of the Western Hemisphere, which are, and have been, actively intervening within Latin America within approximately the past two decades. I will first briefly sketch out the extra-Western powers in question for this paper and how they might have influenced politics and the “soft-power” projection of Latin America globally. This Third World emancipation and liberation might appear differently to varied viewers.

For instance, to some global South struggle towards emancipation from global Northern hegemony, Latin American small and middle powers might be resurgent, “wrestling,” and sometimes winning over their colonialist/imperialist legacies. Latin America and ALBA-TCP were important in the demise of the FTAA propelled forward by a newly resurgent U.S. coming off their recent ratification of NAFTA earlier in the same year as the FTAA was first proposed (López and Mc

Donagh, 2016). Actions like these show a renewed promise by potentially autonomous states to shedding their subservience to hegemonic rule. However, did these renewed counterhegemonic movements include any involvement of more autonomous groups like BRICS, etc.? If so, what if anything was their role?

I will seek to answer several questions in the course of this chapter. If these outside organizations in Latin America are propagating counter-hegemony then what does counter-hegemony mean in these instances (examples and studies of each, for instance, ALBA-TCP set up as a rebuke of neoliberally and “exploitive” – in the view of opposing states – “free trade agreements” with the United States of America) and what if anything does this mean for internal/regional organizations like UNASUR and ALBA-TCP? If there is something here, is this purely a Latin American phenomenon, or is this dynamic happening elsewhere? Is this counter-hegemonic turn in Latin America growing an alliance with these external organizations and external powers? Finally, if there is a counter-hegemonic turn in Latin America and outside organizations are involved, I will identify some of the most prominent example organizations.

BRICS

Terminology is very important and contested in the nomenclature, labeling, and definitions surrounding groups of countries or descriptions of these individual countries. Perhaps, even more so than in other scholarly areas talk of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) as a distinct and cohesive “regional”

or extra-regional group is very significant and much-contested as are referenced by some to Indonesia, Mexico, Argentina, Australia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Turkey as “emerging powers,” “rising powers,” not to mention part of the “global South” or “third world” particularly since these “uncertain and contested categorizations...affect the discussion of their role in the world governance and order” (Acharya, 2014: 59-60).

That I and others think of the BRICS as a group with counter-hegemonic potential is very unusual when one documents the genesis of this group, which appears as anything but counter-hegemonic. One origin point, which is widely known by observers, in 2001, a Goldman Sachs analyst first coined the term BRIC (later to be enlarged by the addition of South Africa adding on the “S”) (Ferdinand, 2014: 376). What may be less known by many is that one of the major next steps in actually gathering the leaders of these physically together was in 2007 at the behest of the G8³⁰ which invited the leaders of these countries to join their summit “to try to stimulate cooperation between the developed and the developing world in a relatively small, business-like forum [and] spotlighted these states as leading representatives of the developing world” simultaneously putting the BRICS on a world stage “pedestal” and inadvertently leading to their increasing cohesion culminating in the group and its accomplishments to date (Ferdinand, 2014: 377). I use the word inadvertently because while the attendance as a part of the G8 (the children at the adult's table) was meant to pigeonhole them into the role of business-like elder statesman of the developing world, it led the BRICS to start to meet

³⁰ The G8 is

annually separately from the G8 and in contradiction of these stultified goals of the global North as represented by the G8 and broadening to unapproved things such as “regular ministerial meetings too, focusing on trade, health, energy and agriculture...an important advisory business council to promote trade between them...[as well as] the BRICS development bank [and most importantly for my purposes] an ‘alternative configuration of world governance’” (Ferdinand, 2014: 377).

Some scholars seek to point out the contradictions of developing countries to define the global “South” and what that might mean today. While I will briefly engage with these lines of analysis, my main intent remains to get at any autonomous, emancipatory, or liberatory characteristics from U.S. hegemony that might become apparent. Though the appeal of groups like the BRICS are that they are made up of countries such as Brazil and China which have sometimes seemed to be charting a course separate from North American hegemony both military and economical we must look deeper than these official pronouncements to see other motives and specifically if they are seeking to create counter-hegemonic leeway or something else entirely.

Certainly, there is a difference of opinion amongst scholars about the BRICS organization and their projects, with one hastening to say that the general public that the BRICS are “doing on the government level what Occupy Wall Street has been advocating [locally]” in their launching of a BRICS developmental bank while in the same article an opposing expert opines that “it is designed to give these large developing capitalist countries more room for maneuver vis-à-vis the American state and the European Central Bank and the IMF and the World Bank” while still a “very

conventional development bank” operating (when it is operational) according to neoliberal market principles just as its conventional cousin banks do and that this is by the graphic design of Brazil and China whose counter-hegemonic potential has severely called into question for many different reasons (New BRICS, 2014).

However, those that ascribe to a firmly positive view of the cohesiveness, substance, and counter-hegemonic (or at least norm changing) potential of the BRICS and their variants such as BRICSAM (i.e., BRICS but including Mexico) put forward the forecasted statistic that BRICSAM GDP will be greater than OECD [a grouping of 34 countries including most of Europe, Scandinavian, and the U.K. and the U.S.] “by 2045” and their “purchasing power parity will exceed it in 2015” (Alden, Morphet, and Antonio, 2010: 122). As we shall see, perhaps the “truth” is something other than the polar extremes of positivity or negativity of the contending debaters’ quoted earlier or implied by the statistics mentioned above.

Amitav Acharya calls into question the self-selecting and based on “traditional indices of power, or material capabilities” membership of groups like BRICS and the much broader U.N. grouping of “developing” countries in the G-20 but writes that these groupings leave out many countries stronger in “global and regional leadership role[s], past and present” and “soft power³¹, or leadership in ideas, innovation, and problem-solving, or what might be called intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership” ultimately calling into question the meaningfulness of terms such as “emerging powers” as a “new force in world politics” (Acharya, 2014: 61). Certainly, the membership of the BRICS is much more self-selective (by design) and arbitrary than

³¹ An alternate, and more traditional definition of “soft power” by Joseph Nye is, “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (BBC China Power Audit, 2015).

for instance United Nation's groupings of similar (mostly developing) countries like the Group of 77 (G77) and does not include many countries, but this does not necessarily negate the effectiveness and influence of this grouping.

Another observation noted within academia is the BRICS predominance within the academic scholarship as well as journalistic coverage, which far outstrips its actual "footprint." For a variety of reasons, "large developed countries" (LDCs) and groups such as BRICS have been emphasized thus far in much of the literature. One of the reasons for this emphasis on LDCs/BRICS is that "Anglophone academic literature, certainly over the 2000s, was empirically never justified and may have been geopolitically motivated in accordance with Western/Northern interests" to the explicit detriment and exclusion of organizations and examples of "South-South cooperation as Third World emancipation and liberation"³² (Muhr, 2015: 4,6). In other words, a very important part of any analysis of global Southern counter-hegemony real or potential should always be aware of and actively "counter the Western-centric bias in the production of knowledge about South-South cooperation" (Muhr, 2015: 2).

Attempting to show the massive, disparate, and arbitrary BRICS autonomous/counter-hegemonic/multi-polar influence on the foreign policy of member countries or events is a tremendously difficult order. Still, some have tried by analyzing the U.N. voting behavior of BRICS countries on their "long-term foreign policy convergence to determine how far they adopt similar positions on world

³² Also to be kept in mind are that there are three other South-South cooperation principles of 'complementation,' 'cooperation,' and 'solidarity,' established in the Group of 77 (G-77) Charter of Algiers of 1967 (Muhr, 2015: 2).

issues” (Ferdinand, 2014: 376, 378). Even the very preliminary results of this analysis of the U.N. voting behavior of BRICS countries revealed that “BRICS vote the same way as each other at least 70% of the time, while they vote the opposite way to the USA at least half the time” and this at the very least “suggests a different conception of the purpose, role and practice of diplomacy at the UN held by BRICS from that of the USA, France and the UK” (Ferdinand, 2014: 380). Thus far, it seems that there may be more cohesion and political autonomy to the BRICS than initial observations of the disparity and arbitrary nature of the grouping seem to show many observers.

However, dissension within BRICS ranks is also rife as foreign policy coordination on issues such as Libya and Syria has been noticeably lacking since the growth of the BRICS as a more cohesive group (Chan, 2011; Ferdinand, 2014: 378). There are also significant disparities economically and politically as well as in their nuclear weapons policies (Acharya, 2014: 64-65). The chief focus and some might say the accomplishment of the BRICS, has been on the subject of “global reordering” from a unipolar to a multipolar world and governing/administrative systems such as the United Nations. Still, it is especially on the topic of reordering from “climate change to UN Security Council reform” where significant differences between the varied BRICS states arise vociferously leading many analysts to question whether there is enough “cement to hold them together” or whether the BRICS membership is more of a “status symbol” and “way of attracting attention from foreign investors” (Acharya, 2014: 64-65).

