

NATIONAL IDEOLOGY IN THE LAND OF CAUDILLOS:
UNDERSTANDING COLOMBIAN - VENEZUELAN RELATIONS

BY

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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I still remember when Doctor Forsyth, my Strategy and Coercion professor at the School of Advance Air and Space Studies (SAASS), stated: “Ideas don’t matter. States only care about power and survival.” His words, spoken facetiously, fueled my desire to find out the role ideology plays in state behavior. I did not know what I was getting into and surely this thesis has, at times, taken a life of its own. Nonetheless, this study has afforded me the opportunity to do the two things I enjoy the most in my professional life; to strategize and to theorize. While any errors are mine alone, it is only fitting that I express my most sincere thanks to those who made this journey possible.

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I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, “Tita”. Your body left, but your spirit remained.

Finally, to the One who truly rules my life, my big brother and Lord, Jesus Christ. You are always in control.

ABSTRACT

Does ideology matter in international relations? Throughout history, states have used ideological rationales to justify war, appeal for cooperation, or promote peace. Despite the importance ideology plays in the fields of psychology, political science, sociology, history, anthropology, and philosophy, theorists in these areas have failed to produce a generally acceptable definition of the term. Furthermore, conventional wisdom in international politics either overemphasizes or underestimates the role of ideology in state behavior. Thus we are left with a concept that historically has been difficult to articulate in spite of the myriad effects it is claimed to have produced. Despite their common ancestry, Latin American countries display a myriad of ideologies, values, and beliefs; some of which can often prompt conflict among its states. This examination advances the argument that ideology can play a strong role in the behavior of states and can also help explain differences in their policy decisions. Colombia and Venezuela offer a perfect opportunity to test this assertion. However, it is the author's contention, that while ideology does influence political decision making, it does not determine it. Only a close examination of context and background distilled from close historical observation can help discern the true role of ideology in the behavior of the countries in question. In this vein, the author defines the concept of national ideology as composed of three interconnected components: social, political, and philosophical. From here, the author examines how the most predominant theories of international politics explain the role of ideology in the context of Colombia and Venezuela. Then, he offers a journey through the often intertwined history of these two countries in an effort to define their respective national ideologies, culminating with an explanation of how they have shaped their contemporary relations. The end result is not a new theory of international politics but rather, a framework for understanding the role that national ideology plays in state behavior.

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Introduction

“Ideology must be recognized as an integral part in world politics.”

- Alan Cassels

Throughout history, states have used ideology as justification for their behavior, whether it be to advocate warfare (e.g. The Peloponnesian Wars, the Crusades and World War II), appeal for cooperation (e.g. NATO and the OAS), or promote peace (e.g. United Nations). Thus, while we know that ideology plays an important role in the relationship among states, several questions remain. First, how much does ideology matter in international relations? Second, what specific role or roles does it play in explaining state behavior? Third, is ideology constructed or is it pre-determined by autonomous elements inherent in nation-states? Lastly, how does it affect political decision making?

My contention is that ideology can play a strong role in the behavior of states. It can also help explain differences in their policy decisions. Ideology can be constructed by political leaders in order to rally support to a particular cause, but can also be determined by conditions emanating from the past. However, national ideology writ large can only inform state behavior. It cannot compel the state to take a specific action. Thus, I cannot claim primacy of the concept of national ideology as the sole and primary motivator in state behavior. There are, as we shall see, a myriad of elements that conspire to affect the policies and decisions of political leaders. Nonetheless, I can make a strong case that the concepts expressed herein serve as a good framework with which to analyze the relations between states, affording this study relevance, practicality, and most importantly, significant explanatory power.

Despite the importance of the concept of ideology among the social sciences, theorists have failed to produce a generally acceptable definition of the term. Thus we are left with a concept that historically has been difficult to articulate in spite of the myriad effects it is claimed to have produced. As such, attempting to explain the role of ideology in state behavior is indeed difficult. Ideology is an abstract concept for which there is little material evidence with which to conduct experimentation and analysis. One cannot just compare and contrast the divergent political ideologies of states and attempt

to distill from them causes for conflict. The effect of ideology in international relations while important is often subtle.

Ideology is also very much a normative concept. For example, one subscribes to an ideology on the basis of what one believes things “ought” to be. In this examination, I seek to explain state behavior using a concept of ideology that is not normative. In other words, I employ the concept of ideology in terms of how things “are” not how they “should be.” To do this, I define ideology in terms of its function in state behavior. Thus national ideology is conceptualized as that element of state behavior which *identifies*, *unites*, and *guides* individuals, organizations, and governments of each respective nation-state towards predetermined goals. Defining the concept based on its function allows for a more evenly accepted application and most importantly, objective observation and analysis.

In examining the behavior of nation-states, I have chosen to ground my work on ideology in the context of international relations (IR) theory. By and large, the study of ideology is often relegated to the discipline of sociology which, despite its contribution to the role and impact of human social activity, does not pay particular attention to the concept of ideology at the nation-state level. The field of psychology also devotes effort and provides a good deal of explanation on the concept of ideology. Unfortunately, it tends to do so in the context of individuals and personal relations. Organizational theory, on the other hand, provides a useful framework with which to analyze how government and non-government organizations adapt, change, and cope with situations in the security, social, and economic environment and how these can help shape the decision making of political leaders. Admittedly, the nation-state is composed of a collection of individuals and organizations. Some are indeed more influential than others. Nonetheless, individually, these are not sufficient to bring about the actions that determine the course of a nation-state’s history. Political leaders come and go. Organizations change. Given that the nation-state is considered the primary actor in international politics and that it is composed of both individuals and organizations, sociology, psychology, and organizational theory represent narrow approaches in the attempt to explain the role of ideology among nation-states.

Grounding the discussion in the context of IR theory is not without its setbacks as well. Traditionally, IR theory has lacked a proper consideration for the role of ideology in international politics, largely due to the levels of emphasis adjudicated by the three predominant schools of international relations: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. In general terms, realism focuses on state power, typically power in relation to other states. Liberalism stresses the emphasis on cooperation, absolute gains, and economic interdependence. Constructivism highlights the influence of shared values and beliefs and claims that state interests are constructed by society and context. Thus, while these theories offer useful frameworks with which to observe international relations, conventional wisdom in international politics either overemphasizes or underestimates the role of ideology in state behavior. Therefore, another contribution of this thesis is to help properly identify the place of ideology within the scope of theories of international politics.

Why Colombia and Venezuela?

In support of my central contention that ideology plays a significant role in explaining state behavior, I focus on the relationship between Colombia and Venezuela. There are three main reasons for doing so. The first simply involves the salience of the region vis-à-vis US interests. The containment of illegal groups, drugs, and terrorism in and from Latin America is vital to the United States and represents an immediate interest for the United States. Additionally, in the long term, as the United States starts to move towards alternate sources of energy, access to Latin American resources is likely to make security, economic, and diplomatic cooperation even more important. Will the United States find fertile ground in Latin America when the need arises or will it find arid terrain with little to no chance of growth? Geographic proximity, economic interdependence, and shared security concerns mean the United States' future is irrevocably linked to that of its neighbors to the south. Understanding how ideology shapes their behavior will provide a key insight into the future of this region. Second, the role ideology plays in the behavior of states has not previously been applied to cases involving countries of similar national identities, but with diverging interests and political philosophies. Consequently, the discussion of these two states helps to isolate the impact of ideology. Third, despite a

shared historical background not other two countries in the region provide more divergent political ideologies, economic basis, and military structures. As such, the presence of these three factors creates a strong rationale for studying the dynamics between these two countries.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis will use Venezuela and Colombia as case studies with the purpose of explaining the impact of ideological differences in the relations between these states. Chapter one will produce a working definition of national ideology based on the identification of three major elements important in understanding the term, namely, the social, political, and philosophical components of national ideology. Chapter two will evaluate the most influential theories of international politics in light of the concept of national ideology as defined in chapter one. Chapter three will offer a journey through the often intertwined history of these two countries in an effort to determine the internal and external forces that define their respective national ideologies. Lastly, chapter four will address Colombian and Venezuelan contemporary relations and how their national ideologies have informed their leaders' policy decisions. The conclusion will highlight the salient propositions of the study, underscore the pertinent implications, and offer ideas for further research.

A Few Caveats

It must be clear from the outset that the intent of this exercise is not to formulate a new theory of international relations but rather, to use the range of theories of international relations to help explain the relationship between two divergent states, in particular, the role that ideology plays in this relationship. The propositions expressed in this study may or may not help explain the role of ideology within other contexts, for example, the role of religion in state behavior; a topic of considerable interest in the contemporary security environment. That is not to say that some of the propositions hereby expressed cannot be useful in explaining other states' relations. This, however, is something for future researchers to determine. Furthermore, this thesis does not intend to determine the efficacy of a state's use of ideology to garner public and international

support. The attempt here is to determine, first, to what extent ideology plays any factor in Colombian and Venezuelan domestic and foreign policies and second, determine some of the ways in which it does. Lastly, this study does not look at the relationship between states and non-state actors. My initial impression is that states will express similar behaviors as if they were responding to another state's actions. In other words, nation-states can assume cooperative, antagonist, and coercive stances towards powerful non-state actors. How would a nation-state attempt to carry out these policies is outside of the scope of this thesis, although I suspect ideology would play a similar role in such cases. Furthermore, as expressed in chapter two security and prosperity are the top priorities of the state, which involves the protection of the state's territorial expanse. Where states differ in behavior is in the means by which they attempt to secure these priorities. Non-state actors, by definition, do not claim a particular territory. Consequently, conflict between state and non-state actors is likely to be limited to social or ideological differences.

As alluded to earlier, the concept of ideology in the context of state behavior is a slippery one. Before contemplating any analysis of this concept at a national and international level, one must first come to terms with what the concept actually means. This will serve as the starting point to a meaningful study, one that will account for an evenly accepted application and most importantly, objective observation and analysis. Our first task, then, is to formulate a working definition for the concept of national ideology writ large.

Chapter 1

The Components of National Ideology

*“We do not know what we want if we do not know who we are.
This insight holds for foreign policy as much as it does for
personal preferences.”*

- Glenn Chafetz

Ideology can play a strong role in the behavior of states and can therefore help explain differences in the policy decisions of states. While the weight of this influence depends strongly on context, I offer that ideology has historically played a crucial factor in Colombia and Venezuela's behavior. However, in examining the role ideology plays in state behavior, it is essential to bring a degree of meaning to such an abstract concept. First, ideology has no physical condition. One cannot observe it in the way one would observe an individual, an object, or an organization. Second, ideology is subject to human interpretation. It can mean different things to different people, even for those who profess to have similar ideologies. Lastly, despite the importance of the concept of ideology in the social sciences, theorists have failed to produce a generally acceptable definition of the term.¹ At the most basic level, we can define ideology as a common set of ideals and beliefs maintained by individuals or shared by groups of individuals. But this definition seems too narrow when attempting to explain the role of ideology in the context of nation-states. Thus we are left with a concept that historically has been difficult to articulate in spite of the myriad effects it is claimed to have produced. The purpose of this chapter is to produce a working definition of national ideology. This definition focuses on the identification of three components important in understanding the term, namely, the social, political, and philosophical components.

The first component relevant to a definition of ideology is the social one. The social dimension is informed by a state's national identity and territoriality as represented by the set of values, ideas, culture, race, ethnicity, history, language, and religion that characterize a group of individuals in addition to the physical demarcations of the state that contains them. The social dimension then is composed of those elements which

¹ Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, (NY, The Free Press, 1976), 13.

make each nation unique. In other words, it *identifies* the members of a nation state and influences the perceptions of its decision makers. The second component that characterizes ideology is political in nature. As such, it is related to national interests in the sense that they are the expression of the desires of the peoples of a state in the political realm. Peace, prosperity, and security are generally accepted national interests for most states. These set of interests *unite* the peoples of a nation-state in a common set of desired outcomes. The political dimension is often expressed by the government in terms of a political philosophy, (e.g. democracy, Marxism, or socialism), which serves as the third component of ideology. This component *guides* the decisions of the political leaders by establishing a set of political and economic norms or rules that define the expressed political philosophy.

In short, the social component determines *who the state is*; the political component is determined by *what a state wants*, with the political philosophy component influencing *how a state achieves its goals*. These three components influence, but do not individually determine, decision making and state behavior. Instead, they interact with each other creating an interdependence that when observed in combination, represent a state's *National Ideology*. We can then use the concept of national ideology as an independent variable with which to explain the behavior of both Colombia and Venezuela. However, in order to produce a working definition of the concept of national ideology, we must first tackle each of its components separately. What follows is a more detailed discussion of each one of these components and their relation to national ideology writ large.

The Social Component of National Ideology

The social component of a state's *national ideology* is twofold in nature. First, it is represented by the general characterization the peoples of a nation have of themselves based on their common history, culture, language, ethnic origin, economy, and common practices. This implies a sense of community, with the member of the community sharing a "single code of rights and duties."² This sense of community denotes some sort of territoriality, which forms the second element. In other words, this is the social space

² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (NV, University of Nevada Press, 1991), 9.

or territory, along with its natural resources, with which the members identify and for which they feel a sense of belonging. Together, these two elements define the concept of a nation-state and represent its national identity. We can then say that one of the functions of national identity is to *identify* its members based on a shared community and territory. It defines *who the state is*.

An important distinction is in order. The terms state, and nation are often used interchangeably, however, there is a difference. A state or country is a self-governing political entity. It is comprised of geographical demarcations and legal boundaries that define a state's jurisdiction. Nations, on the other hand, are culturally homogeneous groups of people that share a common language, institutions, religion, ideologies, ethnic origins, and historical experience.³ In other words, nations are groups of individuals united by a common identity. There is no direct correlation between a state and a nation. For example, there are some states which have two nations, such as Canada and Belgium. On the other hand, there are nations without states as is the case with the Kurds residing in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other countries of the world. A nation-state is a nation which has the same borders as a state. A main assumption in this study is that the prevalent perception is that international relations are the result of the interactions and relationships of nation-states. As such, the term national identity is only used in reference to those states sharing community and territoriality. Contemporary Colombia and Venezuela fit this description. This was not always the case, however.

Both of these countries used to share a common community and territoriality. Following the wars of independence and under the guidance of Simon Bolivar, the territories of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama were united into what was then called Gran Colombia.⁴ As such, from the drafting of Gran Colombia's constitution in 1821 to 1830 when Venezuela and Ecuador separated from Gran

³ This historical experience can include the interactions with and legacies inherited from other nation-states. For example, as we shall see in chapter three, both Colombian and Venezuelan national identities are deeply influenced by the Iberian culture. The Spanish language and Catholic religion are clear manifestations of these states' cultural origins. Yet, both Colombia and Venezuela are distinct states because their identities are shaped by more than just a shared Colonial past.

⁴ Panamá was in fact a territory of contemporary Colombia until 1903. Chapter three will come back to this point in detail. Reference: Richard A. Haggerty, ed., "Venezuela: A Country Study", (Washington, Government Printing Office for the Library of Congress, 1990), <http://countrystudies.us/venezuela>, accessed 17 March, 2010.

Colombia and became sovereign countries, this federation proclaimed a common national identity; it was in fact a nation-state. As a result of the division of territoriality among the members of Gran Colombia, the independent members no longer claimed a common national identity, despite the commonalities in culture, language, history, and ethnic background. In other words, to be Colombian is not the same as being Venezuelan. Both countries struggled for many years in their attempts to define their respective national identities, a point I will return to in chapter three. Figure 1 depicts the social aspect of national ideology along with its main components.



Figure 1: The Social Component of National Ideology

Source: Author's Original Work

How a nation-state defines its national identity has a profound impact on state behavior. “Identity is about sameness, about identifying with those considered similar, it is also about difference, distinguishing oneself from those who are dissimilar.”⁵ This process of categorization is inherently divisive, separating “us” from “them”. At the national level, this process of categorization influences how rights are allocated and what (or whose) priorities are satisfied. When national identity is defined by a social group to the exclusion of other social groups, it is the rights and priorities of the defining group which get satisfied. This creates discontent among those whose rights were disregarded and opens up the possibility of internal conflict and violence. Such is the case with Colombia where elitism, combined with ideological differences between the two main

⁵ Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, *Nationalism: A critical Introduction*, (London, Sage Publications, 2002), 58.

political elites, served as crucial factors in the country's violent history from its independence to contemporary times.

Conversely, this differentiation can also become an instrument that promotes the emergence of alternative identities. "The imposition from outside [...] may, in situations of [...] power differences, come to be worn as badges of pride."⁶ National liberation movements in Latin America and in Colombia and Venezuela in particular, have often brought together different groups under the banner of emancipation. More recently, Hugo Chavez's proclamation of a new brand of socialism for the twenty-first century and a Bolivarian economic alternative to capitalism depict a move towards the formulation of a new national identity. This underscores an important fact. While some elements of a state's national ideology are determined by conditions emanating from the past; others can be constructed by political leaders in order to rally support to a particular cause.

National identity also denotes the existence of civic institutions responsible for securing the legal rights and duties of all members. The legitimization of common legal rights and duties of legal institutions that define the specific values and character of the nation is one of the most salient functions of national identity. Indeed, "the appeal to national identity has become the main legitimization for social order and solidarity today."⁷ In short, this implies the legitimization of government, or a specific group of people who occupy the institutions of the state and create the laws the people, including themselves, are required to follow. As it pertains to national identity, the government of a nation-state is a characterization of national identity in that it represents the values, beliefs, culture, and ethnicity of the nation and secures the territorial integrity and natural resources of the state. As alluded to earlier, conflict and violence ensue when the government of a nation-state is not representative of the individuals contained within its borders.

To this point, we have seen how the national identity of a nation-state is determined by the interplay of the elements of community and territoriality. In other words, the social component of a national ideology *identifies* the members of a nation-state based on a shared set of social traits and location. However, nation-states do not

⁶ Spencer and Wollman, *Nationalism: A critical Introduction*, 60.

⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (NV, University of Nevada Press, 1991), 16.

exist in a vacuum. There is always an interaction between the individuals of the state as well as between the states. Who the state is informs what the state wants. This denotes the existence and expression of desires, needs, and wants which, at the national level, are called national interests. The manifestation of these national interests is the representation of the political component of national ideology.

The Political Component of National Ideology

National interests are often referred to by the French term *raison d'état* and represent a country's goals and ambitions whether political, economic, military, or cultural. National interests are also composed of two elements: *permanent* and *variable*. The first represents the connection with the social aspect of national ideology, that is, the “ultimate foreign policy objectives”⁸ They are the expression of the desires of the peoples of a state in the political realm. In this context, the permanent interest of all nation-states is to ensure their security and prosperity. The second one is influenced by the specific government or political elite. They are subject to interpretation and change as the government itself changes. They are, in fact, variable. Thus, we can say that the political component of a national ideology is the nexus between the social component and the philosophical component.

There is a relationship between national identity and national interests. As Huntington offers, “National interests derive from national identity. We need to know who we are before we can know what our interests are.”⁹ National ideology helps states determine who they are so that they can define what they want. A state that has defined its national identity will be prone to protect that which makes it unique from other states. Culture, history, and language for example, become part of a nation-state's patrimony, something to cherish and protect. The same goes for the territorial expanse of the state which includes the natural resources contain therein. It ‘belongs’ to the members of the state. It is the cradle of the states’ ancient past, the “repository of historic memories and

⁸ Scott Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, (NY, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges of America's National Identity*, (NY, Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 10.

associations.”¹⁰ As such, the state’s resources become exclusive to the people and not for alien exploitation. Protecting that which makes the state unique becomes a permanent interest of the nation-state and binds its people to this common goal.

Thus, the primary interest of the nation-state is to guarantee its own security and survival. As we shall see in chapter two, the concept of national interest is often associated by realist theorists to differentiate their views from those ‘idealist’ ones argued by liberalist theorists. In his seminal work *Politics Among Nations*, Hans J. Morgenthau claims that “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power [...] power is always the immediate aim.”¹¹ Morgenthau defines the concept of national interest in terms of power. Power is indeed a crucial element to the attainment of national interests but it is not an end in itself. As Kenneth Waltz offers, “Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquility, profit and power.”¹² It follows that power and wealth are but means to the end of national security and survival. This is the *permanent* national interest of all nation-states.

Beyond permanent national interests exists more transient, variable interests. Political leaders often state a particular domestic or foreign policy, economic structure, or military force development to be ‘in the nation’s best interest.’ These, however, tend to change based upon current leadership. As an example, consider Colombian president Andrés Pastrana’s original version of Plan Colombia (Plan for Colombia’s Peace). Pastrana’s idea first proposed something akin to a Marshal Plan for Colombia that did not focus on drug trafficking, military aid, or fumigation but rather, favored manual eradication as a better alternative.¹³ Thus, Plan Colombia served as an indicator of the state’s national interest. In contrast, Colombian president Álvaro Uribe’s policy of Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security) called for a strengthening of the military forces and institutions with the purpose of weakening illegal narco-terrorists groups.¹⁴ The policy of Seguridad Democrática was far from military alone. Indeed, it called for a strengthening of the rule of law and the economic basis of the country. President Uribe

¹⁰ Smith, *National Identity*, 9.

¹¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (NY, Borzoi Books, 1954), 25.

¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (MA, McGraw Hill, 1979), 126.

¹³ Andrés Pastrana and Camilo Gómez, *La Palabra Bajo Fuego*, (Bogota, Editorial Planeta Colombiana S.A., 2005), pp. 48-51.

¹⁴ *The Uribe Administration’s Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, Embassy of Colombia, Wash DC, <http://www.colombiaemb.org/>, accessed 2 March, 2009.

argued that an over emphasis in military development was “rightist, bad, militaristic... as long as you have no need to develop security programs. As long as you don’t have to deal with kidnapping. As long as drug trafficking and terrorist groups do not keep the state in checkmate.” Conversely, when these phenomena are present “governments can either exercise their authority, or sink their people into anarchy.”¹⁵ Variable national interests as seen in these two examples can be political, military, economic, or cultural in nature, with the key characteristic being the potential of these interests to change. As such, these types of interests stand in contrast to the permanent ones mentioned above. For further clarification, figure 2 depicts the political aspect of national ideology along with its main components.

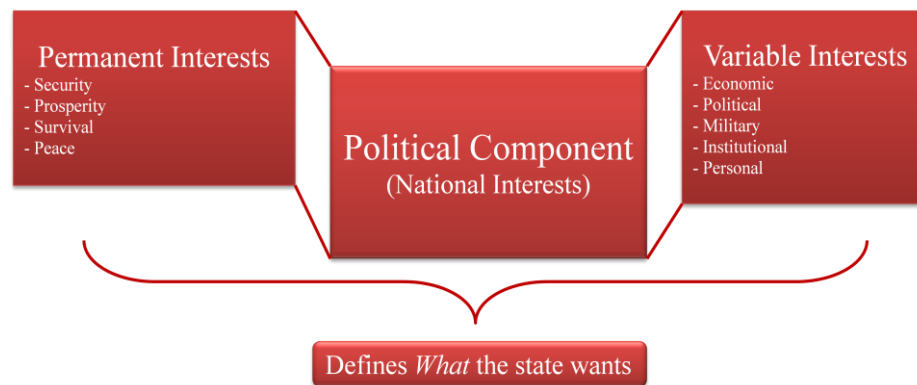


Figure 2. The Political Component of National Ideology

Source: Author's Original Work

The international community also adds another level of consideration to a state’s variable interests. Pressure from other states or international institutions can influence the variable interests espoused by the political leadership. Pastrana’s policy, for example, was surely influenced by the need to secure US financial support as well as that of other countries and international organizations. It was also motivated by the need to patch up bilateral relations that had heavily deteriorated during the administration of President Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) and his alleged association with drug cartels.¹⁶ Similarly,

¹⁵ Álvaro Uribe Vélez, *Common Sense Latin America: Neither Neoliberalism nor Statism; Neither Right or Left*, (Office of the Press Secretary of the Republic of Colombia, March 2007), 14.

¹⁶ Pastrana and Gómez, *La Palabra Bajo Fuego*, 206.

President Uribe has continuously reiterated Colombia's commitment to improve its human rights and International Humanitarian Law records, following the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR) 2009 report on Colombia.¹⁷ The UNHCHR's office in Bogota praised Colombia's progress in overcoming human rights abuses but cautioned that "there is still much to be done."¹⁸ The condition under which the United States offers assistance to Colombia is another example. In 1997 the US Congress approved an Amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act which banned the United States from giving anti-narcotics aid to any foreign military unit whose members have violated human rights. The requirements imposed by the Leahy Law on US aid to Colombia add yet another level of consideration to President Uribe's decision making process and make improving the armed forces' human rights record a vital interest of the state.¹⁹

This is not to say that Colombia's emphasis in improving its human rights records was solely motivated by external influence. The improvement of Colombia's human rights records had been clearly in President Uribe's security agenda all along. Even prior to the United Nation's report, then Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos had already announced, via his Ministry of Defense Directive 208, fifteen "measures" to improve the Armed Forces' human rights performance and eliminate extrajudicial killings. Nonetheless, external forces clearly have an impact on state behavior, a matter we shall return to in chapter three. The important point here is that these examples underscore not only the difference between *permanent* and *variable* interests, but also that *variable* interests are motivated by both internal and external factors. While the *permanent* interest of the states (survival) is the same, *variable* interests change depending on who is in office, what political party is in power, or the level of influence

¹⁷ On 10 December 2008, Colombia voluntarily submitted to a periodic universal assessment on human rights from United Nations Human Rights Council. Following a comprehensive human rights analysis of all governmental institutions, the government of Colombia voluntarily committed to 69 specific recommendations, established an Internet website to enable the public dissemination of the assessment's results, and committed to a public report every four months on the progress of these recommendations. See: *Consideraciones del Estado Colombiano sobre el Informe de la Alta Comisionada de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos correspondiente a 2008*, Embassy of Colombia, Wash. DC, <http://www.colombiaemb.org/>, accessed 2 March, 2009.

¹⁸ Juan Peña, (United Nations High Commission on Human Rights office, Bogota), interview by the author, 17 March 2009.

¹⁹ The Amendment was called the Leahy Provision or Leahy Law after Senator Patrick Leahy, who proposed it.

of the other parties within an international organization. Nonetheless, whether determined by history, culture, or ethnicity or constructed by the political leadership, national interests represent *what the state wants*.

The political component of a state's national ideology refers to the expression of national desires in the form of goals and ambitions, whether economic, political, military, or cultural and is expressed in the form of national interests. They tend to be universally accepted in the sense that most individuals and decision makers, regardless of political philosophy, accept them as legitimate goals of the state. The defining feature of the political aspect is that it *unites* the efforts of the state towards predetermined goals.

In the preceding sections I have argued that the state needs to define its national identity before it can determine its national interests. I have offered that the primary interest of the state is that of securing its own survival. This is a states' *permanent* interest; the one all states strive for. It represents the link between the social and the political aspects of national ideology. Conversely, states also have *variable* interests. These change from one administration or regime to another and are more susceptible, though not always, to external pressures from other states, non-state actors, or international organizations. Variable interests are the link between the political aspect of national ideology and the philosophical aspect. Governments resort to political philosophies to delineate how best to achieve the states national goals.

The Philosophical Component of National Ideology

How political leaders determine the best way to achieve the nation's goals is expressed in terms of a particular political philosophy. They refer to a general view, specific ethic, political belief or attitude about politics that does not pertain to the technical discipline of philosophy. Political philosophies concern political parties as the organizations that exist with the purpose of attaining and maintaining political power within government. Political parties often espouse an expressed ideology or vision and tend to express these ideas on a written platform with specific goals and with the intent of rallying popular support. They tend to promote their core ideas through educational outreach or protest actions. Members of political parties are usually, though not always, elected via an electoral process. Regardless of how political leaders reach power, the

expression of their national-level political intentions are always manifested in terms of *domestic* and *foreign* policies. These in turn are concerned with the range of economic, political, security, and legal actions available and necessary to ensure national interests. In short, the philosophical component of national ideology explains *how* the state achieves its goals. In doing so, political philosophies *guide* a state to actions commensurate with their expressed philosophy.

National interests are sometimes expressed by the government in terms of a political philosophy as the Colombia-Venezuela example suggests. In Colombia, it is expressed in the form of liberal democracy and an emphasis on a trade economy as the means to revive the country following more than 40 years of internal violence. Conversely, and despite a history of democratic governance, contemporary Venezuela's Hugo Chavez links the very survival and existence of the nation-state to the continuation of a socialist political philosophy that counters the influence of the "American Empire." This highlights the fact that the interaction between the components of national ideology is not always clear cut. It is not uncommon for a political leader to link his administration's philosophy to a national interest. If done successfully, the result is the perpetuation of his specific philosophy (and in the cases of Venezuela, of Chavez himself) as the *de facto* mechanism to achieve national objectives. In short, this leads to attempts at making a *variable* interest appear as a *permanent* one, a not uncommon tactic among populist leaders.

However, as I alluded to earlier, a state's social component of national ideology denotes the existence of civic institutions responsible for securing the legal rights and duties of all members. In that vein, when government institutions are sufficiently strong and enjoy relative authority and legitimacy, it is harder for political leaders to justify their continuing administrations. Such was the case with President Uribe in Colombia who, despite overwhelming popular and domestic political support, was not allowed to run for a third presidential term by the Colombian Constitutional Court.²⁰

²⁰ The Colombian Constitutional court voted 7-2 against a proposal backed by parliament to hold a vote on amending the constitution to allow for three terms. President Uribe won an amendment in 2005 that let him run for a second term in 2006. Reference: Reuters, "Colombia Court Blocks President's Bid for Third Term", The New York Times, 26 February 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/world/americas/27colombia.htm>, accessed 20 Feb 2010.