Far from the general media and academic sensation that is the BRICS one analyst argues that “perhaps a more credible agent for reshaping global governance” because of its clear advantages in terms of combined economic and people power not to mention being credited with ‘implementing the largest coordinated macroeconomic stimulus in history, which has successfully arrested [this is debatably true] a potentially deep global recession’ (Acharya, 2014: 65). However, even this analyst who is potentially more positive about the G-20’s chances to effect change globally admits that the “political and practical obstacles to making global institutions more democratic and inclusive are huge” due to resistance from the West/North as well as “disunity within the ranks” and “uncertainties concerning its institutionalization” and “lack of continuity from one summit to the next” (Acharya, 2014: 67).

STRESS TESTS: LIBYA AND BEYOND

More importantly, than the preceding issues have on the BRICS, and its member countries (i.e., as potentially very significant tipping political and diplomatic counterweights that they are internationally and regionally) respectively impact domestic and foreign policy within Latin America and particularly have these effects been tending towards increasing political autonomy or reproducing subservience? The case of Libya and extra-organizations response to this fractious foreign policy situation is a good way to test BRICS response (and a semblance of Latin America’s via the proxy of Brazil). Later I will also delve through the BRICS leaders collectively

agreed upon “Joint Statements” released after their annual summits for more data on their thinking and positions beyond Libya to hint at the group tendency (if any) towards or away from hegemonic demands.

The third summit of the BRICS taking place on April 14 of 2011 was the occasion for the general feeling of the BRICS on the U.N. legitimated intervention in Libya to start to show itself when former South African President Thabo Mbeki opined that “Western imperial powers...brazenly arrogated to themselves the unilateral right to decide the future of this African country” by “imperial diktat” instead of allowing any possibility of “Africa’s right and duty to resolve its problems” through the African Union and other posited ways to handle this situation by Africa and the developing world (Chan, 2011; Mbeki, 2014). There is a “prevailing perception among some leading African intellectuals and policy-makers that the continent remains a target for western neo-colonialism or imperialism,” and among the preeminent cases of this in recent times has been 2011 Northern-led intervention in Libya (Vickers, 2013: 682). How was the Western conflagration unleashed upon Libya reacted to by the states of Latin America and the regional organizations they were members of, and did these reactions bolster or detract from the ongoing struggle towards political autonomy?

In one of the most recent BRICS summits taking place June 8, 2015, in Moscow State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin addressed the assembled BRICS parliamentarians in the first BRICS Parliamentary Forum (fostering BRICS parliamentary cooperation) stating, a “liberal interpretation of the United Nations Charter” and “substitution of the UN Security Council's decisions” in the U.N.

resolutions against Libya and Kosovo “in an effort to monopolise <sic> the decision-making process” and “trying to promote their unipolar concept of the world through ideological conflicts” (Matviyenko and Naryshkin, 2015).

That the Russian-led BRICS Parliamentary Forum mentioned Libya and Kosovo as examples of Northern monopolization of U.N. decision-making and unipolarity “through ideological conflicts” is a very strong indication of Russia’s resistance to Northern hegemony. However, at the same time, we should look skeptically at the significance of parliamentarian’s declarations, especially those from Russia (not known for a particularly strong parliament) and not from BRICS leaders, which can be backed up by executive action.

The annual Joint Statement(s) (J.S.) of the BRIC Countries Leaders from 2009 to 2015 are some of the most substantial and relevant collective statements that help to ascertain the views of the BRICS on international politics and foreign policy in their own words. The 2009 Joint Statement coming as it was in the still turbulent reverberating wake of the U.S. financial crises (soon to spread globally) was obviously and rightly focused on the disastrous aftereffects of this spring mention of foreign policy in an almost “boilerplate” manner only in points 12 – 15 of the 15 point statement.

In these concluding foreign policy statements of the J.S., there were no bold pronouncements but instead careful statements familiar to those that follow BRICS (and their members) press releases and the like. For instance, in point 12, there was a joint statement that the BRICS “support...a more democratic and just multi-polar world order based on the rule of international law, equality, mutual respect,

cooperation, coordinated action and collective decision-making of all states” and “disputes in international relations [through] political and diplomatic efforts” (2009, BRICS First Summit). Generalities and what passes for unexceptional rhetoric thus far interesting as a counter positioned world order to that hegemonic U.S.-led “order” increasingly in tatters and full of strife between states, outright war, and economic collapse.

Point 13 of the BRICS First Summit was more of the same bland statements focused only on a condemnation of terrorism, “in all its forms and manifestations and reiterate that there can be no justification for any act of terrorism anywhere or for whatever reasons” (2009, BRICS First Summit). Point 14 emphasized BRICS intentions to make the U.N. the predominant institution of choice for dealing with all “global challenges and threats” and a commitment to “multilateral diplomacy” and structural changes to the U.N. long proposed by many in the global South (e.g., expansion of the Security Council to include more “emerging” or developing members) with very little movement or even agreement among even its proponents on these changes to the U.N. such as which countries should be a part of this expansion (Acharya, 2014: 109-110).

This first summit of the BRICS sets out some counterhegemonic outlines in terms of changes it calls for to create/found a “multi-polar world order” based on “multi-lateral diplomacy” both subtle rejections of the current U.S.-led/Global Northern hegemony and multiple recent examples of instances (North American Treat Alliance – NATO coordinated attack of Kosovo in 1999 and U.N. legitimized attack of Libya 2011) where multi-polarity and multilateralism were not on display.

The second summit with a “Leaders’ Declaration and Action Plans” in 2010 sees a much more lengthy and organized list of points (33 in total) with “transformations in global governance” now as Point #1 and a “multipolar, equitable and democratic world order” #2 respectively signifying the tremendously changing priorities of the BRICS the year after the first summit (2010, BRICS Second Summit). The Third Summit was a collection of thirty-two points and twenty-three subdivided “Action Plans” with the important items the addition of South Africa to the BRICS, Point #4 being the 21st Century goals of “strengthening BRICS cooperation as well as on promoting coordination on international and regional issues of common interest,” and “enhancing multilateralism and promoting greater democracy in international relations” as Point #5 (2010, BRICS Second Summit). The BRICS leaders noted, “strengthening of multipolarity, economic globalization, and increasing interdependence” globally and included now-familiar statements about “democracy in international relations” (i.e., more voice for “emerging and developing countries” in “international affairs”) and “multilateral diplomacy” through an improved U.N. in Points #7 and #8 (2010, BRICS Second Summit).

Another BRICS Summit (the Fourth) and another differently organized “Joint Statement” now with fifty points and seventeen “Action Plans” (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit). Most of this Fourth Summit (see Points #2, 4-13, 15-18, 34, 38, and 47) was focused on a mix of “global financial architecture,” “trade relations,” development of the global economy and particularly the national economies and interests of the “emerging” countries in this milieu (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit). The sparse potential counter-hegemonic mentions within the document were found

only within Point #3 when the BRICS leaders hope for a “multi-polar” world and Point #4 where the goal of the BRICS was strengthened global governance through institutions of note (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit).

Speaking of strengthened global institutional governance, the institutions mentioned throughout the points dealing with the “global financial architecture” included the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the G20, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) hardly bastions of counter-hegemony and culminated with support for the “Doha Round”³³ of WTO trade negotiations to “lower trade barriers around the world, and thus facilitate increased global trade” (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit). The BRICS were increasingly treading very grey and blurry lines between submitting to hegemony and their counter-hegemonic tendencies (often pushed on them by their constituents).

These multiple contradictions were shown on the one hand in the supportive mentions of clearly hegemonic institutions (IMF, WTO, G20, etc.) and their associated processes (i.e., Doha Round) reproducing dependency and other examples of subservience to Northern institutional and economic strictures. On the other hand, BRICS tread the line of potentially counter-hegemonic items such as the founding of the BRICS Development Bank (meant to be an alternative to the IMF), and individual countries of the BRICS debatably had a hand in the breakdown of the very (Doha) talks they supposedly supported as a group. Cognizant of the North’s role in the variety of economic crises afflicting developing countries and what they

³³ “The Doha Development Agenda (DDA) aims to reduce trade barriers and assist developing countries through trade liberalization [and has been] characterized by differences between the United States, the European Union, and developing countries on major issues” resulting in subsequent meetings which were generally acknowledged as fruitless and in the DDA still not culminating in any final agreement (Kurian, 2011).

should do to help put a stop to these crises, all show the contradictory nature of the BRICS while at the same time pointing to signs of potential counter-hegemony (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit; Desai and Vreeland, 2014). The torn nature, and at the same time “keeping all options on the table,” of the BRICS are again shown in Points #5 - #13 where the BRICS leaders simultaneously call for an increased voice in the IMF, World Bank, and other Northern led global financial institutions (something they have been calling for a very long time) and then right after in Point #13 declare their intention to start researching the possibility of setting up their own global Bank as an alternative to the IMF and World Bank and all of the deleterious and harsh austerity and other economic “pain” they often call for in developing countries that submit to their “services” (2012, BRICS Fourth Summit).