Political philosophies are espoused in two distinct areas: *domestic* and *foreign*. As such, political leaders express their philosophy in terms of domestic or foreign policies that address social, economic, security or legal concerns. Domestic policies are the set of laws and regulations that the government establishes within a nation's borders. This can include a wide range of areas such as business, education, energy, health care, law enforcement, taxes, and social welfare. In contrast, a state's foreign policies are those by which a state interacts with other nations and attempt to influence them. Foreign policies are the official postures of a state towards other states and serve as their guidance for economic, military, and diplomatic cooperation with other states.

There is an interactive relationship between domestic and foreign policies, especially in the contemporary globalized world. For example, the success of the domestic security policies adopted by President Pastrana (Plan Colombia) and his successor Álvaro Uribe (Seguridad Democrática) have influenced the increase of foreign direct investment in the country, which, in turn, has opened the possibility of international trade agreements with various countries. Figure 3 depicts the philosophical aspect of national ideology along with its main components.

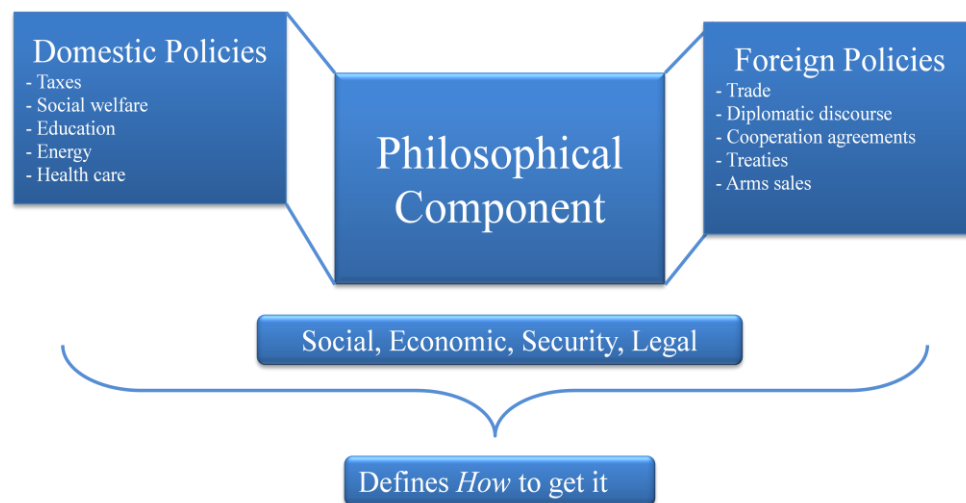


Figure 3. The Philosophical Component of National Ideology

Source: Author's Original Work

In addition, political ideologies contain certain ideas on what it considers to be the best form of government (e.g. democracy, theocracy, etc) and the best economic system

(e.g. capitalism, socialism, etc). Sometimes the same word is used to identify both the form of government and its corresponding economic system. For instance, the term socialism is often used to refer to a type of government displaying socialist economic tendencies. Similarly, the term democracy is typically associated with capitalism. However, this is not always the case. Venezuela's twenty first century socialism, a term coined by Heinz Dieterich in 1996, is a good example. According to Dieterich, neither "industrial capitalism" nor "real socialism" have managed "to solve the urgent problems of humanity, like poverty, hunger, exploitation, economic oppression, sexism, racism, the destruction of natural resources, and the absence of a real participatory democracy."²¹ Dieterich suggests the construction of "four basic institutions within the new reality of [a] post-capitalist civilization"; all of which revolve around an "equivalence economy [...] based on Marxian labour theory of value and which is democratically determined."²² Twenty first century socialism is neither capitalism nor "old" socialism, but this does not invalidate the acceptance of certain democratic traits. I will return to this topic in chapter three. For now, it is sufficient to underscore that the economic system and the state's form of government largely determine how both domestic and foreign policies are formed and implemented.

In short, the philosophical component is the national leader's vision on *how* to best achieve national interests. They frame the courses of action available to decision makers. In turn, these are strongly linked to the form of government and economic system of the state. Political philosophies influence the panoply of domestic and foreign policies of all nation-states. Furthermore, regardless of the administration or regime in power, political philosophies *guide* the actions of government in that, in general, it will not enact domestic and foreign policies contrary to its expressed philosophy without paying a political price. Again, governments resort to political philosophies to delineate *how* best to achieve the state's national goals, creating the third and last component of what I call *National Ideology*.

²¹ Chile Hoy Tv, interview with Heinz Dieterich, 10 March 2007, <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=57133>, accessed 9 February 2009.

²² Dieterich, interview.

What is National Ideology?

We can now produce a working definition of the concept of national ideology taking into consideration the relationship between its three components: social, political, and philosophical. At the nation-state level, ideology is the result of how the collective answers the questions *who are we?*, *what do we want?*, and *how do we get it?*. The first emanates from the social aspect of the nation, that is, how the peoples of a state define their national identity. It identifies individuals as members of the state. The second resides within the political dimension, is framed within the desire for security and prosperity, and expressed in the form of national interests. In this sense, ideology serves as the unifying element between the members of a state and helps direct individual, organizational, and governmental efforts to common goals. The national government, whether by popular desire or by authoritarian rule, sets the direction the state is to take to achieve its national interests by claiming a political philosophy as the path to follow to reach their goals. As I alluded to earlier, national ideology is the combination of the social, political, and philosophical components. Thus, national ideology is that element of state behavior which *identifies*, *unites*, and *guides* individuals, organizations, and governments of each respective nation-state towards predetermined goals.

The reader will note that this definition is based on what national ideology *does*, that is, its function with regard to state behavior. This is an important distinction. The main purpose of this thesis is to observe the *role* of ideology in the behavior of states, in other words, what ideology *does* or *how it affects* state behavior. As mentioned earlier, ideology can mean different things to different people. Ideology in general is very much a normative concept in that one subscribes to an ideology on the basis of what one believes things “ought to be”. I am attempting to explain state behavior using a concept of national ideology that is not normative. In other words, ideology in terms of how things “are”, not how they “should be.” Defining the concept based on its function allows for a more evenly accepted application and most importantly, objective observation and analysis. Figure 4 depicts the national ideology framework along with all its components: social, political, and philosophical.

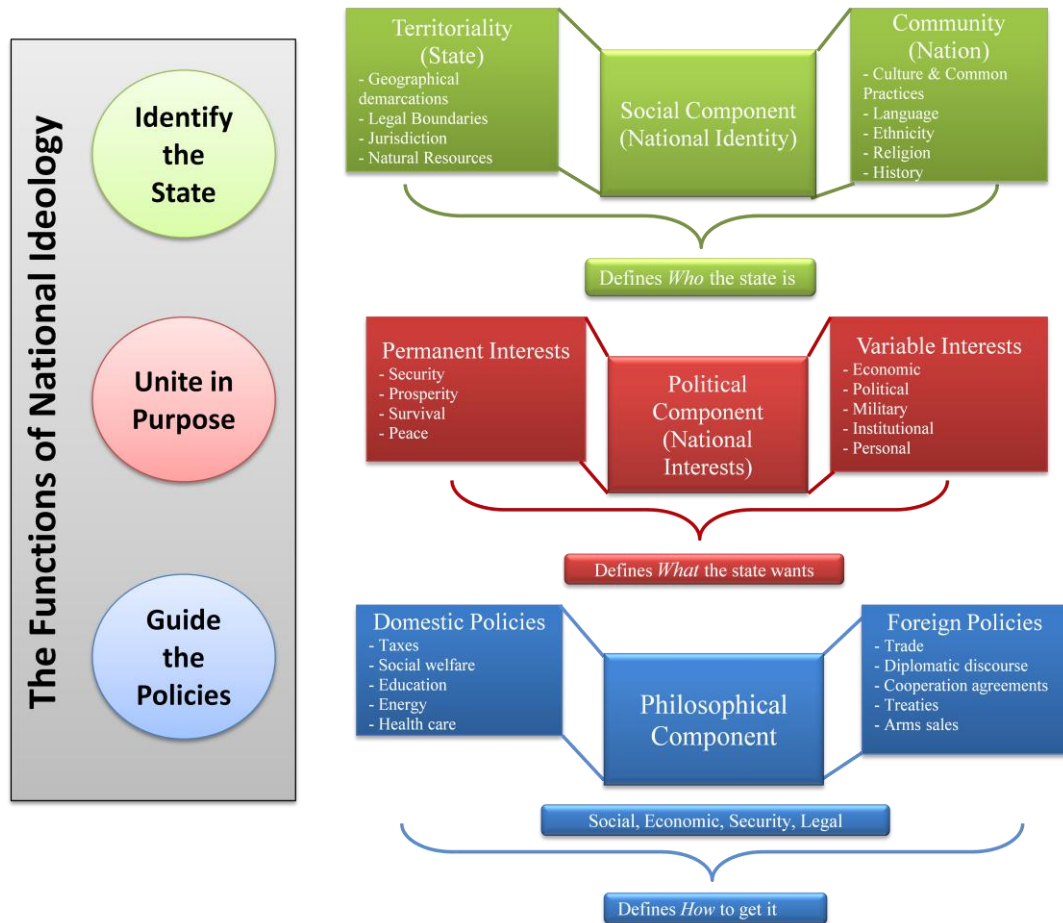


Figure 4. National Ideology Framework

Source: Author's Original Work

Another crucial aspect of national ideology is that it can only inform state behavior. It cannot compel the state to take a specific action. In chapter two we will see how different theories of international politics bring forth convincing arguments that explain state behavior using a variety of independent variables (e.g. power, cooperation, and individuals/institutions). Furthermore, chapter three will allude to external and internal factors embedded in a state's historical background that also conspire to shape the way states behave. As such, national ideology can only be one element among many and, thus, can only influence, but not determine, state behavior.

Conclusion

This chapter has put forward an argument that there are three aspects of ideology. The first takes place in the social dimension and is related to the concept of national identity. It is influenced by elements such as values, ideas, culture, race, ethnicity, language, and religion with which people from a specific country identify themselves. The second one is related to the concept of national interest and takes place in the political dimension. It is related to the common desire of the peoples of a state to maintain security and prosperity. Lastly, I have pointed out that political ideology is to be distinguished from the expression of said national interests in terms of a political philosophy. State behavior is influenced, though not determined, by the combination of these three elements.

Defining the concept of ideology as utilized in this thesis is indeed important. One cannot explain its role in the behavior of states without a clear idea of what the concept entails. Unfortunately, definitions also constrain. One of the limitations of this study is precisely that, by accepting the definition of national ideology hereby espoused, I have limited analysis and conclusions to those abiding by this definition. Thus, I make no claims of primacy for this thesis nor the concepts expressed herein over those expressed elsewhere. This fact does not degrade this study's explanatory power, however. It simply focuses it on the context in which it is observed. Nonetheless, constructing a definition for the term national ideology is but the first step in the process of understanding its relation to state behavior.

The reader should note that neither one of the components of national ideology specifically addresses the *means* by which states achieve their goals. This is an important distinction. As we shall see in the following chapter, the element of power is indeed crucial in a state's attempt to achieve national goals. The concept of national ideology in its social, political, and philosophical contexts do not invalidate the importance of power in state behavior. Likewise, it does not invalidate other behavior-motivating factors such as honor, national emergencies, foreign aggression, or coercion by another state that also influence decision makers. In short, power and ideology are not mutually exclusive. In fact, ideology can be a source of power if it manages to attract other states to a common goal. As we shall see in the next chapter, contemporary theories of international relations

offer a good conceptual framework with which to analyze state behavior and test the concept of national ideology.

Chapter 2

National Ideology and International Relations Theory

“Theory is nothing but systematic reflection on phenomena, designed to explain them and to show how they are related to each other in a meaningful, intelligent pattern, instead of being merely random items of an incoherent universe. Every discipline requires theory to guide research, to provide a basis for explanation, and if possible, to lead to a probabilistic predictive capability.”

- James E. Dougherty, and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, 2001

In chapter one I offered a working definition of the concept of national ideology based on its function with regards to state behavior. I also claimed that national identity emanates from the combination of three distinct components, namely: social, political, and philosophical. While the ulterior purpose of this study is not the development of a theory of international politics, international relations theory provides a conceptual framework with which to analyze the role of national ideology in state behavior. The importance of international relations theory cannot be overstated. Political leaders and public commentators use elements of these theories when articulating solutions to national and international security dilemmas. Furthermore, they influence the thinking of public intellectuals who then transmit academic ideas based on the theories' main propositions. However, despite their explanatory power, IR theories fail to capture accurately the role of national ideology in state behavior. When considered in isolation, they tend to overemphasize or underestimate the importance of national ideology.

Nonetheless, the biggest gift of international relations theory is not obtained by studying them in isolation. Their true explanatory power emanates from the synthesis of these propositions as they apply to a specific context. As Snyder offers: “Each theory offers a filter for looking at a complicated picture.” As such, they help explain the assumptions behind political rhetoric about foreign policy. Even more importantly, the theories act as a powerful check on each other. Deployed effectively, they reveal the weaknesses in arguments that can lead to misguided policies.”¹ The purpose of this chapter, then, is to evaluate the most influential theories of international politics in light of the concept of national ideology as defined in chapter one.

¹ Jack Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (November/December 2004): 52-62.

A major claim in this chapter is that no theory of international politics can fully explain the complexities of state behavior (or state interactions). As it pertains to this examination, these theories either underestimate or overemphasize the importance of ideology in state behavior. This is primarily because they tend to observe ideology as a normative concept. In other words, they look at ideology in terms of what individuals believe things “ought to be.” These theories are attempting to explain the nature of behavior in ways that are not normative, hence the use of independent variables such as power or cooperation that help explain state behavior in terms of “what things are.” I have already offered that ideology can help explain state behavior in a non-normative fashion. This can be done by observing the phenomena through the lens of national ideology and how it influences decision makers.

Three predominant schools of thought attempt to explain the way states behave: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. In general terms, realism focuses on state power, typically power in relation to other states. Liberalism stresses the emphasis on cooperation and absolute gains. Constructivism highlights the influence of shared values, identities, and interests on state behavior. In the sections that follow, I will evaluate the concept of national ideology through the lenses of these three theories with the purpose of discerning their explanatory power when observed through the lens of national ideology and in the context of Colombia and Venezuela.

How Real is Realism?

The foundations of realist theory lie in the ancient world and extend to contemporary times. The Greek historian, Thucydides is said to be the first realist. In his seminal tome, *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides offers that “the growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta made war inevitable.”² Indeed, the primacy of power or constant search for power among states seems to be the single-most important element in realist theory. Classical realism introduces a materialist perspective depicting states in a constant search for power and a constant struggle to satisfy their interests. On the other hand, neorealism or structural realism puts the state in the context

² Robert B. Strassler, ed. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to The Peloponnesian War*, (Free Press, NY, 2008), 16.

of an anarchic international environment where the lack of credible and legitimate authority leaves nations to their own devices. Finally, neoclassical realism attempts to bridge the gap between classical realism and neorealism by focusing on the complex interaction between domestic and international levels. Indeed, “so broad and so diverse is this [realist theory] tradition, that taken together, what we have is not realist theory, but instead realist theories.”³ Despite some difference in perspective, these three realist analytical lenses maintain key similarities and retain several core assumptions.

According to Lobell et al, realism has three central propositions.⁴ First, the security of individuals lies in their ability to conform to larger groups, kept together by loyalty, and capable of providing security from external enemies. In this sense, realists consider the state the dominant actor in international politics. Second, politics is the constant struggle between these groups under general conditions of “scarcity” and uncertainty”. That is, the main goal of the state is to ensure the security and prosperity of its people. Third, power is a necessary ingredient for the attainment of the group’s goals, whether these goals are oriented towards domination or preservation. Power is the mechanism by which states seek, obtain, and maintain their security and prosperity and thus is a crucial element of state survival.⁵

These principles represent the binding propositions between the three major manifestations of realist theory. Most importantly, these ideas are not anathema to the concept of national ideology where loyalty to the nation-state is based on common attributes (social component), survival is the *permanent* interest of the state (political component), and the attractiveness of a political philosophy can become a source of power based on the legitimacy it confers (philosophical component). Nonetheless, there are disagreements between realist theorists about how these principles affect political decision making and state behavior.

³ James E. Dougherty, and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, (Longman Inc. NY, 2001), 63.

⁴ Steven E. Lobell, Norin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge University Press, NY, 2009), 14-16.

⁵ Kenneth Waltz adds another element: anarchy. According to Waltz the international environment is one of anarchy, not in terms of the absence of government, violence, or disorder, but one of “self-help” because there is no international institution with the authority and legitimacy to compel action from any state, all the time. His argument also serves to justify why nation-states are considered the main actors in international politics and not international organizations and also why states look for their own survival first.

Classical realism for example is “concerned with the sources and uses of national power in international politics and the problems that leaders encounter when conducting foreign policy.”⁶ Classical realist theorists like Hans J. Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger write extensively about national power but say little about the constraints international politics place on the state. It is important to realize that classical realism “was never a coherent research program, but rather a vast repository of texts written by different authors for different purposes and in different contexts over the course of 2,500 years.”⁷ That Thucydides is also considered the first historian should not surprise the reader. In fact, most of the earlier classical realist theorists were not political scientists. The amalgam of authors, purposes, and contexts that influenced classical realism accounts for the predominantly inductive reasoning associated with this theory which seems to be based more on philosophical reflection than scientific experimentation. Nonetheless, classical realism set the foundation with which contemporary realist theories attempt to explain state behavior, and this theoretical basis lies in the variable of *power*.

On the other hand, structural realists or neorealists focus on the constraints the international system places on the decision making of states. Though not the only international relations theory developed under the neorealist umbrella, Kenneth Waltz’s “balance of power” theory represents the most prominent and comprehensive one. As such, I discuss a few of the core aspects of his approach. One of Waltz’s basic premises is that the *structure* of the international environment is anarchic, that is, it lacks a legitimate central authority with the capability to bring order among states.⁸ Though they differ in size, ideology, power, and wealth; states are similar in that they strive to survive and go to great lengths to guarantee their political and economical stability.⁹ Likewise, while the ends of all states are similar, they differ in the means available to achieve them. That is, the political, economic, and military capabilities available to states for the purpose of guaranteeing security and prosperity differ from state to state. In other words, *structure* determines state behavior. This highlights two key aspects of state behavior in

⁶ Lobell, et al., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, 16.

⁷ Lobell, et al., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, 16.

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw Hill), 1979, 102.

⁹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 96.

the international arena: first, the state is the dominant actor in international politics and second, the nature of the international structure is one of “self-help.”¹⁰

For example, it would be safe to assume that the domestic and foreign policies adopted by the Colombian government are meant to favor Colombia first, despite Colombia being the strongest US supporter in South America. On 15 March, 2009, Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos called for the end of the US multi-million dollar anti-drug program in Colombia, which has been the US main effort in its fight against illegal drugs in Latin America. Santos indicated: “I know the President and Minister of Defense will box my ears for this, but the cost to the dignity of the country is too great. [...] We are not just friends and allies (with Washington), but we are the only country in Latin America where the image of the United States is positive. But still, they mistreat us, and in what fashion.”¹¹ The remarks were made as a result of the US Congress’ refusal to ratify the free trade agreement between the two countries and the cuts in Plan Colombia funds for a second year in a row. Santos’ remarks should come as no surprise. After all, as discussed in chapter one, this is the role of the government: to guarantee the security and prosperity of its people. I am not suggesting that the US-Colombia relation is hypocritical. Cooperation is a common interaction between states, especially when there are common interests. US assistance has enabled the government of Colombia to gain and maintain security in most of the country. Similarly, a more secure Colombia represents one less narco-trafficking heaven for drugs coming into the United States. However, Santos’ remarks suggest that states are not only willing to cooperate given mutual interests; but that they are also willing to end cooperative policies if continuing them runs contrary to their national interests or if the domestic political price is too high.

It follows that states constantly monitor the international environment to discern disproportionate advantages held by other states or groups of states. In turn, states seek stability by either working to increase their own capabilities or joining together in order to balance the perceived imbalance of power. Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez’s efforts to rally other South American countries under the banner of 21st Century

¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 104.

¹¹ AFP. “Colombian VP calls for end to US anti-drug program.” 16 March 2009, received via mailing list from Alert Colombia, alert-colombia@rendon.com

Socialism, for example, is an attempt to counter United States' influence in the region, in particular with its neighbor Colombia.

According to Waltz, stability is achieved by maintaining equilibrium. Unfortunately, the actions a state takes to ensure its own security are sometimes perceived as threats by other states, leading to conflict and the use of force. While, militarily, Venezuela does not pose a threat to the United States, it does, to Colombia. After over 40 years of waging a counterinsurgency fight, Colombia's forces have developed into a professional unconventional force. However, Colombia's unconventional forces are not equipped or structured to repel Venezuela's conventional forces if the need arises. Unfortunately, Waltz's theory of balance of power does not account for a state's propensity towards internal violence. A realists may be inclined to believe that Colombia allies itself with the United States as a counter-balance to Venezuela's conventional military buildup. In reality, violence in Colombia (and in Latin America for that matter) has historically occurred within the state rather than against other states.¹² Colombia's main concern, as demonstrated by more than forty years of struggle against revolutionaries and narco-traffickers, is internal and the main role of the United States has been to support Colombia in winning this fight.¹³

Lastly, neoclassical realism is the most recent iteration of the realist school of international relations. It attempts to "bridge domestic and international politics and specifically to relate domestic structures to international structures."¹⁴ Where classical realism and neorealism put primacy on the state or the international system respectively; neoclassical realism holds that state behavior in the international environment is "the result of complex patterns of interaction within and between both levels."¹⁵ Neoclassical realists still believe survival is the ultimate goal of all states as classical realists assert. They also hold true the neorealist concept of balance of power. However, neoclassical

¹² Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America*, (PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 17.

¹³ Lt Col Aleman and LTC Lukasevish, interview by the author, J5/WHA, Pentagon, Washington DC, 18 February 2010.

¹⁴ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 88.

¹⁵ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 89.

realists suggest that “states can respond to international events through domestic actions and may attempt to solve domestic problems through actions at the international level.”¹⁶

This perspective is exemplified in the case of Venezuela’s recent arms purchases from Russia. On 7 December 2009, President Chávez acknowledged the acquisition of thousands of Russian-made missiles and rocket launchers. In addition, Chavez mentioned T-72 Russian tanks, 24 Sukhoi fighter jets, and dozens of attack helicopter would arrive soon thereafter. To facilitate the sales, Russia opened a \$2.2 billion credit line for Chávez to purchase more arms.¹⁷ Domestically, Venezuela is in need of “[replenishing] its aging stocks, promote sustainable national defense, and help in the fight against drug trafficking.”¹⁸ The Venezuelan President, on the other hand, justifies the purchase by arguing that Colombia and the United States were plotting a military offensive against Venezuela, and that he was acquiring more weapons as a precaution.¹⁹ As such, he looks to the international community to find the solution for both his domestic arms shortfalls and the foreign threat to the state.

Neoclassical realism also accounts for the role of state leaders as an influencing element in state behavior. The ability of state leaders to meet and overcome domestic and international challenges and rally and maintain domestic and international support are also important elements in securing state survival. A state leader’s search for legitimacy extends not only to the domestic level but also to the international level where recognition can be seen as a basis for strengthening domestic legitimacy. Indeed, the political leaders’ perception of what is best for the state informs the variable interests of the nation. This is perhaps the reason behind Hugo Chavez’s defamatory rhetoric against the United States and its Colombian allies. It may not elicit much response from the United States, but it certainly gains him support from China, Iran, and Russia. This, in turn can be used by Chavez as evidence of international support to his Bolivarian cause. As I argued in chapter one, political leaders often call a particular domestic or foreign

¹⁶ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 89.

¹⁷ Lt Col Phillip R Cuccia, *Something is Brewing in Venezuela*, (Strategic Studies Institute, January 2010), 2.

¹⁸ Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera, “Venezuela Responds”, *Armed Forces Journal*, April 2010, 8. (Ambassador Alvarez is the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’s Ambassador to the United States in Washington DC.)

¹⁹ Venezuela has bought more than \$4 billion worth of Russian military equipment since 2005. See: Lt Col Cuccia, *Something is Brewing in Venezuela*, 2.

policy, economic structure, or military forces development to be ‘in the nation’s best interest.’ The legitimization of Chavez’s Twenty-first Century Socialism on the international stage serves to justify his socialist agenda at home. In other words, it validates his strand of socialism as the *de facto* political philosophy of the state and as such, part of Venezuela’s national ideology. Furthermore, neoclassical realism reformulates the role of power in state behavior and opens the door for the understanding of the conditions that promote cooperation instead of competition among states.²⁰ In this regard, realism and liberalism are not mutually exclusive.

In the aggregate, realism does very well in explaining the tendency of some states in engaging in arms races or frantic attempts at discerning other states’ intentions based on capabilities. It helps to understand a state’s constant search for power and how domestic and international constraints affect the decision making process. Most importantly, as Robert Keohane offers: “realism provides a good starting point for the analysis of cooperation and discord, since its tautological structure and its pessimistic assumptions about individual and state behavior serve as barriers against wishful thinking.”²¹ Realism, in particular neoclassical realism, opens the door for the study of alternative elements that may influence the way states behave. This includes the element of ideology, so long as it is looked at from the perspective of power. Ideology, then, can serve as an instrument to gain power. When looked from this perspective, Chavez’s attempts at adding new adepts to his Bolivarian move should come as no surprise.

However, realism puts primacy in the role of power on state behavior. As such, ideology is only seen as a means to attain power. It does not, with the limited exception of neoclassical realism, recognize the influence of individuals and their view of the world on state behavior. Thus, its vision of how political philosophies influence political leaders independent of the element of power is somewhat narrow. Realism in general overemphasizes the role that security concerns play in the relationships among states and in so doing, minimizes the role all the components of national ideology play in shaping state behavior. While a state’s overall perception of its standing within the international system shapes the state’s choices, “foreign policy is also affected by choices based on

²⁰ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 89.

²¹ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (Princeton University Press, 1984), 245.

perceptions, values, and other domestic-level factors.”²² Realism may help explain why states can resort to force to guarantee their security. However, even in an anarchic society, states can also achieve their goals by cooperative means.

Liberalism and Downfall of International Anarchy

Liberalism has its roots in the idealist theories and policies of Immanuel Kant, and later, Woodrow Wilson. The liberalist view contrasts with the realist proposition that the anarchic structure of the international environment accounts for the way states behave, namely in a constant struggle for power. Liberal theorists argue the *process* of economic relations and democratic institutions, both domestic and international, play a crucial factor in state behavior, especially in a globalized world. The democratic *process* is both the catalyst for economic development and the result of sound economic practices. Liberalist theorists posit that the interaction between states is affected not only by political aspects, but also by economic ones. As such, they maintain cooperation among states is possible based on trade, commerce, and economic interdependence. This makes sense from a national ideology perspective as security of the states entails the possibility of prosperity. Thus, peace is achievable not through balancing state capabilities based on perceived threats, but rather, through the establishment of processes that lead to cooperation. For liberal theorists, trade and finance build ties among nations, and these ties result in interdependence. Interdependence, in turn, promotes cooperation and reduces the chances of open conflict.

Can economic interdependence make the anarchic international environment more cooperation friendly? Gilpin suggests that “economic regionalism is an important response by nation-states to share political problems [...]. As the international economy has become more closely integrated, regional groupings of states have increased their cooperation in order to strengthen their autonomy, improve their bargaining position, and promote other political/economic objectives.”²³ This suggests that there is common ground between the realist and the liberalist views on state behavior. Gilpin’s statement does not invalidate the nation-state as the primary actor in international relations. The

²² Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 89.

²³ Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order*, (Princeton University Press, NJ, 2001), 11.

purpose of cooperation, he posits, is to maintain autonomy and improve the state's standing. However, states can resort to cooperation to achieve these goals, and in doing so, they achieve the dual purpose of ensuring their own security while maintaining peace. Also important to consider is that cooperation is not limited to the economic aspect alone. It also includes direct cooperation on security issues. Liberalists contend that states cannot guarantee their security by simply increasing their power. States have to cooperate to ensure security and do so through institutions, some of which may use democratic processes.

Democracy and democratic institutions represent another fundamental canon of the liberalist theory. The axiom that democracies do not fight other democracies is "the closest thing we have to an iron law in social science."²⁴ Institutions, especially democratic ones, foster competition and competition over markets and technologies can help prevent conflicts.²⁵ Jack Snyder summarizes the liberalist theory well by saying: "Liberals foresee a slow but inexorable journey away from the anarchic world the realists envision, as trade and finance forge ties between nations, and democratic norms spread. Because elected leaders are accountable to the people (who bear the burdens of war), liberals expect that democracies will not attack each other and will regard each other's regimes as legitimate and nonthreatening. Many liberals also believe that the rule of law and transparency of democratic processes make it easier to sustain international cooperation, especially when these practices are enshrined in multilateral institutions."²⁶

Liberalism, however, is not devoid of controversy. While it is true that democracies tend not to fight each other, some argue they are "prone to launch messianic struggles against warlike authoritarian regimes" or simply intervene in the affairs of smaller states when they are unfit to resolve international issues by themselves.²⁷ For example, on 2 December, 1823 President James Monroe stated that further efforts by European countries to colonize land or interfere in the affairs of states in the Americas would be viewed by the United States as acts of aggression requiring US intervention.²⁸

²⁴ Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," 52-62.