BEYOND THE BRICS: BRAZIL, RUSSIA, AND CHINA IN LATIN AMERICA

Aside from the BRICS collectively, the undisputed extra-hegemonic powers that individually make up the group are Brazil, Russia, and China, and the Latin American region have long been a foreign policy priority of all countries much longer than the BRICS was even an embryonic idea. In the decades since the Cold War dynamics have changed considerably, and yet some have remained very similar. No longer is Latin America in an abased position to the United States of America but is now “actively being courted by different powers, with Moscow regaining a prominent role in western hemispheric affairs,” and I can now very justifiably add

China to this statement (Sanchez, 2015: 362). Brazil's main role in the region is as a local aspiring hegemon.

BRAZIL

Even in terms of its sheer size, numbers, and geography, Brazil dominates the continent of South America and overall within the Latin American region. Indeed, one scholar calls them a “giant” among nations as one of the “fourth-largest in the area [of South America],” the third-largest democracy, and the largest Catholic country” and with over 170 million people consists of “half of South America’s population and the “fifth largest in the world” (Vanden, 2002: 483). In 2002 Brazil was rated as the “eighth largest in the world” exceeding at that time Russia, Canada, and Great Britain” (Vanden, 2002: 484). If only by these statistics and standards, can one understand why Brazil would naturally aspire to a regional hegemonic position. As scholar Wilber Albert Chaffee wrote in 2002,

“Brazil is a nation of superlatives, but one that threatens the nation is the reality of the greatest wealth and income inequality among major nations of the world. The great question is whether Brazil’s democracy and economic reforms can be maintained and advanced at the same time that great problems remain. Can successive governments pay the “social debt” (Vanden, 2002: 509)?

With an understanding of the above problems mentioned in the passage and events since then, one can see that not much has changed. Since the 2002 time of this writing the Brazilian Congress and other power elites throughout Brazil, etc. have swiftly pushed through the impeachment (many observers have instead called it a coup) of democratically elected President of Brazil Dilma Vana Rousseff in 2016,

the jailing of extremely popular former President “Lula” who was running for a second term, the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President (called by many a “fascist”), and the ouster and arrest of the interim/“caretaker” President Temer in 2019. The Odebrecht transnational company scandals may have begun in Brazil (where the company was founded and based) but have riven “scorched earth” style throughout Latin America taking down the highest political and corporate executives and show no signs of ending any time soon (AFP, 2019; Graham-Harrison, 2017; Fishman and de Santi, 2019; Kaiser and McGowan, 2019; Watson, 2017).

Brazil has been analyzed as a “consensual hegemon” (“the consensual approach draws on Gramscian suggestions that a hegemony gains its strength through consent, not the latent threat of imposition”) by one scholar writing that regionally Brazil is “predominant, but not dominant” and recognizing this Brazil seeks to “push a regional or international system in a given direction” and in this way how Brazil with “limited military and economic power capabilities might attempt to leverage its idea-generating capacity to construct a vision of the regional system and quietly obtain the active acquiescence of other regional states to a hegemonic project” (Burges, 2008: 65).

Given the political turmoil in the world and especially in Brazil at this time (at the time of this writing three different Brazilian presidents within the extremely brief span of five years, with the most recently elected after a series of coup-like bordering on illegitimate elections, not to mention the instability of the current Bolsonaro regime) it is likely that Brazil’s elites dream of regional hegemony have been pushed even further down the historical timeline into the mid to late 21st

century if it does come to pass (Turner, 1991: 476). Most of the painstaking coalition building towards regional integration and other international group involvement and organizing such as UNASUR, MERCOSUR, etc. under the Bolsonaro regime has come to a very rapid halt where if the organizations are not already in the process of being disbanded, they have suspended members/countries, etc. (Bragatti, 2019: 70-71).

Of course, all of the above instability in Brazil and more specifically Bolsonaro has meant that if during the Lula years of from 2003 to 2010 where Brazilian diplomacy and presence on the world stage was advancing closer to the hegemonic (“consensual” or otherwise) from its membership within UNASUR and similar organizations which excluded the United States from membership, its role as “peacekeeper” nation in Haiti (as troublesome and debatable the benefits of this position), international trade, role in diplomacy and “peace-making” between countries within Latin-America, etc. Under Bolsonaro, all of this has steadily been crumbling like a house of cards and in the wake of various chicaneries of the Brazilian elites embodied in the Brazilian government, judiciary, etc. (Milani, Pinheiro, and Soares de Lima, 2017: 585-586; Harig and Kenkel, 2017: 625–641).

RUSSIA

Russian diplomatic ties with LATAM began as early as 1824 with Mexico very soon after the country’s independence. They only increased in importance and frequency with the passing years and momentous events such as World War I, the

coming to power of the Soviets in Russia, and the Cold War during which time LATAM countries sought out more contacts with the Soviet Union because “they regarded it as...a counterweight to...U.S. dictate” (Sanchez, 2015: 363). Former functionaries within these world powers (or at least “middle powers”) like Russia through the person of Foreign Minister Lavrov views Latin America particularly as a “very interesting” prospect towards making multi-polarity in international affairs real (Blank and Kim, 2015: 162). Per Lavrov, Latin America shows great potential as a region on the world stage pushing forwards international political multi-polarity (or what Lavrov refers to as “independence in international affairs”) and is a “swiftly developing region, which wants to be independent more and more” and [the region] “certainly becomes one of [the] centers of economic growth, financial power, political influence and forming multipolar world order” and shares many mutual concerns that Russia has with this unipolar historical moment (Blank and Kim, 2015: 162).

Notwithstanding ministerial and policy paper statements, Russia has also been cultivating many ties with Latin America in many different areas, including trade and infrastructure. Unlike China, which seems predominantly focused on the infrastructural and easing their access to natural resources, etc., Russia seems to be interested more in military trade and projection of their military power back into Latin America at the same time as the United States of America attention and direct support to the region is ebbing. For example, “Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced Russian plans to build military bases in Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, marking Russia’s most forward endeavors in the region since the end of the Cold War” (Meacham, 2014). There has been some “general commercial trade”

[but] particularly the weapons trade” between Latin America and Russia “focusing primarily on establishing its [Russia’s] place in the region” with Venezuela one of the largest recipients of Russian trade “dominated by arms sales and military contracts” (Meacham, 2014).

In 2013 “Russia and Brazil finalized a five-year deal originally signed in 2008, netting the South American giant 12 military-grade helicopters worth about U.S. \$150 million” and later in the same year there was a visit by Russia’s Defense Minister promoting another proposed deal “the US\$1 billion sale of missile systems that could considerably improve Brazil’s defensive capabilities,” and finally “Russia is working out agreements to establish actual Russian military bases in at least three countries—the most ambitious engagement in the region in the past 25 years” (though it is important to recognize these latter gargantuan military deals still have yet to be finalized at this time of writing) (Meacham, 2014). One analyst argues that far from seeking a return to the Cold War international dynamic of a bi-polar world with many competing proxy battles and states Russia in today’s Latin America is seeking “an alternative to an unfair alliance [i.e., between regional hegemon the U.S. and a subordinate Latin America] and at the same time institute a cooperative multipolar international structure that allows both larger and smaller states to participate in the processes of globalization, military cooperation, and economic integration (COHA – Russia, 2014).

In a now largely unremarked upon event that at the very beginning of President Chavez’s tenure in 2008, Russia flew “two strategic bombers” in September and in November sailed “four Russian warships” to Venezuela for joint

military exercises (Chuang, 2008: 14-15). This Russian visit was the first time that Russian bombers of this type had “landed in the Western Hemisphere since the end of the Cold War” (Chuang, 2008: 15). This has, however, been followed up with many other Russian significant displays of power and projection.

In response to the ratcheting up of tensions between Washington DC and Havana and Washington DC and Moscow for the first time in almost ten years, Russia sent a flotilla of naval ships to dock in Havana. Several months later, in July of the same year, Russian flotilla visits Cuba as part of a global tour. Then just a month later, Venezuela and Russia signed a ports agreement and other cooperation agreements covering military education, training, and joint exercises on land, air, and sea (Cranny-Evans, 2019; Sanchez, 2019; Sanchez, 2019).