²⁵ Schouten, P, "Theory Talk #1: Michael W. Doyle on Markets and Institutions," Theory Talks, <http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/04/theory-talk-1.html>, 15 Apr 08 (accessed 10 Feb2010).

²⁶ Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," 52-62.

²⁷ Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," 52-62.

²⁸ Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine: 1826-1867*, (MS, The John Hopkins Press, 1965), 3.

By and large, American statesmen believed Latin America was a “backward, inferior, and underdeveloped region” in need of close supervision.²⁹

On December, 1904, Theodore Roosevelt officially announced his intended management of the Monroe Doctrine, also known as the Roosevelt’s Corollary, appealing “to the popular notion of the United States as a benevolent father figure watching over the well-being of a child.”³⁰ President Roosevelt issued an amendment to Monroe’s policy asserting the US right to intervene in the economic affairs of Latin American states that could not pay their international debts. Both, the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary, which also became known as “big stick policy”, became the first of several US attempts to assert its influence in the New World, a matter that would have considerable implications for both Colombia and Venezuela as we shall see in chapter three.

On a similar example, on April 2, 1917, President Wilson went before Congress seeking a declaration of war against Germany in order to “make the world safe for democracy” a petition that was granted four days later and marked the United States entry into World War I. Furthermore, this tendency towards self-righteousness prompted American “atomic diplomacy” following WWII which promoted Stalin’s desire to balance the US nuclear monopoly making the security environment fertile for the nuclear arms race that ensued.³¹ While not considered open conflict, the fiery peace that characterized the Cold War was a period of great tension between the two post-WWII superpowers and brought about the US policy of contention which will have significant impact in Latin America. Indeed, the prescription of democratic institutions, liberal government, and a market economy could lead to the belief that democracy is a precondition for peace. In the United States, this may be seen as democracy in the likeness of American democracy.

Furthermore, the advent of liberal democratic governance is not an automatic guarantee of security and prosperity for either new or established democratic governments. Mansfield and Snyder suggest that “The early stages of democratization unleash intense competition among myriad social groups and interests. Many transitional

²⁹ Steward Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, (CT, Praeger Security International, 2006), 36.

³⁰ Steward Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, (CT, Praeger Security International, 2006), 89.

³¹ Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War*, (Random House, NY, 2009), 54.

democracies lack state institutions that are sufficiently strong and coherent to regulate effectively this mass political competition.”³² Thus, states transitioning to democracy or those with weak political institutions are more likely to engage in internal conflict. New democracies often have inexperienced institutions incapable of dealing with popular demand and may lack the political legitimacy to “credibly enforce compromises among rival groups.”³³ The Spanish Conquest had a particularly debilitating effect in Colombia and on Venezuela’s capacity to establish robust institutions, because colonialism made its way into the New World not in the spirit of development, but in the spirit of expansion, conquest, and wealth accumulation. Lack of institutionalization in Venezuela and weak institutional legitimacy in Colombia became engrained in these countries’ national ideology, a fact that continues to haunt them to this day. In such an environment, government accountability is imperfect and “nationalist politicians can hijack public debate.”³⁴

Populist movements in Latin America are a good example. While some argue that populism in Latin America “arose as a protest movement, rejecting certain aspects of traditional politics and representative democracy,”³⁵ the reality is that, especially in the context of Colombia and Venezuela, the reasons are more culturally and historically based than mere popular discontent. As we shall see in chapter three, *Caudillismo* became part of both these countries’ identities as a result of the Spanish Conquest and the independence movements that followed, and it continues to be an important part of the social aspect of their national ideology today, particularly for Venezuela. On the other hand, states with established democracies make perfect targets for terrorist violence or national liberation movements because they are accountable to a cost-contentious population.”³⁶ Colombia fits this description well.

³² Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War”, *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (The MIT Press, Spring, 2002), pp. 297-337.

³³ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62

³⁴ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62

³⁵ Lt Col Mayerholtz, a Chilean Army officer, offers two fundamental characteristics to populism in Latin America. The first he calls “anti-intellectualism, that is, popular rejection of the elites. The second one he terms hyper-personalization which in essence describes the persona of Caudillos as the “leader [who] possesses those very virtues that allow him to overcome a perceived barrier between representatives and represented.” For more information see: Lt Col Gustav L. Mayerholtz, *Populism in Latin America*, (PA, US Army War College, 20 March 2009), 2.

³⁶ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62

In addition, it is not clear whether economic interdependence can in fact guarantee cooperation and peace among all states. Nazi Germany had considerable economic ties with its neighbors before it invaded Poland. More recently, economic interdependence has not stopped Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez from picking on his Colombian counterpart, President Alvaro Uribe, despite the considerable trade levels between these two countries. Similarly, despite strong economic ties between Colombia and Ecuador, President Uribe launched an air raid that killed leftist rebels-including FARC's number two man, Raul Reyes-within Ecuadorian territory. The act caused severe diplomatic rupture and significantly affected economic trade between Colombia and Ecuador for nearly two years. The liberalist argument suggests that trade deters conflict because conflict considerably reduces trade and this has a negative impact on the belligerent states.³⁷ History shows, however, that some interests may go beyond the expressed benefits of trade.

In short, liberalism highlights the importance of economic power in the relationship between states as well as the impact of democratic institutions in enabling peace through cooperation. In doing so, they discard the deterministic notion of an anarchic international environment. No doubt these propositions have relevance in a globalized contemporary environment. However, neither economic interdependence nor democratic governance are necessarily a *sine qua non* for international peace. In fact, in some instances, such as in the case of nascent democratic states, they could prompt violence at the national and international levels, especially when democratic institutions are not sufficiently robust to meet the demands of the population as was the case of Colombia and Venezuela during the post-colonial period. Nonetheless, as with realism, liberalism provides a powerful tool with which to approach the study of state behavior. More importantly, as it pertains to this examination, liberalism can shed some light on US-Colombia relations and the uneasy peace between Colombia and Venezuela where trade and commerce are still alive, albeit in decline.

The preceding sections have brought to light two of the most prominent theories of international relations. On one hand, realism helps understand how the *structure* of the

³⁷ Katherine Barbieri and Jack S. Levy, "Sleeping with the Enemy: The Impact of War on Trade", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Special Issue on Trade and Conflict (Sage Publications, Ltd., July, 1999), pp. 463-479.

international system sends states on a constant search for power and influences a state's behavior. On the other, liberalism explains how peace is achievable, even in an anarchic environment, by establishing *processes* of state-to-state cooperation, in part fostered by economic interdependence and democratic governance. However both of these theories say little about the role of society in state decision making. This is particularly important when examining the role of national ideology in state behavior, specifically, as it pertains to its social component. Many scholars, for example, contend that international politics is socially constructed and that such construction directly impacts state behavior.

Constructivism and the Power of Ideas

The term “constructivism” was first used by Nicholas Onuf in 1989 to describe the interaction and behavior of states as socially constructed. Norms play a crucial factor in the constructivist view. These norms, whether domestic or international, dictate what people or states should do. How people or states execute these rules are known as practices. Onuf further explains that by observing people's practices, one can determine the norms. Norms and practices are vital to the sociopolitical makeup of states and when accepted by the people and backed up by legal laws, they become institutions and regimes. These institutions and regimes define appropriate behavior and acceptable practices, and help redirect those who wander off these norms via sanctions, fines, or other punitive actions.³⁸

Constructivist thought draws from a variety of social theories to include feminism, institutionalism, and postmodernism, to name a few. Despite their differences, all these social theories “share a concern with the basic ‘sociological’ [aspect of] identity and interest formation.”³⁹ Constructivism offers an *idealist* perspective to the study of international relations. This is contrary to the *materialist* perspective offered by classical realism where power reigns supreme, the *individualist* view of neorealism characterized by a self-help environment, or liberalism's *institutionalist* view with its emphasis on international trade and democratic organizations. By and large, constructivist theorists

³⁸ Nicholas G. Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, (University of South Carolina Press, SC, 1989), 341 pp.

³⁹ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 393

explain state behavior as influenced by two main tenets. First, that shared ideas, not material forces, are the primary determining factor in human associations.⁴⁰ Second, that these shared ideas construct the identities and interests of the state.⁴¹ In short, constructivist theory attempts to explain how states define their identity and their interests and how these affect state behavior, elements that clearly relate to national ideology.

Neorealists like Kenneth Waltz attack this emphasis in identity and interests as “reductionist” because it focuses on “unit-level” or state-centric variables instead of structural ones such as the international environment.⁴² Constructivist theorists like Alexander Wendt argue the causal powers attributed to the international structure in which states find themselves are not given, but rather, constructed by social practice. The latter is not only the result of domestic realities such as language, culture, and ideals; but it is also the result of the social practices that emanate from the interactions between states, that is, how states are expected to behave in a given situation. For Wendt “self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and that if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to process not structure. [...] *Anarchy is what states make of it* (Wendt’s emphasis).”⁴³ For Wendt, states only perceive themselves in a self-help environment if they conform to a zero-sum definition of national security where the gain of security for any one state means the loss of security for another.

It is important to realize that Wendt is not rejecting the possibility of zero-sum policies among states. He is simply stating that states choose such policies depending on their particular circumstance. In other words, they are not predestined. Neither is he invalidating the fact that states look for their own security first. They can also do so regardless of other states’ capabilities. This supports my assertion that, within the political component of national ideology, the *permanent* interest of the state is that of security and prosperity regardless of whether it happens as a result of the perception of threat from another state. This also means that a state, or rather the state’s government, chooses the *style* of policy. As I offered in chapter 1, the domestic and foreign policies

⁴⁰ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, UK, 1999), 1.

⁴¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1.

⁴² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 18-37.

⁴³ Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” pp. 395

governments adopt represent the philosophical aspect of national ideology. If this is the case, understanding the state's national ideology is crucial if one is to apply the correct theoretical framework when attempting to discern state behavior. The same is likely to apply in policy making. Understanding the social, political, and philosophical particularities of each state is a precondition to formulating effective foreign policy.

Constructivists also contend that states can hold alternative conceptions of security.⁴⁴ For example, in some circumstances, states may perceive security in cooperative ways. Here states attempt to maximize their security without negatively affecting the security of another. The relationship between the United States and its major allies; Great Britain, Australia and, Canada, is a good example. Similarly, states may assume a collective stance towards an issue and identify the security of other states as being valuable to themselves. Ecuador and Bolivia may find it in their best interest to band together with Venezuela so long as Hugo Chavez's Twenty-first Century Socialism provides them with the legitimacy to carry out their respective domestic and foreign policies. In both of these cases, anarchy does not lead to self-help. Anarchy, then, influences but does not determine state behavior according to the constructivist view.

Given the contemporary security environment, particularly in the post-9/11 world, it is easy to see the value of a theory that emphasizes the role of national ideologies, identity, and interests. Constructivist thought can provide greater insights about the ideas and values in the current international order. For example, it can help explain the influence of transnational organizations in political decision making. In Colombia, for instance, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations Human Rights office in Bogota have been crucial in bringing to light hundreds of alleged extrajudicial killings by members of the armed forces. These allegations motivated members of the United States Congress to make any military and monetary aid to the government of Colombia's conditional on its ability to show significant improvements in human rights and international humanitarian law. As a result, the Colombian Ministry of Defense enacted organizational measures that included changes to operational doctrine, more comprehensive human rights training to members of the armed forces, changes in the officer promotion system, and the creation of a rapid reaction commission (Comisión de

⁴⁴ Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," p. 395

Reacción Inmediata) for the investigation of human rights violations.⁴⁵ Groups such as these often succeed in provoking change by exposing violations or illegal activities that counter the established moral standards professed, “at least rhetorically,” by a state’s political leadership.⁴⁶ As alluded to in chapter one, the international community also influences state interests.

Constructivist theory also helps explain the actions of non-liberal transnational forces such as Islamic extremism and the more recent anti-American movement in Latin America spearheaded by President Chavez. Snyder posits: “Individuals and groups become powerful if they can convince others to adopt their ideas. People’s understanding of their interests depends on the ideas they hold.”⁴⁷ Ideologies can then be a source of power in so far as they help states rally other states to their cause. This is not to say that these groups or states do not have political goals or ulterior motives. On the contrary, they are still likely to work towards securing their own objectives. However, in the manner in which they can rally other groups or states to their cause, they establish their legitimacy, achieve a heightened sense of security, and increase their chances at accomplishing their objectives. In this sense, ideology is not in itself a threat but a catalyst by which states can influence others states to assume postures favorable to their own. Constructivism and realism, it seems, are not completely mutually exclusive. This is true not only in the case of transnational forces, but also in the relationships between states.

States with similar national ideologies are likely to have common interests and as such, are likely to follow common norms and practices. In turn, these norms and practices may defer from those of states with divergent ideologies which can be a source of conflict. This helps explain the tension in the relationship between Colombia and Venezuela. The former follows a democratic and capitalist philosophy that aligns it to the United States. The latter seeks to rally its neighbors around a common socialist philosophy distinct from the failed socialist practices of the past and in blatant contradiction of US-like democracy.

⁴⁵ Embassy of Colombia, Washington DC, “Special Report: Investigating Extra-judicial Killings”, 5 May 2008.

⁴⁶ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62

⁴⁷ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62

This process is applicable to hegemonic states as well. The exercise of power by hegemonic states is the result of the combination of the manipulation of “material incentives” and the altering of “substantive beliefs.”⁴⁸ The later is achieved when “the norms and value orientations of leaders in secondary states change and more closely reflect those of the dominant state.”⁴⁹ Ikenberry and Kupchan call this process hegemonic socialization.⁵⁰ Nye calls it soft power.⁵¹ The United States and Soviet efforts to promote democracy and communism respectively in Latin America and elsewhere during the Cold War are fine examples.

However, the notion that states can establish international order through shared beliefs suggests the need for cross-cultural dialogue in order to determine appropriate behaviors and acceptable practices. This is not that different from liberalism’s international order based on democratic governance and economic capitalism. Unfortunately, constructivism may lead to an assumption of primacy of one group’s beliefs over others and limit the possibility of cooperation or the imposition of norms (such as western values) to groups of diverging beliefs (such as Islamic states). Furthermore, as alluded to in chapter one, identity and interests are for the most part state dependent. They are defined by the state nationals based on a myriad of factors to include ethnicity, history, religion, and culture. As Robert Gilpin posits, “governance at any level, whether national or international, must start on shared beliefs, cultural values, and, most of all, a common identity. Unfortunately, we do not yet live in a global civic culture, and few common values unite all the peoples of the world.”⁵² As such, a constructivist approach can mean different things to different people. Yet, there is still possibility to cooperate even without mutual values so long as there are mutual interests. This accentuates the importance of understanding the foreign policy of states from the perspective of these states, not our own. US foreign policy towards Venezuela, for example, needs to capture an understanding of Twenty-first Century Socialism as

⁴⁸ John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer, 1990): 283-315

⁴⁹ Ikenberry and Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” 283-315.

⁵⁰ Ikenberry and Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” 283-315.