As the preceding Chinese author analyzes, this joint effort of Venezuela and Russia was not only a “show of force” by the Russian government, military, and the nascent Venezuelan government seeking to show its independence from traditional hegemonic overseer the U.S., but also “to put U.S. President-elect Barack Obama [now President Trump] on notice and create leverage for future military dialogue between Russia and the United States” (Chuang, 2008: 15). Aside from the above reasons for Venezuela and Russia, this was also most importantly to push back, or at least hold, “the strategic squeeze³⁴ they ha[d] experienced during the Bush administration” and to protect their interests increasingly eroded by the Bush regime (Chuang, 2008: 15). W. Alejandro Sanchez ably describes comprehensively what

³⁴ For Russia, this strategic squeeze was “a response to aggressive American actions worldwide, not just in Latin America. Threatened by the missile defense system the United States is deploying in Eastern Europe, Russia seeks to make the United States equally uncomfortable in its own backyard. Venezuela seems to be the best place to start” (Chuang, 2008: 15).

this Russia/Latin America interaction looks like, “a combination of an aggressive Russia foreign policy focusing on diplomacy, trade and military sales and the rise of anti-Washington governments in LATAM, who favour gaining extra-hemispheric allies” and in which the U.S. is steadily losing influence due to the “lack of a consistent and constructive foreign policy towards the region” (Sanchez, 2015: 362).

CHINA

In Latin America’s past, present, and very likely future, China has become yet another variable upsetting the bandwagon of hegemonic tradition (i.e., Lars Schoultz talks of ‘hegemony creep’ and “preventive hegemony”) in which Latin America was seen as the U.S.A.’s “backyard” but also, just perhaps, changing one of the more pernicious and hidden explanations of U.S. policy “in a process that blends self-interest with what the Victorian British called their White Man’s Burden...a process by which a superior people help a weaker civilization overcome the pernicious effects of its sad defect” (Schoultz, 1998: xiv, xvi). Instead of the United States of America, or another developed country and most likely former colonialist overseer, China is now the largest trading partner of Brazil, Chile, and Peru, and “lending more than \$100 billion to Latin America since 2005” and promising to “invest \$250 billion more in the region” from 2015 to 2035 which “trumps the combined regional lending of the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and the U.S. Export-Import Bank” (Kaplan, 2015: 1).

On top of the over ten years of growing investment from China to Latin America from at least 2005 until the present, there are always further investments and ties. A potentially momentous example of the growing investment and ties between China and Latin America is the second round of meetings of the Chinese government and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) confirming and elaborating on the first round of meetings in January 2015 during which an “investment deal worth some US\$50 billion, in areas ranging from energy to scientific research[, and] as well as “deepen[ing] trade and other political and economic ties” was signed and would take place over a four-year span (teleSur Latin America and China, 2015). Of course, other than the enormous potential of this investment deal and the benefits in many economic, scientific, and other areas, it also showcases another autonomous politically focused organization, CELAC, of Latin America that is yet another very significant example of Latin America’s states politically integrating in ways that are not supported or approved by the U.S. and which explicitly exclude the U.S. and other developed countries of the Northern world (De La Barra and Dello Buono, 2012: 32-33).

Apart from China and Latin America bilateral dealings, China is also further involved along with its co-member states in BRICS, far from just a forum for communicating internally by the member countries in 2014 it concretized institutional tools like their New Development Bank (NDB) as an alternative to global Northern institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and other financial institutions with initial member investments of 50 billion and a planned additional “USD 100 billion liquidity reserve fund” (PTI BRICS Bank to Fund, 2015; PTI BRICS Bank to Issue, 2015). In

January of 2015, in the space of about two weeks during that month, China made agreements with both Venezuela and Ecuador to invest 20 billion dollars in Venezuela and 7.5 billion dollars in Ecuador (Al Jazeera To Invest, 2015).

Moreover, countries throughout Latin America that “have struggled to acquire lending from global capital markets like the World Bank, or private capital markets, have often found a willing partner in China” at the very least funneled “development funds to places that otherwise would be cash-strapped and stricken” (Gustafson, 2016).

Political events in the U.S.A. such as the national election of November 2016 and the victory of a demagogue, bombastic, iconoclastic, and unexpected, the figure of Donald J. Trump has in the opinion of more than one commentator offered only a “negative agenda” of “anti-trade, anti-immigration” to Latin America as his current statements show in abundance “China will fill the void and gain even more influence in the region” (Oppenheimer, 2016). Precisely because of the “lack of attention” that free trade and neoliberally inclined ideologues such as Oppenheimer bemoan of the U.S. to Latin America in recent decades, set to increase through the stated isolationist tendencies of Trump, the U.S. is only accelerating its “decline of American power” globally and simultaneously providing the means of Latin America’s to collectively free themselves “from Western imperialism” (Chomsky, 2016).

However, even if it is clear the vast amounts of financial and other resources that are being provided to Latin America by China what is much less clear is if these resources come with ulterior requirements or if the increasingly huge sums of trade

and resources are making Latin America less or more dependent and politically autonomous of the United States, China, and other Great Powers? As many analysts have noted, the vast amount of loans, foreign direct investment, and other resources and agreements that China is making with countries throughout Latin America (by many accounts much more even than other regions of Chinese interest like Africa) do not, of course, come without cost. Instead, typically, “repayments to China are guaranteed by long-term commodity sales, which means a commitment to push ahead with resource exploitation – often with dire consequences for the environment and indigenous communities” (Watts, 2013). For instance, Chinese investment has largely focused on “short-sighted natural resource exploitation” and led to a “recommodification of the region’s exports as more and more attention has been lavished on the selling of unfinished products and natural resources” (Gustafson, 2016).

In fact, one scholar declares that “Chinese projects have often been largely exploitative and unsustainable” (Gustafson, 2016). Even tremendous Chinese investment in infrastructural development within the countries it is involved with has been continually questioned and dismissed as only “designed merely to facilitate its access to a particular natural resource deposit rather than the public good” (Gustafson, 2016). Each potential benefit of Chinese investment has been undercut and attacked at every turn. For example, the significant possibility of creating endogenous jobs for huge Chinese projects (in the case of the planned Nicaraguan canal fully 10% of the entire population of Nicaragua) has often not resulted in an uptick in in-country employment, but instead, jobs have gone to “Chinese and other

foreigners” and joint infrastructural projects are conditioned on “Chinese workers and Chinese equipment” (Gustafson, 2016; Shipley, 2015).

The lack of a beneficial increase in endogenous employment for Latin American workers living around Chinese enterprises in-country is compounded by a deep “cultural divide” characterized by “simplistic and unhelpful stereotypes dominating on both sides” between Chinese managers and workers and the Latin American’s which are their hosts (Watson, 2015). There is also the example of a satellite tracking facility being built in the Patagonian region of Argentina, which the author purports “will be staffed by the Chinese, and Argentinians themselves will have only extremely limited access to it” (Coyer, 2016).

Not only are the costs of Chinese investment and trade with Latin America fraught with potential pitfalls but according to some Latin America’s yearning for political, economic, etc. autonomy from the United States and other Great Power domination might instead be replaced with a new but altogether similar dependency on Chinese largesse (Watts, 2013).

Of course, dependency is one of the main enemies and “albatrosses” around the “neck” of Latin America from Bolivar’s first yearnings towards autonomy for the region and so any form or degree of same such by Latin America towards any other outside power would simply be renewing this cycle...or would it...? Could, for instance, Latin America modulate/re-direct Chinese as well as other outside powers (and we are thinking specifically of those powers outside of Latin America that are nominally at least outside of the global hegemony of the reigning hegemon the United States of America and its sycophants at this time) and leverage what support

they might provide in the way that leaders like Tito in the former Yugoslavia and Nehru in India might have balanced the Cold War sides of the U.S.A. representing the West and the Soviet Union representing the East against each other to further themselves and the respective countries that they led (Berger, 2004: 14). Whether or not Latin America can cohere sufficiently through its regional organizations to follow the Tito/Non-Aligned Movement example, or even if this is still possible or optimal in a predominantly unipolar world, remains to be seen.³⁵

Of course, all of the preceding said about China's financial incursions into Latin America, and first and foremost, the regional hegemon, Brazil, does not come without its detractors in academia. One such detractor, who after study of "Chinese foreign direct investment and loan/aid data" within the region declares that compelling evidence "that China's economic activity in Latin America is overstated in comparison to the sustained economic commitments of other, more traditional foreign actors in the region" and that any assertions to the contrary stating something along the lines of China's economic prowess and danger in region's such as Latin America are "toxic discourse" which perpetuates is "dangerous...misinformation" (Narins, 2016: 36).

However, as tentative as this soft balancing might be by Latin America using their newfound leverage provided by China to adjust the scales of their power, international political flexibility, etc. with the United States of America this hegemonic attenuation has certainly been evident to those who closely watch international relations between these world players. Aside from the new levers of status and soft

³⁵ Perhaps with some cracks in the façade by other world powers such as Russia and China repeatedly declaring their support of and works towards a multipolar world (Blank and Kim, 2015: 162).

power that Chinese investment has provided Latin American governments it is important to note that apart from the immense suction of natural resources from the Latin American region and the consequent environmental despoiling, potential dependent relationships created, etc. that there are many other factors to consider about China's involvement in Latin America.

China likewise lays out its contra-hegemonic intentions in its recently published its Defense White Paper of Chinese Military Strategy which clearly declares first and foremost that China will, “unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development, pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy that is defensive in nature, oppose hegemonism and power politics in all forms, and will never seek hegemony or expansion” (MND-PRC, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, I have analyzed the extra-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic potential that might be a phenomenon in Latin America at this recent historical moment of the past two decades. I have studied the collective BRICS as well as Russia and China's political interventions and influence within Latin America, and if these interactions are shifting the international affairs/foreign policy decisions, room to maneuver, on whether these interactions are reproducing the traditional subordination of Latin America to the United States or are introducing factors which create some new “elbow room” for Latin America to take advantage of the distraction of the reigning hegemon stretched as it is in many foreign policy entanglements

throughout the “Middle East” (Syria, Turkey, the refugee crises, terrorist attacks), terrorist attacks in Western Europe, Eastern Europe (Ukraine) coups and civil war, etc. (of course many of these things are debatably caused by their actions or inaction) is always striving to bend the world to its interests and objectives. The answers to several of these questions are necessarily speculative at this point since my investigation is still in its early stages pending further study; however, I will attempt to offer some preliminary results.

In the BRICS section of this chapter, I laid out the paradoxical and contradictory background of the organization questioning its emancipatory potential (i.e., towards supporting the political autonomy of the global South) with the many incontrovertible facts of its existence including its origin coming about in part due to the ruminations and selling of a Goldman Sachs banker and the attempted matchmaking/invitation to a “seat at the global elites lesser table” of the G8. Add to this that the BRICS most prominent members are Brazil, Russia, China, and India all ostensibly still developing nations and also members of the global South on the one hand and on the other hand countries arguably on the cusp of rising/emerging on the way to “great power” status or in the case of Russia a strange amalgamation of a “traditional European great power, which was also a military superpower during the cold war,” and is sometimes called an ‘outdated great power’ (Acharya, 2014: 59-60).

In the case of Brazil, we see a country which is considered a hegemon over “its” region of the world by many observers within and without Latin America and the Caribbean, which seeks to be a great power with large amounts of soft power

through serving as a diplomatic intermediary intra-LATAM and the Caribbean conflicts as well as in external conflicts such as Israel versus Palestine. Brazil is an instrumental and lynchpin member of the BRICS and supporter/funder of many projects supporting the supposed political, energy, etc. independence LATAM and the Caribbean from U.S. hegemony through their co-founding of institutions and regional organizations such as UNASUR and the BRICS Development Bank but at the same time supports the United Nations Stabilization Mission In Haiti (UNSTAMIH) a.k.a. *Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti* (MINUSTAH)³⁶, which began in Haiti ostensibly as a protector of Haitian civilians against coup government excesses but instead “helped facilitate political violence” (Cohn, 2015; Sanchez, 2012: 161-162; Draitser, 2016).

However, considering all of the contradictions and potential negatives against counter-hegemonic movements, the positive column ledger is also significant. For instance, the cohesion showed by the virtually coordinated U.N. voting behavior of the BRICS “vot[ing] the same way as each other at least 70% of the time, while they vote the opposite way to the USA at least half the time” and thus “suggest[ing] a different conception of the purpose, role, and practice of diplomacy at the UN held by BRICS from that of the USA, France, and the UK” (Ferdinand, 2014: 380).

Thus far, it seems that ALBA-TCP was created as a response to the FTAA and was instrumental in mobilizing and focusing broad opposition among the people of Latin America and the groups that directly represented them “including indigenous, labor, student, environmental, and women’s movements, as well as

³⁶³⁶ This is not to mention the tremendous but largely unnoticed (i.e. within Brazil) problem of “police-related homicides” (Vigna, 2015).

sympathetic NGOs and others” (López and Mc Donagh, 2016). However, ALBA-TCP does not seem to have been the linchpin leading to the demise of the FTAA, but only one international actor, among many others. From my study thus far of BRICS Joint Statements, BRICS Parliamentarian’s, and individual BRICS leaders statements, and purely from the fact that the first meetings as BRIC and later BRICS began at the earliest in 2006 one year on from the demise of the FTAA, I can say with relative sureness that the BRICS were not very significant or even apparent in any sense pro or con versus the FTAA.

CHAPTER 4:

CONCLUSION: INTEGRATING POSSIBILITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

For a brief time in Latin America³⁷, the possibilities seemed endless, the horizon infinite and getting brighter all of the time. LATAM was no longer the exploited and tortured suffering region portrayed³⁸ in the *Open Veins of Latin America*. Still, a newly reinvigorated, re-emboldened, and even a strong and unified hemisphere just then emerging from the “dark times”³⁹ of military dictatorships, coup d’états, mass disappearances of civilians/“dissidents,” and neoliberal economic

³⁷ The past two decades period which I focus on in throughout my thesis.

³⁸ Though this was only one part of Galeano’s poetical and emotional narrative.

³⁹ In addition to the above atrocities, these dark times included widespread crimes against humanity (kidnapping and torture of mothers and seizure of their children to the associates and “deserving” portion of the population friendly or preferred by coup shock troops), oppression of those already poverty-stricken and marginalized masses, and the economic side of these apocalyptic times which was brutal austerity, exploitation of these same masses in perpetuating the “resource curse” through forcing these families into extraction of natural resources, destruction of labor unions and anyone who even hinted at dissension from these ruinous courses of action (Blum, 1995: 214, 229, 235; Mitchell 2011: 19-21).

“shock therapy”⁴⁰ imposed region-wide the United States allied governments in countries throughout the area.

For the first time in a very long while, LATAM were newly asserting their political and economic sovereignty and autonomy from their traditional U.S. overseers. Venezuela invited the Russian military into their airports and naval ports for the first time in over three decades for joint military exercises and a way to firmly and boldly signal their independence from the U.S. and in their foreign policymaking. Venezuela and many other countries in the region allied with another rising power, China, in increasingly massive and important trade, infrastructure, etc. deals again, signaling their political and economic autonomy.

During the “Pink Tide” in Latin America, the national economies of countries throughout the region were also in the “boom” times benefiting from very high commodity prices of exportable natural and other resources from oil (Venezuela and Mexico), soybeans (Brazil and Argentina), to lithium (Bolivia, Chile, Argentina) (Ash, 2017; Workman, 2017). Politically left-of-center LATAM governments were increasingly being democratically elected (with many instituting much more progressive constitutions, participatory democracy, etc. than previous governments) with presidents vociferous in their opposition to U.S. “neo-imperialism,” political and economic prescriptions, and strongly supporting multi-polar global governance

⁴⁰ “Governments embarked upon massive economic restructuring and the privatization of natural resources, selling off the national patrimony (including public services and utilities) to domestic and international capital, and opening up previously protected sectors (notably agriculture) to competition from the industrialized producers of North America” all in an political environment in which the “right-wing forces” or “governments, political parties, think tanks, corporations, religious institutions and the media, all of which overwhelmingly and enthusiastically embraced neoliberalism” and “aimed to block movements for redistributory and socially just reforms (Dominguez, Lievesley, and Ludlam, 2011: 93; Klein, 2007: 4-5).

instead of U.S. led unipolarity through increasing alliances outside of the U.S. such as Russia and China, and overall “some of the most interesting and progressive experiments in the conduct of political economy have been taking place [and] novel strategies of economic, social, and political development are being explored in the aftermath of long decades of neo-liberalism” (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 33-35, 60-61, 87; Vivares 2014: xiii).

U.S. dominated regional organizations such as the O.A.S., and the World Bank and I.M.F. were steadily spurned in favor of newly created organizations such as ALBA-TCP, UNASUR, CELAC, and the BRICS Development Bank that explicitly excluded the U.S. in favor of LATAM states, and often charted vastly different political and economic systems and methods than that of neoconservative and neoliberal predominant organizations and systems of the past. The “old ways” of doing things in LATAM were continuously acknowledged, debated, and often done away with by these governments in favor of progressive innovations, and all of this not only grounded but led by mass popular support⁴¹.