⁵¹ Joseph Nye posits that soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others, that is, to get others to “buy in to your values.” For a detailed description, refer to Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, Public Affairs, NY, 2004), 5.

⁵² Gilpin, *Global Political Economy*, 402.

intended by Chavez not as understood by the United States, since there may be more in common than meets the eye; this can be a source of cooperation. The same applies to the US relationship with Colombia. Understanding its history of internal violence can shed light onto Colombia's historical struggle with human rights which can help formulate better foreign policy.

Regrettably, constructivism can lead to the belief that individuals and organizations have primacy over other elements of state behavior. Constructivists argue the causal powers attributed to the international structure in which states find themselves are not given, but rather, constructed by social practice. Yet, this statement overemphasizes the role that ideas play, because not all elements of state behavior are socially constructed. From a national ideology perspective, only the philosophical and, to a certain point, the political (variable interests) are constructed. The social component is determined by all the elements that make the nation unique. These may change in the process of historical progress as more experience is accumulated and as a result of a nation's contact with other nations, but remains by and large untouched by human design. Human decisions may impact, but these are seldom, if ever, designed to change state identity purposefully. Identity could, however, be constructed subconsciously and, over time, become ingrained in a state's social component. For example, the most President Chavez can hope to accomplish in the short term is to change Venezuela's political and philosophical components in line with his Twenty-first Century Socialism ideology. However, the longer Chavez's brand of socialism is associated with Venezuelan politics, the more it becomes the de facto philosophy of Venezuela. This is, of course, contingent on his ability to convince Venezuelans that Twenty-first Century Socialism can provide for the security and prosperity of the state.

It is important to note that constructivist theory still recognizes the state as the primary actor in international politics. In addition, constructivists typically do not reject the concept of anarchy in international politics. Rather, they explain it in terms of opposing ideas instead of a power struggle. Neither does constructivism reject the importance of institutions, both national and international especially when these are focused towards a mutually beneficial goal. In this regard, constructivist, realist, and liberal theories are not entirely mutually exclusive. This is important for the purpose of

this examination as, like Snyder suggests, “the most prudent course is to use the insights of each of the three theoretical traditions as a check on the irrational exuberance of the others.”⁵³

Conclusion

The value of international relations theory cannot be overstated. Both political leaders and academics often reference these theories when formulating or proposing national policy. Yet, there is an inherent danger with formulating policy based on one set of variables only. Not all states are created equal and thus, not all states behave following a predetermined pattern that can be easily identified. Putting Colombian and Venezuelan relations into context reveals that one could use elements from all three theories of international relations to explain the phenomenon. Indeed, as Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff suggest, “the prudent scholar may deem it unwise to fasten too early and too exclusively on any of the theoretical paradigms now being offered from several quarters. [...] no single approach can explain adequately, with comprehensiveness and subtlety, the full range of phenomena that make up the ever-evolving *complexe internationale*.”⁵⁴

The purpose of this chapter has been to evaluate the most influential theories of international politics in light of the concept of national ideology as defined in chapter one. It is clear that no theory of international politics can fully explain the complexities of state behavior (or state interactions). Individually, they fail to explain fully the role of ideology as they either underestimate or overemphasize its influence on state behavior. Nonetheless, the biggest gift of international relations theory emanates from the synthesis of these theories as they apply to a specific context. They provide a series of conceptual frameworks from which to analyze the role of national ideology in state behavior.

For example, realism does very well in explaining the tendency of some states in engaging in arms races or frantic attempts at discerning other states’ intentions based on capabilities. It helps understand a state’s constant search for power and how domestic and international constraints affect the decision making process. Realism does explain Venezuela’s attempts to balance US influence in Latin America by offering a Bolivarian

⁵³ Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” 52-62.

⁵⁴ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Politics*, 7.

alternative. It also explains Hugo Chavez's attempts at legitimizing his Twenty-first Century Socialism by appealing to countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, Iran, and Cuba because international and domestic legitimacy translates into the power to act as he sees fit. Colombia's interest in the US ratification of a free trade agreement will not be strange to realists when looked from the perspective of Colombian economic interests. Nonetheless, realism perceives ideology only as a means to attain power. It minimizes the role national ideology plays in shaping state behavior because it overemphasizes the role of security concerns in the relationships among states.

On the other hand, liberalism also helps to understand the role of national ideology in state behavior. Liberalists would argue that Colombia's constitutional court not allowing President Uribe to run for a third term is a clear example of the power of robust democratic institutions. According to the liberalist school, the alliance between Colombia and the United States is based on similar political philosophies. Similarly, liberalists would offer that Colombia's remarkable increase in foreign direct investment in recent years is due to the increase in security throughout the country and the government's efforts to revamp its economic basis along the lines of trade and investment. Unfortunately, liberalism does not account for historical elements that may jeopardize the authority of government institutions. Venezuela's historical overreliance on the individual has arguably allowed Chavez to hijack the same political process that accounted for his democratic election in 1999. In Colombia, the same democratic process has also opened the door to terrorist violence and national liberation movements and made the Colombian government accountable to its more politically sensitive population.

Finally, constructivism can provide great insights about the ideas and values in the current international environment. Constructivist theory attempts to explain how states define their identity and their interests and how these affect state behavior, elements that clearly relate to national ideology. It helps explain the influence of individuals and organizations in state behavior and how concepts such as *Caudillismo* and a history of internal violence influence the individuals and institutions of Colombia

and Venezuela and thus, inform their behavior.⁵⁵ Constructivism also explains why states with similar national ideologies are likely to have common interests and are likely to follow common norms and practices, and how these may defer from those of states with divergent ideologies, thus providing a source of conflict. Yet, constructivist thought tends to overemphasize the role of ideology in state behavior. Constructivism can lead to assume primacy of one group's beliefs over others and limit the possibility of cooperation or the imposition of certain norms to groups of converging beliefs which can in turn lead to conflict. Similarly, constructivism can lead to the belief that individuals and organizations have primacy over other elements of state behavior. Table one provides a comparison of these theories as they relate to state behavior.

Table 1: Theories of International Politics and State Behavior

IR Theory	Key Actors	Main Instruments	What it explains about state behavior	What it does not explain about state behavior	Methods for conflict resolution
Realism	States	Power (military or diplomatic)	Why some states resort to coercion and violence. Tendency of some states to "balance" the power of other states. Arms races. Smaller states' "bandwagoning" with bigger states.	Non-zero-sum game policies (limited). Why states cooperate (limited). The impact of ideas and values other than for power gaining purposes.	Coercion (deterrence / compellence) War
Liberalism	States & Institutions	Institutions & economic interdependence	Political and economic cooperation. Globalization. The move towards free trade. Democratization.	Violent transitions into democracy (limited). Conflict between democratic states (limited). Arms races and economic competition.	International body or treaty as mediator Sanctions
Constructivism	States Individuals & Organizations	Ideas, values, and beliefs	The impact of history, values, beliefs, culture, and individuals. The alliance between states based on philosophical compatibility. The impact of strong personalities/leaders.	Why states with similar identities and/or philosophies engage in conflict (limited). Why some states attempt to impose their values/beliefs (limited).	Dependent upon context and situation
Purpose	The security, stability, and prosperity of the state				

Source: Author's Original Work

⁵⁵ *Caudillo* is a Spanish word describing a political and military leader usually displaying authoritarian power and a term used to refer to charismatic populist leaders among the people of Latin America. *Caudillismo* depends greatly on personality.

Despite their shortfalls, these theories go a long way in explaining state behavior and the role national ideology plays within it. We can then summarize the theoretical basis in which this examination stands. As this study moves forward, it analyses the relations between Colombia and Venezuela based on the following propositions derived from the preceding sections:

- States are the dominant actors in international politics.
- However, this does not negate the existence of regional approaches to national security
- Power remains an important element in state-to-state relations.
- Individuals, especially individuals in high government positions, impact the foreign policy of states.
- National ideology influences the decision making process of political leaders.
- National ideology, however, does not determine state behavior.
- Domestic policy influences foreign policy.
- Foreign policy also informs domestic policy.
- The social aspect of national ideology and the *permanent* interest of the state (survival) are integral parts of the state's identity and are not changed or modified by purposeful human interaction, though can change "subconsciously" over a long period of time.
- The *variable* interests of the state and the philosophical aspect of national ideology are socially constructed.

This theoretical basis is not a panacea. States are motivated by different elements in different fashion. Thus, I cannot claim primacy of the concept of national ideology as the sole and primary motivator in state behavior. Nonetheless, this theoretical basis serves as good framework with which to analyze the relations between Colombia and Venezuela and affords this study relevance, practicality, and most importantly, significant explanatory potential. One thing becomes blatantly clear in this chapter. Context matters. As such, we must now turn to history in order to understand the conditions that

helped shape Colombia and Venezuela's national ideology specifically, while influencing their contemporary behavior.

Chapter 3

National Ideology in the Land of Caudillos: A Historical Perspective

“Men make their own history, but they don’t make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.”

- Karl Marx, 1852

Chapter one provided a definition of national ideology based on three specific components. The social component is related to the concept of national identity. It is influenced by elements such as values, ideas, culture, race, ethnicity, language, and religion with which people from a specific country identify themselves. In sort, this is what determines *who the state is*. Conversely, the political component is related to the concept of national interests, that is, the common desire of the peoples of a state to maintain security and prosperity and those additional interests brought forth by political leaders and that tend to change from one administration to another. In other words, the political component helps shape *what the state wants*. Lastly, the philosophical component is the national leaders’ vision on *how* to best achieve national interests, often expressed in terms of political and economic platforms such as socialism, democracy, and communism, and market or command economies. State behavior is influenced, though not determined, by the combination of these three elements.

Theories of international politics provide useful frameworks with which to understand this behavior. Unfortunately, by assigning primacy of one element of state behavior over other elements, these theories each fail to present a complete picture of the intricacies that motivate, inform, and shape state behavior. With respect to the role of national ideology, each either overemphasizes or underestimates the role national ideology plays in international relations. The gift contemporary theories of international politics leave us, however, is the possibility to use multiple lenses in attempting to explain how states behave. To fully articulate this behavior, the use of these lenses requires accounting for the specific context and nuance that help define a state’s national ideology within its social, political, and philosophical milieu. Consequently, I shift my

focus in this chapter to the historical context out of which Colombia and Venezuela developed.

External forces such as the Spanish Conquest and American intervention in Latin America, for example, were both crucial elements in the formation of a national ideology for these two countries. The Spanish Conquest created a spirit of expansionism and self-interest that failed to foster an environment conducive to institutional development. Instead it served to foment elitism and division by social class. While these elements became part of Colombian and Venezuelan cultures, they manifested themselves differently following the wars for independence. In the resulting Gran Colombia, and as inherited from the previous Viceroyalty of New Granada under Spanish control, the military and intellectual centers of society were located in different locations: “Venezuela had the barracks and Colombia the universities.”¹ This too was to have an impact on the outlook of these two countries following their independence. In Venezuela, the overreliance on military leaders created a *caudillo* culture that did much to suppress revolution within the country, but focused little on bringing social equality and institutional authority along with it. On the other hand, Colombia became a country with much stronger civilian institutions, but like in Venezuela, the elite failed to address the needs of the majority of the population. This generated popular discontent and opened the door to the internal violence and the insurgencies that followed.

Caudillismo and internal violence, aggravated by social inequality and elitism, became the social realities of Venezuela and Colombia at a time when the United States had embarked on a journey to increase its influence in the world, demonstrating a willingness to spread its ideals of capitalism and democracy. These ideals, however, were not uniformly welcomed and received. In Colombia, capitalism and liberal democracy enabled the government to reestablish the authority and legitimacy of its institutions. Its history of internal violence and the need to rescue the Colombian people from the grasp of insurgents supported by drug money contributed to Colombia’s acceptance of US hegemony in the region and the sustainment of political and economic policies consistent with a democratic state. In Venezuela, however, capitalism was blamed for the government’s inability to use oil revenues to help close the gap between

¹ Lt Col Eliot Benavides, Colombian Air Forces, interview by the author, 23 April 2010.

social classes. It evolved as socialism as defined by Hugo Chavez; an alternative developed in direct response to US influence in the region, enabled by the strength of *caudillismo*. US intervention had considerable impact on the political and economic interests of these two countries and as such, helped shape their respective policies and philosophies. Unlike the Conquest however, these effects led to different national ideology outcomes in spite of the similarities of their social origins.

Such concerns with the relationship between historical context and its impact on national ideology serve as the focus of this chapter. Specifically, I seek to illustrate several themes that form the basis of the role of national ideology within the context of Colombia and Venezuela. I have tried to stick to a chronological rendering, yet, as Marco Palacios points out, “sometimes the strands of society, economy, politics, and culture move at different rhythms.”² I have chosen to resolve this by presenting this chapter from the stand point of the most significant and shared events in their history. A close examination of the history of these two countries reveals that three fundamental episodes significantly altered the progress of their history and helped shape their national ideologies: the Spanish Conquest, independence from Spain, and US intervention. I term these *history altering events* to distinguish them in both importance and impact in the evolution of both Colombia and Venezuela from colonialism to contemporary times. This chapter is divided into four major sections. Section one will examine the influence of the Spanish Conquest and how it helped shape Colombia and Venezuela’s *national ideology*. Section two addresses the impact of these countries war for independence and the shared social and political traits emanating from it. Section three examines Colombia and Venezuela’s the divergent paths following their establishment as independent nation-states and the events that shaped their respective national ideologies. Lastly, section four offers a review of the US influence in the region and how it impacted Colombia and Venezuela’s political and philosophical components. As Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph Tulchin offer, “Right or wrong, historical interpretations and myths permeate the perceptions of foreign policymakers and enjoy tremendous popularity with the general

² Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, (NC, Duke University Press, 2006), xv.

public.”³ States may not be destined to take the actions of the past, but past experience has an impact on how they behave. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the salient points of this chapter.

The Spanish Conquest and the Rise of the *Criollo* Elites

Colombia and Venezuela’s shared historical background define their post-colonial national identities in similar ways. The Spanish Conquest is the first of three *history altering events* for both Colombia and Venezuela. The ideological encounters and political traditions that emanated from the Spanish Conquest have permeated each country’s historic, present, and future outlooks.⁴ The Spanish Conquest not only binds these two countries in a common history, but also serves to promote the development of a common national identity where elitism and strong division by social class have become the standard. As Muñoz and Tulchin offer, “Historical and cultural factors have been crucial in shaping the belief systems, images, and attitudinal prisms of foreign policy elites in Latin America.”⁵ Colombia and Venezuela are not the exceptions.

Two Worlds Collide: Conquest and Colonization

The conquest of Latin America was conducted in the spirit of expansionism and self interest and not with the intent of development. The European *discovery* of America came as the result of Europe’s expansion during the fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century, they had constructed an intricate network of communications all around the world and established the economic dominance that would shape the world for over three centuries. Three main elements made the European conquest of the Americas possible: unparalleled technological skill in ocean travel, a robust economic base to finance exploration, and the desire to convert heathen masses to Christianity.⁶ The combination

³ Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, ed., *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, (CO, Westview Press, 1996), 47.