At the same time, for almost as long as there has been a politically leftward shift in Latin America the United States hegemonic attentions and intentions have been daily distracted by “economic and security crises in the Middle East and Europe” instead of simultaneously pandering and dominating Latin America and the Caribbean in one hand and in the other completing their pivot to Asia (Daalder,

⁴¹ It is interesting to note here that academic and journalistic (particularly those media organizations controlled by corporations) analysis often dismiss the relevance and significance of autonomous LATAM regional organizations when they even deign to mention them. However, taking no note of this dismissiveness themselves neither did LATAM regional organizations or events in the region limit themselves to neoliberal, neoconservative, and hegemonic proscriptions of the amassed Northern media/government forces arrayed against them.

2016). Notwithstanding these blazes happen with such frequency and the likelihood of blowing back and exploding into the much larger region and even global spanning conflagrations, the U.S. continues to flail in its search of “full-spectrum dominance” of all its international problems and “threats” (Council, 2009). Thus the U.S. has largely had all of its military and economic attentions monopolized by geopolitical flare-ups at the expense of maintaining firm control of its usual national subordinates in its customary hemispheric influence.

Latin American politicians noted this loosening of the hegemonic ties that bound them and the simultaneous long-held opinion of their constituents towards greater political and economic integration of the region that would presumably materially benefit them through the creation of a greater and stronger united bloc. Consequently, there were some tremendous shifts and changes to more participatory democracy and economics, which increased the implementation of social welfare within many of the countries at the forefront of this leftward shift.

On the other hand, these shifts within the region towards social development and the reduction of poverty while counter-hegemonic in their ways have not always been universally condemned and stifled at every turn by the hegemonic powers that be in fact with certain examples they have been readily accepted and even feted. For instance, the Brazilian model of poverty reduction and socio-economic amelioration implemented by President Lula da Silva called *Bolsa Familia* or the “conditional cash transfer program through which parents receive a fixed monthly stipend...in exchange for sending their children to school and complying with different health checkups” and which has “managed to reduce poverty by half in

Brazil...some 50 million low-income Brazilians, or a quarter of the total population” and in this case (unlike the Complementary Economic Zone) received the praise of the political and economic masters of the day as the “market-friendly way to fight inequality” of such establishment and neoliberal bastions like the World Bank and Foreign Affairs Magazine (Muhr, 2014: 9; Tepperman, 2016; Wetzel, 2014).

No matter if some of the “innovative examples” of a resurgent Latin America were accepted with arms wide open or countered at every turn, there were always challenges, and perhaps these challenges often seem insurmountable. Without question, integrating individuals is very hard, joining municipalities more so, and integrating continentally or hemispherically located states perhaps as difficult as aerospace engineering. Considering the lack of examples of region-wide “united states,”⁴² the level of difficulty signified by this analogy seems apt (Parent, 2011: 2).

Certainly, academia and the news media never seem to tire of gleefully pointing out the difficulties of political, social, economic, etc. integration among states, and not many examples are as rich with material for these critiques as Latin America. These difficulties are evident, from “the unique geography of the area” (e.g., continental topography in South America which includes huge mountain ranges like the Andes, earthquakes, flooding, mudslides, the impossibility of building quick and efficient infrastructure through the Amazon Rainforest), to the heavy-handedness and “unfair” implementation by those leaders “selling” integration and their conflicting and uncompromising state interests, to inter-state squabbles over

⁴² Whether this is in a federation, confederation, or some other form.

borders/territory which are legacies of post-liberation civil wars (COHA Great Barrier, 2009; Parent, 2011: 116-117, 120, 126-128; BBC News Peru and Chile, 2015).

In recent years the difficulties are reappearing in force as Latin America is in the midst of a “perfect storm” of political and economic tumult (brought on in part by these same convulsions worldwide, partly through active subversion led by the United States and its allies, and partly through festering systemic problems never adequately addressed) signaling a return to a deep trough in its development and integration from its period of heady highs. From the ongoing crises (economic, political, etc.)⁴³ in Venezuela after President Chavez’ death in 2013, to the faltering economies and struggling currencies throughout Latin America, to the return of the right in many of the countries previously headed by leaders of a more leftist political persuasion often through less than electoral or constitutional means, to natural and environmental calamities brought on partly by global warming and partly by governmental and societal policies and practices, no matter where you peer the outlook seems dark and oppressive with not much hope for a turnaround any time soon (BBC – Bolivia, 2016; Bolton, 2016; Gonzalez, 2016; West, 2016).

Of course, these economic “boom” times could not last forever. The tremendous reduction in commodity prices coupled with a variety of other factors such as economic “slowdowns” in China (and other non-economic factors such as the aforementioned death of Chavez, overthrow or changing of governments from left-of-center to the right in Honduras, Paraguay, and Brazil, etc.) all combined to

⁴³ One may disagree with causes of these crises or even to their degree as compared to always hyperbolic and negative press by the corporate media domestically and internationally.

add pressure to governments within Latin America and the erosion of the previously ascendant “Pink Tide.”

It is important here to recognize that this observation of Latin American governments (esp. that left-of-center) was “riding the boom” (and to a better extent – than previous rightist governments – distributing these windfalls to the general population) but remained significantly dependent on these extractive commodities and such reproducing age-old economic dependencies (Rojas and Sunkara, 2017). This same commenter further acknowledges that the social welfare (“social democratic”) universal programs were put into place by these Pink Tide governments seeking the continued approval of the new constituencies that had elected and continued to support them against previous constituencies (the elites in each country). They did not otherwise really have the time, wherewithal, etc. to make lasting structural changes to the economic framework in place from various colonialist overseers to the present capitalist/neoliberal globalization (Rojas and Sunkara, 2017).

My hypothesis from the beginning of this paper has been to look at the rise of these at one time ascendant governments, renewed impetus towards regional integration, and regional organizations consolidating and solidifying this integrationist push as something qualitatively different than previous times and projects somehow independent of the states that spurred these latest regional initiatives. However, my study of various cases such as base deals between Colombia and the United States and the Colombian bombing of Ecuador, to the BRICS and more importantly the two countries of the BRICS, China and Russia, newly ascendant worldwide and

particularly in Latin America, and most importantly the past several years full of turns away from regional integration and Pink Tide.

It is a time of worldwide political tumult. At the time of this writing, there have been major protests throughout Latin America in the past several weeks and months from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador, with earlier protests from Honduras and Nicaragua to Venezuela. The protests and tumult in Argentina, Bolivia, and arguably Ecuador all signal major discontent with the ruling government, and at least in Argentina and Bolivia come at the time of presidential elections, which could result in dramatic shifts in government. The mass demonstrations and societal strife in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador are all against governments that are either rightist or right-of-center in political orientation and took power on the coattails of the Pink Tide. At the same time, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela all still have leftist or left-of-center governments. One article sums up the demonstrations throughout Latin American and the Caribbean as “people are rising against right-wing, US-backed governments and their neoliberal austerity policies” (Koerner, 2019).

As the article above states, most of the recent uprisings and civil disturbances have in common is a repudiation of the “neoliberal austerity policies” and “right-wing, US-backed governments” foisted on those countries that elected⁴⁴ governments of this nature in response to a downturn in the Pink Tide. The return of rightist (or corporatist, elitist, etc.) governments general turmoil, overall intra-conflict, and increasing obscurity and irrelevance of the still-nascent counter-hegemonic regional

⁴⁴ In many cases throughout current and past Latin-American and Caribbean governments of this rightist and neoliberal nature such as Brazil and Honduras the term election needs to come with many disclaimers as both came in the aftermath of an outright coup d'état as in Honduras and an impeachment as in Brazil and later jailing of the most popular and prominent presidential candidate.

organizations have led me to the unavoidable conclusion of the irrevocably state-led nature of these regional organizations and counter-hegemonic and integrationist projects wafting away like so many ephemeral wisps of smoke.

At the same time, the durability and significance of China and Russia, and to a lesser extent, the larger global South's influence in Latin America, cannot be denied and reinforces the state-led nature of most regional integration within LATAM. China and Russia are truly new international power players vying against United States interests in their soft-balancing but already long-lasting and impactful ways. Within South America, Venezuela is the country that is furthest from America's sphere of influence, and the strongest likelihood of resisting the U.S. dictates beginning with the election of President Hugo Chavez in 1998 and his presidential tenure from 1999 until his death in 2013.

Against the U.S.'s intents, even America's most rightist and hawkish think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation in their annual report on the U.S. military have, for years, have had to acknowledge China and Russia's rarely before seen heights of power. In the Heritage Foundation's report, Russia and China are at the very uppermost of their listing and gradations of threats and their capabilities steadily improving while the U.S. military capacities to counter these challenges remained steadily diminishing (Mehta and Gould, 2019). In at least the past decade, the actions and continued policies of concurrent American presidents Obama and Trump the sanctioning, punishing, and isolating measures and continued encirclement and enlargement of U.S. military bases and military involvement abroad attempting to constrain China and Russia has instead of constraining them

have ostensibly led to a strengthening of their diplomatic, military, economic, etc. cross-state ties.

One of the major media outlets within the U.S., CNBC, recently reported that military ties between Russia and China had taken a “leap forward” with Russia’s intent to help China build a “system to warn against ballistic missile launches” (Reid, 2019). Earlier the same year as the collaboration over the ballistic missile launch system was Turkey’s decision to go ahead with delivery of the S-400, the most advanced and sought-after Russian-made air defense system (Mehta, 2019).

American foreign policy since the election of President Trump in 2016 is a perplexing and chaotic mixture of bluster, bombast, brinkmanship, effusive praise (offers of blank checks and overflowing coffers) or vehement and unhinged vituperation (total annihilation by military strikes depending on the minute or day) of world leaders and powerful rivals of the U.S. state, foreign policy and state secrets via Twitter/tweet, and military strikes and military use abroad via uninformed and mercurial presidential fiat. However, relatively consistent throughout this mishmash has been the steady distancing of the United States from even the hint of closer ties with China and Russia, which are increasingly viewed as definite great power rivals (Lu, 2019).

By now, it should be clear who the closest great power competitors of the United States of America are, as is clear by the criteria which we already set forth. Both China and Russia have very clear military, national, and international policy and strategy documents setting forth one of their core state interests as political autonomy from the U.S.A. Both Russia and China’s membership within the BRICS

and their close bilateral ties with countries throughout South America, which also are clear in their intent to grow autonomy from the U.S., and particularly the ability to resist economic sanctions and political instability perpetrated by U.S. efforts to effect governmental/political change in targeted countries, and Russia and China's involvements and alliances within South America both considerably bolster those countries in Latin America that are working towards political autonomy from the traditional hegemon the U.S. in this goal.

The second point of our established criteria is that at least one state within a regional organization that desires autonomy from the U.S. and has some power to resist U.S. power on its own. Russia and China again definitely fulfill these last points in their BRICS membership as well as in their close ties to many countries within Latin America.

What has carried through from the dissipation of the Pink Tide has been the people power that has always been there and only awaiting the right stimulus. The stimulus has come in the oligarchic imposition of austerity for the poor. With the continuing and growing protests in Chile and past demonstrations and uprisings in Ecuador and Argentina (among other significant political-social movement events and countries), there is a visceral and mass fury against economic and political austerity/neoliberalism/hegemony imposed by the U.S. via its willing political subordinates and functionaries within top governmental positions. Chile's mass demonstrations of over a million people in one city have so far resulted in the rollback of all public transportation increases as well as a raft of planned new legislation in an attempt to appease the masses demands in the streets as well as

many of the president's cabinet being replaced. Additionally, in the wake of the mass uprisings and the accompanying brutality and atrocities committed by police and the military and over twenty-two people killed the demands have moved far beyond what has already been offered by the president and people are now organizing in local assemblies across the country to push for a Constitutional Assembly and re-founding of the country with the full participation of the citizenry (the current Constitution was written during the Pinochet dictatorship) and the resignation of the president (Cuffe, 2019).

And yet, with all the difficulties well known for over a century by policymakers, this idea still has intellectual and emotional traction and cache unlike few others within the Latin American imagination. Even outside of the very well-known "liberation" of much of South America from Spanish occupation through the actions of Simón Bolívar, there is also the example of Francisco Morazán a temporal and revolutionary peer of Bolívar. In the poetical description of Eduardo Galeano Francisco Morazán "fought" to unite the disparate and fractious countries of Central America (where the countries "alternately ignore and mistreat one another") into a "single republic" in which he turned "convents into schools and hospitals" over his eight years in power before his eventual overthrow by the "Church" and associated elites that set the stage for invasion by [North] American William Walker (Galeano, 2009: 204).

From Latin America's past to its future, the struggle towards autonomous regional integration continues. At the time of this writing there has been over a decade of "new forms of governance, economic restructuring, and social

mobilization...responding to and at times challenging the continuing hegemony” of the ‘neoliberal world order’ in stalwarts and regional leaders of the “New” Latin American Left like Venezuela and Bolivia.

Under past left-of-center of traditional regional hegemons like “Left-of-Center” Brazil and Argentina playing cautious and unlikely sometimes “anti-imperialist” allies and more often “herders” of Latin American opinion and diplomatic suasion/sway regionally, bilaterally, and internationally and usually regional mundane and reactionary recalcitrants such as Paraguay and Uruguay⁴⁵ both seeing relatively-speaking seismic shifts politically leftward and regionally closer to the rest of the “Pink Tide” (Goodale and Postero, 2013: 1; Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 2). In the current day, many of these Left political gains supporting regional political integration have been eroded or are in the process of being rolled back or otherwise stymied. However, the changes in government are always in flux, as can be seen in the recent elections in Argentina returning government the left-of-center after one term of the right-of-center oligarchy and developments in Chile still ongoing and unpredictable.

There have been massive shifts in economic and political investment by governments of the “Pink Tide” into improving what has been defined as “millennium development goals” or “sustainable development goals”⁴⁶ by the United Nations and away from previous neoliberal priorities “such as privatization, fiscal austerity, deregulation, free trade, and reductions in government spending in order to enhance

⁴⁵ The political changes/shifts in Paraguay and Uruguay have continued to wildly oscillate from the original time of this writing and so this general leftward shift is no longer evident.

⁴⁶ 2016. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. “Millennium Development Goals.” <http://bit.ly/2aiJY1B>.

the role of the private sector in the economy.”⁴⁷ Of course, as with so much else within this conclusion in many countries such as Argentina, Chile, and most notably Brazil conditions within these countries have changed radically as has the leaders elected in recent years that are in the process of rolling-back and attempting to destroy any of these hard-fought changes that sought to benefit the poor and middle-classes within these countries.

Throughout the post-Pink Tide and into the pre-Coronavirus pandemic, current-day social movements have been resurgent busy mobilizing a million or more people a day protesting “as the revolt of the dispossessed for a better world against the barbarism of neoliberalism” (Harris, 2019). The social movements of today in Latin America differ widely in everything from their counterparts in past years. Today’s social movements are innovating in their “demands, identities, repertoires, and profile of the participants,” they are “multi- and pluri-class movements” and they are increasingly transnational with an “alter- or anti-globalization vision” (Gohn, 2015: 361). Social movements may be defined in part as being, “*collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and distribution by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities* [original emphasis]” or “an organized and sustained effort of a collectivity of interrelated individuals, groups, and organizations, to promote or to resist social change with the use of public protest activities” (Goodhart, 2007: 2-3).

Latin American social movements cover the full spectrum of focuses and demands from land reform/farmland and food security for landless rural workers

⁴⁷ 2016. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. “Neoliberalism.” <http://bit.ly/2a22YD9>.

movement in Brazil, to upholding a given lifestyle or identity such as many national and transnational indigenous groups out of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, or environmentalism (Gohn, 2015: 362;364). New technology has allowed the creation of new virtual social movements such as a transnational coalition of rural organizations that exist without either physical headquarters or a high-profile organizing group (Gohn, 2015: 362). These new virtual social movements organizing via social media have been prevalent in all the recent large protest movements from Bolivia to Chile and Colombia.

From northern Mexico to southern Argentina, there has been ever-increasing popular participation from the 1990s to the present day in social movements throughout Latin America and transnationally (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3). These social movements have been very diverse including 2007 street marches in Costa Rica against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the white marches in El Salvador against health care privatization, and the black marches in Panama against pension system reform, along with the massive indigenous mobilizations in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3). In addition, there has been widespread mobilization against economic liberalization policies throughout the early 2000s in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3).

Social movements that organize and advocate for indigenous communities have been widespread in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Peru (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3). Organizations have included amongst their demands and foci “environmental[ism], feminist, gay/lesbian, and

consumer identities” as well as the traditional labor unions and rural sectors (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3). Most significantly for the thesis of my paper, the “mass mobilizations are also directly linked to the rise of several left-leaning governments in the region by converting street politics into successful electoral outcomes” (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 3).

Transnational/supranational social movements (TSM) may be affecting more than just their states (where the members of the TSM’s originate) policies or electoral outcomes but also sovereignty. According to Michael Goodhart, there are a “vast empirical literature documents how [TSM] can influence policy and constrain global governance...[and] promote norms of democracy and human rights...[that are] good thing[s] [that have] positive effects on global governance” but there is very little looking at TSM’s and sovereignty (whether the typical outside, inside or popular) and if Latin American TSM’s maybe making a new form of autonomy (Goodhart, 2007: 2-3, 6). If TSM’s can impact the autonomy of nation-states, one way might be by “counterbalanc[ing] the ‘state-like’ system of global governance made up of institutionalized regulatory arrangements (regimes) and less formalized norms, rules and procedures” (Goodhart, 2007: 4).