⁴ Their pre-colonial history certainly helped shape their particular cultures. However, as we shall see in this chapter, the remaining indigenous population in Colombia and Venezuela was much smaller compared with other Latin American countries. As such, their legacy was not as potent as that of the colonists.

⁵ Muñoz and Tulchin, ed., *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, 47.

⁶ Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 6th ed., (NY, Oxford University Press, 2005), 15.

of these factors generated a spirit of conquest that reached its height in the trips to the New World.

This spirit of conquest set the tone for colonial rule in the Americas and shaped the attitudes of the elites charged with governing the colonies. The first Spaniards to come to the New World were the conquistadors, administrators, and the clergy. Conquistadors were adventure-seeking travelers and “risk-taking entrepreneurs” who used to finance their own expeditions in hopes of getting rich quick. The administrators were appointed as representatives of the Spanish crown in the colonies. Their role was to maintain the newly established colonies as a source of wealth and prestige for the empire. Monarchs believed the wealth of the New World would strengthen their political control domestically and abroad. The clergy had the mission of “saving the souls” of the native peoples and acquiring wealth and land for the Catholic Church.⁷ Therefore, while the Spaniards might have reached America with the expressed purpose of serving God and King, many did so with the intention of getting rich and increasing their social status. According to Skidmore and Smith, the main reason was “the achievement of noble rank and wealth.”⁸ Thus, Colonialism made its way to the New World not in the spirit of development, but in the spirit of expansion, conquest, and wealth accumulation.

The Conquest also fomented elitism and stratification by social class, elements that are still present in contemporary Colombia and Venezuela. During the sixteenth century, 2 percent of the population was comprised of white elites who were the most powerful and wealthy. Blacks, *mestizos*, and *mulattoes* comprised around 3 percent of the population during the same period. The remaining indigenous peoples made up the remaining 95 percent of the population. The conquest by the Spanish and Portuguese starting in 1492 created “a new social order based on domination, hierarchy, and the intermingling of European, African, and indigenous elements.”⁹ Natives were of the utmost importance to crown and colonists alike. They became the basis of the New World economy as they produced cheap labor, which maximized the colonists’ revenues. The combination of labor exploitation and diseases such as influenza, smallpox, and

⁷ Dennis M. Hanratty and Sandra W. Meditz, ed. “Colombia: A Country Study”, (Washington, Government Printing Office for the Library of Congress, 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/colombia>, accessed 17 March, 2010.

⁸ Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 15.

⁹ Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 3.

measles for which native peoples had no immune defenses resulted in the drastic decline of the indigenous population. Data specifying the population of indigenous people before, during, and after the conquest is elusive. The most reliable studies, however, point to as much as a 95% decline of the native population during the first 85 years of conquest.¹⁰ To compensate for the drastic decline in native labor, the Spaniards began to import black slaves from Africa.

Colonial society relied on “purity of blood” as a basis of stratification. There were rivalries between whites born in Spain or *peninsulares*, and those born in the New World, called *criollos*. *Peninsulares* appointed by the crown controlled the highest jurisdictional levels and *criollos* could compete only for the lower posts. *Peninsulares* held political power and social prestige while *criollos* had only limited access to higher levels of power and status. Next in importance, and the most numerous, were the *mestizos*. These were persons of mixed Spanish and Indian blood that were free but relegated to positions of lower prestige. Black African slaves and *zambos*, persons of mixed Indian and African decent, were at the bottom of the social scale and were important only as a source of labor.¹¹ In contrast with the North American biracial society that developed during and after the North American revolution, Latin America’s multi-racial societies formed a social structure that divided itself in terms of race and function. The result was a Spanish America where stratification by social status or social group was rampant. In the eighteenth century the resentment accumulated through years of social inequalities and the desires for national sovereignty motivated *criollo*-led moves for independence.

The Spanish settled along the north coast of today's Colombia as early as the 1500s, but did not establish their first permanent settlement until 1525. In 1549, the institution of the *Audiencia* in Santa Fe de Bogotá gave that city the status of capital of New Granada which included a large part of what is now territory of Colombia. In 1717, the Spanish established the Viceroyalty of New Granada with Santa Fé de Bogotá as its

¹⁰ This number represents the most reliable estimates from Central Mexico alone and encompasses the period between 1519, at around 25 million natives, to 1605 with about 1 million remaining natives. Reference: Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 19. The impact of the Conquest and colonialism to indigenous peoples in Latin America varies from one country to another. Colombia and Venezuela have a much smaller indigenous population than Ecuador and Bolivia. This may be the result of a stronger Spanish presence in Colombia and Venezuela due to them having more exploitable resources.

¹¹ Hanratty and Meditz, ed. “Colombia: A Country Study”.

capital. This Viceroyalty included some other provinces that correspond mainly to today's Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama. Consequently, Bogotá became one of the principal administrative centers of the Spanish possessions in the New World. In addition, Spain divided the military and intellectual centers of society in different locations, with universities and other intellectual institutions residing in today's Colombia, and the military's stronghold located in today's Venezuela.¹² It is no surprise then that the movement for independence started in Venezuela, the center of military capability of New Granada. Colombia, however, was to maintain a strong adherence to its institutions. Despite the distinction, the wars for independence became the second *history altering event* for both countries.

The Wars for Independence

Independence in Latin America was the result of the collapse of the Spanish empire and not due to “internal development of new political forces.”¹³ As such, the early development of strong political institutions was impaired by a social system incapable of assimilating its new freedom. Three major events contributed to the independence movements in Latin America. The first was the increasing direct control Spanish monarchs were exercising on their New World colonies. As mentioned earlier, this began with the establishment of the Viceroyalty in New Granada by Philip V. Later, Charles III levied heavy taxes on his colonies to fund the war with Britain and to fund the Spanish fleet that patrolled the Spanish American coasts. These taxes affected the imports, exports and the sales of general items important to the colonies' economy. The Enlightenment served as the second influence factor in the struggle for independence as it infused the ideas of self-governance and autonomy in the minds of the local upper-class and *criollos*. The North American and French Revolutions also influenced the intellectual foundations of a new society and highlighted the possibility of change.¹⁴ They also influenced the ideas and values of Simon Bolívar, the hero of the independence movement in Colombia and Venezuela. Lastly, the Napoleonic invasion of the early

¹² Lt Col Benavides, interview.

¹³ Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation State in Latin America*, (PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 23.

¹⁴ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

1800s served as the final and perhaps strongest motivator for Latin American independence.

Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte placed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte on the throne of Spain following the French invasion in 1808. By and large, the Spanish elite did not recognize Bonaparte as their legitimate ruler. As a result, Spanish elites resorted to the creation of *juntas* as an alternative to the official administration toppled by the French.¹⁵ However, establishing a stable and widely recognized government in Spain took time. Napoleon's placement of his brother on the throne precipitated a four-year long guerrilla struggle in Spain. This created a power vacuum in the Spanish territories in the Americas and further political uncertainty. Declarations of independence followed the news of Napoleon's control of Spain. On 19 April 1810, the Caracas municipal council deposed the Spanish Governor and Captain General, Vicente Emparán and established a local *junta*. On July 5, 1811 the Caracas *junta* declared Venezuelan independence from Spain.

In Venezuela, poor political leadership and rampant elitism plagued the First Republic in what eventually became known as “La Patria Boba”, The Foolish Fatherland. Several major cities' *cabildos* never accepted independence from Spain.¹⁶ The Caracas *criollo* elite initially failed to accept the importance of popular support for the cause of independence. As a result, Venezuela's popular masses preferred to remain loyal to the crown instead of being governed by the white elite of Caracas. A young Venezuelan named Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Palacios y Blanco, commonly known as Simon Bolívar, vowed to liberate Spanish America from Spanish rule. His famous “war to the death”, a prelude to Hugo Chavez's “socialism or death” cry, was followed by a rapid campaign through the Andes to capture Caracas. In 1813, Bolívar invaded Venezuela, captured Caracas, and was proclaimed the “Libertador” by the people. He proceeded to found the Second Republic and was given dictatorial powers. Following the tradition of his *criollo* elite predecessors, Bolívar also overlooked the aspirations of the non-white population.

¹⁵ *Juntas* were usually composed of prominent members of society added to the already existing municipal councils called *ayuntamientos* or *cabildos*. *Juntas* of the capitals of the traditional peninsular kingdoms distinguished themselves from the provincial *juntas* by using the term “Supreme” *Juntas*. *Juntas* were created to coordinate efforts against the French and to deal with British aid.

¹⁶ Coro, Maracaibo, and Guayana preferred Joseph Bonaparte's rule to that of the Caracas *cabildo*.

Ferdinand VII regained the throne of Spain in late 1814 and quickly moved to regain control of the colonies. Most of the non-white population in Venezuela fought under the leadership of royalist caudillo José Tomás Boves for what they perceived as “social equality against a revolutionary that represented the white, *criollo* elite.”¹⁷ Boves troops forced Bolívar out of Caracas forcing him to take refuge in Jamaica. This effectively put an end to the Second Republic, though a number of local caudillos kept the independence movement alive. One of them, José Antonio Páez, convinced his fellow countrymen that the Spanish, not the *criollo* patriots were the true enemy of social equality. His alliance with Bolívar proved crucial during the 1816-1820 struggle for independence. It was Simon Bolívar, however, who was to be elevated to the role of “maximum caudillo.”¹⁸ His worries and hopes for the future ahead were eloquently captured in one of his letters from Jamaica where he stated: “It is harder, Montesquieu has written, to free a nation from slavery than to enslave a free nation. [...] In spite of this lesson, South Americans have endeavored to obtain liberal, even perfect institutions, doubtless out of that universal human instinct to seek the greatest possible happiness; and this is certain to be found in civil societies founded on the principles of justice, liberty, and equality.”¹⁹

The struggle for independence was not relegated to Venezuela alone. In modern-day Colombia, the leaders of various *criollo* councils sought to unite the colony of New Granada. Conflict emerged from the beginning. The provincial councils did not want the “centralist, authoritarian type of government advocated by the Bogota council”, preferring a federalist government resembling the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and the examples of the American and French revolutions.²⁰ In 1812, Simon Bolívar tried to gain independence for New Granada following the earlier declarations of independence by several individual provinces. The absence of united support from the provinces frustrated his efforts.

Following Ferdinand VII’s reestablishment of the Spanish throne, Pablo Morillo led a pacification expedition on behalf of the king from present-day Venezuela to Bogotá.

¹⁷ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

¹⁸ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

¹⁹ Simon Bolivar, *Letter from Jamaica*, 1815, quoted in R.A Humphreys and John Lynch, eds., *The Origins of Latin American Revolutions, 1808-1826* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 266.

²⁰ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

He granted pardon to those who swore allegiance to the crown as well as freedom to all slaves who participated in the re-conquest of the colonies. Combined with Bolívar's exile to Jamaica and the continued conflict between centralists and federalists, Morillo was able to recover most of the provinces. Cartagena fell by the end of 1815. Morillo's regime soon turned to violent repression as he moved to conquer Bogotá, which fell in early 1816. He installed a Tribunal of Purification to deal with exiles and prisoners and a Board of Confiscations. The Ecclesiastical Tribunal imposed military law to priests implicated in subversive activities.²¹ The repressive regime led to growing discontent, contributing to the renewal of the independence movement and the opening of the door to Bolívar's return.

Now counting on the support of the masses previously lured by the Spanish promises of freedom from slavery and repartition of land, Bolívar was able to sustain a successful military campaign for independence. In 1819, after the Battle of Boyacá, he created the Angostura Congress, establishing the Third Republic with himself as president. Bolívar quickly moved his troops across the Andes to conduct a surprise attack on the Spanish garrison of Bocayá, near Bogotá liberating New Granada. In June 1821, Bolívar's troops fought the Battle of Carabobo that liberated Caracas from the Spaniards. The following month Colombian and Venezuelan delegates met to sign the Constitution of the Republic of Gran Colombia, a federation of present day Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador, with its capital in Bogotá. Bolívar was named president and Francisco de Paula Santander as vice-president.²²

In the years following independence, rivalries, revolutions, and civil wars destroyed the unity Bolívar fought so hard to put in place. Venezuelans expressed resentment at being governed once again from afar.²³ In 1830, Venezuela separated from Gran Colombia under the leadership of General José Antonio Páez and became a sovereign country. This constituted Venezuela's Fourth Republic.

²¹ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., "Venezuela: A Country Study."

²² Haggerty and Meditz, ed., "Venezuela: A Country Study."

²³ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., "Venezuela: A Country Study."

From Shared Origins to Divergent paths

Differences between Spain and the colonies' elites opened the door for the independence movements that followed in the eighteenth century. Singularly charismatic *caudillos* like Simon Bolívar rose to the occasion and led the peoples of Latin America to their eventual independence. The elitism, social divisions, and rampant inequality that characterized the Spanish colonies remained following Colombia and Venezuela's wars of independence and prompted popular discontent. The *criollo* elites possessed wealth, but lacked the economic and social cohesion to develop the conditions necessary to control government. In the absence of a framework for legitimate government institutions, Venezuela and Colombia's politics became personalized. Elitism and social division might have been the shared result of the Spanish Conquest; however, they were manifested differently in these two countries following their independence. Venezuela's military tradition and reliance on strong military *caudillos* not only helps explain why the move for independence was originated there; it is also the main reason insurgencies tended to be quelled quickly through the often despotic and ruthless policies of the many military dictators that took over following its independence. Conversely, Colombia's tradition as the institutional and intellectual stronghold of the Viceroyalty of New Granada explains its preponderance of civilian governments and the relatively few years of military regimes.²⁴ Unfortunately, conflict between the two dominant political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, coupled with the endemic elitism inherited from the Conquest sundered Colombia into an era of internal conflict that remains to this day.

Venezuela: From Birthplace of *Caudillismo*, to Democracy in Peril

Caudillo, a Spanish word describing a political and military leader usually displaying authoritarian power was a term used to refer to charismatic populist leaders among the people of Latin America. *Caudillismo* depended greatly on personality. Military leaders like Simon Bolívar who displayed a charismatic personality and enough

²⁴ Colombia maintained a tradition of civilian government and regular, free elections following the dissolution Of Gran Colombia. The military has seized power three times in Colombia's history: in 1830, after the dissolution of Great Colombia; in 1854 by General José María Melo; and from 1953 to 1957 under General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. Civilian rule was restored within one year in the first two instances. Rojas Pinilla orchestrated the military coup that ousted the democratically elected and Conservative Party leader, Laureano Gómez following La Violencia. He was overthrown by the military when he failed to restore democracy and under allegations of corruption.

populist programs promising future reforms gained, at least initially, a lot of followers among the common people. From 1830 when Venezuela separated from Gran Colombia until the emergence of pro-democratic movements in 1958, the country had practically continuous dictatorial rule. Haggerty offers that “Venezuela’s century-long post-independence era of *caudillismo* is perhaps best understood as a competition among various social and regional factions for the control of Caracas-based bureaucracy that served as the trade with the North Atlantic Nations.”²⁵ Venezuelan nationalism and political and economic control centered in Caracas “have been an ever-increasing force for over a century.”²⁶ Following the destruction and death left behind by the wars of independence and the devastation to its economy, Venezuela transitioned into an agricultural-based export economy based primarily on coffee, a high commodity product in the North Atlantic nations. This coffee-based economy dominated Venezuela’s economy until the oil boom of the twentieth century. Under the tutelage of General Páez, who was twice elected president under the 1830 constitution, Venezuela experienced considerable economic growth.