The idea of TSM’s creating a form of autonomy in addition to or rather than political elite led international organizations or the states they rule is very interesting and promising for future research. However, returning from the brief analysis of TSM’s potential for something other than unitary state-led or regional political autonomy, my research throughout this paper have continually returned to the centrality of state/political elite led counterhegemonic autonomy.

The results of my study appear to show that the vehicle of autonomous regional integration and security from United States domination will likely not be via autonomous Latin American regional organizations (at least not solely) but maybe with state-led region's relationships with alternate world powers such as China and Russia. One of the best opportunities for newly resurgent and strong Latin American regional organizations to show a united front and assert their capacity to chart an independent foreign, military, etc. policy versus the United States of America in the case of the bombing of one of their members by a neighboring country (the Colombian military bombing of Ecuador) or the proposed base deal between the United States and Ecuador what opposition, coordinated diplomacy, etc. was squandered as it was hidden from global and official view. The hidden and subdued nature of regional integration in this historical moment as evidenced by the statements from Latin American leaders attending regional summits and crisis meetings and at the time releasing only the most diplomatic and cautious public statements while prohibiting any media coverage of the actual negotiations. The only reason we now know that statements of these same leaders behind closed doors were vociferous and completely in agreement of the active role of the U.S. in fanning the flames of conflict and internecine divisions was that these hidden statements were revealed via leaked transcripts, documents, etc. years after the conclusion of events.

The B.R.I.C.S. and other similar amalgamations of developing countries allegedly demonstrating the counter-hegemonic potential and independent streaks from the reigning world imperial hegemon was another test case I studied. Still,

upon further investigation, the results were similarly contradictory and fractious. The agglomerated and hastily assembled nature of the B.R.I.C.S. is evident from its inception. Brazil, a regional hegemon like many of its co-member countries that make up the B.R.I.C.S. at first glance seem to be torn between resisting the U.S. as global hegemon by being a supporter/funder of many projects supporting the supposed political, energy, etc. independence of LATAM and the Caribbean from imperial hegemony through their founding of institutions and regional organizations with counterhegemonic purposes and actions at the same time actively propping up reactionary and oppressive groups such as the “peacekeeping” foreign forces acting within Haiti.

However, on second glance, this is perfectly logical for Brazil as all these seemingly countervailing actions simultaneously working with and against the U.S. hegemon together add up to the rising hegemonic aspirations of Brazil, and all have these interests and goals first and foremost from their founding to their implementation. Of course, with the Temer⁴⁸ government strongly supported by the entire Brazilian National Congress and some further write that Rousseff’s impeachment/removal from power was in fact, “not an isolated event: it was the result of a coordinated maneuver to overthrow the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers’ Party, PT) government—a plan carried out by the Brazilian mainstream media and the country’s political and economic elites, with aid from the judiciary,” all of this maneuvering by Brazil under the tenures of Lula and Rousseff is now seriously in question (Piva and Muscarella, 2017).

⁴⁸ As of this writing currently Jair Messias Bolsonaro government.

There is a significant “constituent resistance to [the] conservative wave” away from the Pink Tide shown by the growing and strengthening protests and other resistance within Brazil and throughout Latin America. However, even if these movements are successful in pressuring the levers of government to work against these reactionaries leading their often ill-gained positions of power these same governmental levers are still often held by those within the same institutions that approved of seriously questionable or outright illegal governmental actions against elected and popular leaders like Rousseff in Brazil or other countries, and not only complicit in these unconstitutional actions but also directly threatened by any actions they are pushed to take, making the outcomes oftentimes murky and grim (Piva and Muscarella, 2017).

News out of Latin American in recent years post-Pink Tide seems more of a dreary dystopia or a reminder of the unattainable dream of Bolivar. We have seen country after country fell to the overwhelming economic, military, and other resources wielded by an increasingly erratic and dangerous imperial hegemon and its latest iteration holding the reins of power. However, even during this darkness, if one looks hard enough, one can find silver linings in the most unexpected places. For instance, the presidential term of Donald J. Trump, while reactionary and regressive in most aspects, has been refreshing at least in removing any pretense and flowery words over foreign policy, the reasons for the United States military interventions, and presence around the world (Bennis, 2019). As Nelson Mandela has related, during his early revolutionary days under apartheid, mobilizing people is better when there is a clear enemy in power (Richman, 2013).

However, though silver linings may be found the current regime in power in Washington D.C. is certainly one of the worst in the historical record particularly for its peopling of the administration's functionaries as the worst of the worst in terms of war criminals and other bad actors, its support and cozying up to dictators abroad, and the brutality and virtually unrestricted use of the military (St. Clair, 2019).

With all of the tumult throughout the Latin American region and worldwide at this time, it is no surprise that regional integration is the farthest thing from most people's minds. Certainly, the past few years have seen the gradual dissolution, obscurity, or irrelevancy of most of the nominally counter-hegemonic organizations in Latin America that arose during the Pink Tide. The mass demonstrations and changes in government in Latin America that is mostly delayed reactions to ruinous neoliberalism imposed (or re-imposed) after the Pink Tide and the just-announced release from prison of Lula De Silva are more glimmers of light in the darkness.

My interest in Latin America and what would become my thesis began around the beginning of what would later be labeled the "Pink Tide" or the rise of left-of-center governments throughout Latin America (but particularly in South America) with the election of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela in 1998 who would become a firebrand and standard-bearer for this response to previous decades of austerity, dictatorship, and domination. During this time, I was going through and finishing my Bachelor's and this Master's. My political education had continued and took a dramatic turn only a year after the election of President Chavez during the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing of Kosovo, Serbia, and the surrounding areas during the "Kosovo War" as much of my family outside of my

immediate relatives lived in Serbia and were directly impacted by the bombing. Seeing and hearing the justifications for the bombing (unapproved by the United Nations Security Council), public reactions, media coverage, etc. compared to what my family was experiencing and coming at a formative period of my political education all primed me to very much doubt official media narratives and national government statements against what were deemed enemies of national geostrategic interests by U.S. politicians and would color my curiosity and learning of Latin America in subsequent years.

As news reports of political developments would trickle out of Latin America, I became more and more interested and excited about what was happening there. The real spur to my interest and my decision to major in International Studies in my Bachelor's and this Master's was the brief coup against President Chavez removing him as president on April 11, 2002, and reinstatement after mass protests against the coup agents and for President Chavez on April 14, 2002.

As I learned and digested more about the complicated history of Latin America I became aware of how Latin America was underdeveloped economically, politically, etc. due to the manipulation and domination of world powers such as the United States of America, Britain, etc. at least since Latin America's liberation from the control of Spain during the early 1800's.

As I learned more about the region, including educational trips to Venezuela and Bolivia in the early 2000's, I became much more interested in how Latin America was addressing the accumulated underdevelopment and what could be done in the future in this regard. All of this was already in mind when I found out about the

regional organizations of Latin America and how countries mostly in South America were organizing and coordinating to further and faster push the development of the region independent of the interests and desires of the great global powers.

I started to look for examples of political autonomy and subordination in South America. Were there instances in the history of regional political sovereignty and independence from the historic sway of the United States? Could regional organizations or some other sources facilitate and engineer South American elites' search for regional autonomy and solidarity as an alternative to Washington's Consensus agenda or more broadly subservience to hegemony? Working through regional organizations and bloc politics could member states collectively stand against the great powers and simultaneously fuel their development?

I sought to arrive at conclusions by studying the United States and South American international relations and dynamics (e.g., perceived U.S. international allies and enemies and influence of these allies-enemies in the region whether real or perceived), and U.S. support and policymaking towards Latin America (e.g. "Plan Colombia," "counter-terrorism," etc.). I learned that Latin Americans had been desiring and working towards fighting their subservient position to the United States of America and the political and socio-economic integration of their region since the beginning of the area independent of foreign military occupation.

The results of my study have underlined the state-led nature of regional integration in Latin America and the importance of great powers outside of the U.S. orbit, such as Russia and China, in keeping Latin America afloat and gradually further from U.S. domination. At the same time, the significance and power of

people when united, awake, and active no matter the other forces arrayed against them, cannot be denied.

“Every day, I feel greater strength in this project. I see that new leaders are arising. And the day will come when they will not see me any longer because I am not indispensable. There are those who say that if I disappear, this whole project would crumble. But that is not true.”

President Hugo Chavez

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