In the 1840s, however, coffee prices decreased considerably, and the Venezuelan elite divided into two factions. The Conservatives remained loyal to Páez while the Liberals opposed him. In 1846 Páez selected General José Tadeo Monagas as his successor who, two years later, ousted all the Conservatives from his government and sent Páez into exile. Monagas established a decade of dictatorial rule which he shared with his brother, José Gregorio. In 1857 they introduced a new constitution in an attempt to install a Monagas family dynasty. The regime was ousted the following year in a revolt that included elite members of both parties. A 12-year civil war followed when the elite factions failed to reach an agreement on who was to succeed the Monagas. Between 1858 and 1863, local caudillos engaged in a chaotic power struggle known as the Federal War, because the Liberals favored federalism.²⁷ General Juan C. Falcón was named president following a Liberal victory in the war. Falcon’s lack of interest in ruling and poor leadership skills allowed local caudillos to establish oppressive authoritarian control over their citizenry. Central government authority was restored in 1870 by Falcón’s chief

²⁵ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

²⁶ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

²⁷ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., “Venezuela: A Country Study.”

aide, Antonio Guzmán Blanco who established a dictatorship that lasted 18 years and brought considerable peace and economic development.

The years following Guzmán's tenure were marked by "colorless military regimes" known more for provoking numerous foreign interventions-like the German and British blockade of 1902 imposed to collect defaulted foreign loans-and "despotic and dissolute" governing than for any attempts at developing the political and economic structures of the country.²⁸ One such dictator was Juan Vicente Gómez, who stayed in power from 1908 to 1935, alternating between the posts of president and minister of war. Under Gómez's direction, the national legislature drafted and enacted six different constitutions. The Gómez regime coincided with a favorable period for Venezuelan exports with coffee exports increasing in volume and price. Most importantly however, the foreign exploitation of Venezuela's petroleum reserves began in 1918. This augmented government revenues incredibly and allowed Gómez to pay off the nation's entire foreign debt and initiate extensive public programs. An urban middle class expanded as a result. Oil revenues also allowed Gómez to build a modern army, establish a military academy and create a corps of military officers. Gomez used this professional Army to defeat any attempts of revolution and to impose national integration. Gómez ruled until his death, by natural causes, in December 1935 at age 79.

"During the transition years from 1935 to 1958, the outlines of a national democratic political culture, including the configuration of Venezuela's modern political party system, at last began to take shape."²⁹ It started following Gómez's death when his Minister of War, Eleazar López Contreras assumed the presidency. By and large, Contreras avoided Gomez's despotic policies. The first modern political movements were created under Contreras, namely, the Movimiento de Organización Venezolana (ORVE) later superseded by the National Democratic Party (PDN), and the Contreras-backed Bolivarian Civic Association. Contreras' government laid the foundation for a modern administrative state. Unfortunately, *caudillismo* produced an overreliance on individual political leaders in lieu of the development of robust government organizations capable of sustaining the country. The result was a social, economic, and political

²⁸ Haggerty and Meditz, ed., "Venezuela: A Country Study."

²⁹ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, "Country Profile: Venezuela," <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/vetoc.html>, (accessed 17 March, 2010).

environment totally dependent upon the governing style of the political leader. The advent of democracy therefore, did not bring a permanent solution to either *caudillismo* or its effects. Despite the tremendous achievements of Contreras' successor, Isaías Medina Angarita, his government was overthrown, pushing Venezuela into another 13 years of political instability.

Venezuela was ruled for most of the first half of the twentieth century by military dictators. Pro-democratic groups composed of members from several political parties forced the military out of politics in 1958 and helped to implement a new constitution in 1961. Since that time, Venezuela has had uninterrupted civilian constitutional rule.³⁰ For forty years, Venezuela's two dominant parties, the social democratic Acción Democrática (AD) and social Christian Comité de Organización Política Independiente (COPEI), alternated in power several times following the terms agreed upon during the Pacto de Punto Fijo (Punto Fijo Pact). Their import substitution and government intervention policies for the economy increased their legitimacy and popularity. This changed following the administrations of Carlos Andrés Pérez (AD) and Rafael Caldera (COPEI). Both of these presidents instituted neoliberal policies that exacerbated social inequality.

As a world supplier of oil, Venezuela had ample resources with which to address poverty and provide opportunities for the lower classes. In the ten years between 1970 and 1980, Venezuela's income surpassed that of all of its previous years, yet, at the end of the same period, the country had only limited economic gains and a substantial foreign debt.³¹ The government's inability to address these issues, coupled with scandals of corruption and the collapse of banking institutions, further exacerbated the frustrations of most Venezuelans. Carlos Andrés Pérez's measures, which were prompted by the International Monetary Fund, included the privatization of state companies, tax reform, and diminishing the role of the state in the economy. Perhaps the most controversial part of Pérez's economic reforms was the elimination of gas subsidies, which had maintained the domestic petrol price well below international levels. Following the elimination of subsidies, petrol prices increased as much as 100 percent, increasing the cost of public transportation by 30 percent and leading to a wave of riots and looting in Caracas on 27

³⁰ Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Venezuela."

³¹ Frank O. Mora and Jeanne A. K. Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, (NY, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2003), 153.

February 1989. Commonly known as “El Caracazo”, the event resulted in the death of up to 3000 people, most of them at the hands of the national security forces.³²

Actions such as those taking place during El Caracazo undermined the government’s authority and legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Two failed military coups in 1992—one of them lead by then Lt Col Hugo Chavez—exemplified the level of popular discontent. AD and COPEI political leadership attempted to remedy the situation throughout the 1990s without success. President Pérez was impeached in 1993 under allegations of misappropriation of funds. Chavez was released from prison in 1994, remaining determined to take power. Frequent economic crises and corruption scandals heightened the discontent of the population, helping to set the stage for Hugo Chavez gaining power through elections in 1998. However, Chavez had learned the lesson his eighteenth century caudillos did not. His social development platform garnered great appeal among the middle and lower classes. Some believe President Chavez may be well on his way to breaking the current 40-year democratic monopoly. Chavez’s election broke the spell of what, in the prior decade, had become known as “Venezuela’s exceptionalism”; the period, starting in the early 1960s, where Venezuela’s democratic government contrasted with the wave of dictatorships and authoritarian governments elsewhere in Latin America.³³

As illustrated above, *Caudillismo* has been an important part of Venezuela’s national identity. This identity, in turn, was expressed in the form of tyrannical rulers that, with various degrees of efficiency, shaped Venezuelan society to this day. In modern day Venezuela, Hugo Chavez represents the epitome of the post-colonial caudillo. Even Chavez has referred to himself as the re-incarnation of Simon Bolívar. Celebrating the anniversary of Simon Bolívar’s death in the presence of some of his military colleagues, a young Chavez declared: “There is Bolívar in the sky of the Americas, watchful and frowning [...] because he left undone remains undone to this

³² Hands Off Venezuela, “Anniversary of the Caracazo”, 22 February 2007, http://handsoffvenezuela.organniversary_caracazo_london.htm, (accessed 15 March 2010).

³³ Steve Ellner and Miguel Tinker Salas, ed., *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an “Exceptional Democracy”*, (NY, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 5.

very day.”³⁴ However, after decades of *caudillos* who paid little attention to electoral politics, Chavez has expertly created his own populist caudillismo “through the constant mobilization of the machinery of electoral mass politics.”³⁵

Colombia: Struggle from Within

While I return later to Venezuela’s contemporary politics, it seems prudent to first discuss Colombia as a point of comparison with respect to the role of elitism inherited from the Conquest. The overreliance on the individual was also manifested in Colombia’s post-independence history. Unlike Venezuela, however, Colombia’s tradition of stronger institutions and the advent of capitalism replaced the old colonial structure and opened the door for the ideological differences between the two dominant political parties to replace *personalism* as the main political trait. Regrettably, the institutions were incapable of closing the gap between the elite and the population. Popular discontent coupled with ideological differences between the political elites led to the decades of violence that have torn Colombia to this day, along with the insurgencies and drug trafficking that have followed.

Since 1810, Colombia has maintained a democratic tradition with representative elections. Two political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have dominated the political environment in Colombia since its independence. The Liberals, following Santander’s policies, believe in a federalist government characterized by decentralization, state controlled education and broader suffrage. The Conservatives, mainly Bolívar’s supporters, prefer a more centralized government and limited franchise. Despite being the President of the new republic, Simon Bolivar decided to continue leading the republican forces in their southern campaigns in Ecuador and Peru. The office of the President of Gran Colombia was entrusted to General Francisco de Paula Santander, the vice-president at the time. The Constitution mandated that the vice-president remain in Bogotá in order to handle the functions of the executive branch of government. During

³⁴ Joe Contreras, “The Ghost of Simon Bolívar”, *Newsweek*, 5 January, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/84500/page/1> (accessed 19 March 2010), from the Magazine issued 14 January 2008.

³⁵ Eakin C. Marshall, *The history of Latin America: Collision of Cultures*, (NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 358.

this period Santander moved to uphold the liberal beliefs of the Enlightenment.³⁶ He also made a concerted move toward free trade, removing and/or reducing many of the taxes left in place by the Spanish rule in addition to opening ports to all foreign nations. He also created incentives for immigrants, including expedited naturalization and land grants.

Bolívar undid many of Santander's actions after he returned in 1826 and reassumed his position as president, often ruling through emergency decree. In 1828, Bolívar assumed dictatorial powers and attempted to install a constitution calling for a strong central authority and a president for life who could name his own successor. Santander and his political sympathizers felt that this act was contrary to the ideals of liberalism and the ideology of the Enlightenment. In 1830, Bolívar resigned the presidency and installed José Domingo Caicedo as his successor. A new constitution emerged under the direction of Caicedo. It restricted the power of the president and expanded the authority of the regional departments. Santander returned in 1832 and was elected for a second term. He remained an important and influential political figure even after his term expired. Santander died in 1840 and was eventually considered as one of the original ideological founders of the Colombian Liberal Party.

Similar to Venezuela, Colombian politics until then were characterized by an overreliance on the individual as an agent of development and progress. “Personalism and regionalism remained key elements in national politics in a country with small cities, weak state, and semifeudal population that was bound to the large land owners in patron-client relationships.”³⁷ This changed as a result of the election of José Hilario López as president in 1849. Under López, capitalism began to replace the old colonial structure while the ideological differences between the two dominant political parties replaced *personalism* as the main political trait. Colombia’s reliance on institutions represents a clear distinction from Venezuela’s *caudillismo*. Elitism, however, remained a shared trait between these two countries. In Colombia, it will serve as a precursor to years of violence and set the stage for the national liberation movements of the 1960s.

³⁶ One of Santander’s most famous quotes, spoken to his fellow Colombians states: “The weapons gave you the independence. The laws will give you freedom.” Benavidez, interview.

³⁷ Dennis M. Hanratty and Sandra W. Meditz, ed. “Colombia: A Country Study”, (Washington, Government Printing Office for the Library of Congress, 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/colombia>, (accessed 18 March, 2010).

The ideological division between the two predominant elite parties became official in 1850 with the creation of the Liberal Party (PL) and the Conservative Party (PC). In keeping with the traditions of their predecessors, the Liberals favored anti-colonial policies, advocated free trade, endorsed the liberalization of state economic monopolies, and sought less executive power, separation of state and church, free press, and the elimination of the death penalty. In contrast, the Conservatives wanted to maintain the Spanish colonial legacy of a strong central government and institutions, an alliance between the state and the church, continued slavery, and the elimination of what they considered excessive freedoms.³⁸ The lower class was divided between the two parties with individuals aligning their loyalties to those of their patrons but not necessarily out of philosophical affinity or civil duty. The bitter rivalries between the two parties culminated in the War of a Thousand Days which lasted from 1899 to 1902 and affected the entire country, killing about 100,000 people.³⁹ The constant conflict between the elite parties left little room for social and economic development. The problem in Colombia was not a lack of institutions, but a lack of institutions capable of effectively addressing the needs of the population.

This lack of institutional legitimacy was strongest at a time when Colombian society was in dire need of strong and equitable legal and law enforcement institutions. After a 40-year peace, civil war erupted once again between supporters of the Liberal and Conservative parties. This period of extreme violence which lasted from 1946 to 1965, became known as La Violencia (The Violence) and claimed the lives of 300,000 Colombians.⁴⁰ La Violencia became an expression of a “chronic deficit of state authority.”⁴¹ Both the armed forces and the police became involved in crimes and human rights violations and gained a reputation for brutality and inefficiency that remained a major trait of these two institutions until the 1990s. The Judicial system, having been established just a year prior in 1945, became “subservient to the executive branch.”⁴²

³⁸ Hanratty and Meditz, ed. “Colombia: A Country Study.”

³⁹ Eakin, *The History of Latin America: Collision of Cultures*, 354. Also, reference Hanratty and Meditz, ed. “Colombia: A Country Study.”

⁴⁰ This is the accepted figure in Colombia; however, the exact numbers are elusive given the rampant criminality and distances between the rural communities and the capital at the time. Reference Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, 136.

⁴¹ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, 1875-2002, 168.

⁴² Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, 1875-2002, 169.

In 1958, a political pact known as the Frente Nacional (National Front) mandated that the Conservative and Liberal parties alternate the presidency and divide political offices for four administrations. The Frente Nacional did maintain the accorded itinerary. Four presidents of alternating Liberal and Conservative parties were elected by popular vote.⁴³ While the effort partially healed the partisan tensions and distrust, the need to secure bipartisan agreement for any policy or action resulted in government stagnation and led to voter apathy. This “crisis of legitimacy”, as Colombian historian Marco Palacios calls it, constituted the defining trait of Colombia’s political system in the 1970s which was aggravated by “financial scandals, the emergence of drug trafficking, and the strengthening of the guerillas.”⁴⁴ The National Front system itself eventually became a form of political repression by dissidents and even many mainstream voters, especially after the fraudulent election of Conservative candidate Misael Pastrana in 1970, which resulted in the defeat of the relatively populist candidate Gustavo Rojas.

The Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement), also known as the M-19 guerrilla movement, was eventually founded in part as a response to this particular event. Palacios captures the essence of Colombia’s armed groups most eloquently: “The revolutionary guerrillas of the 1960 were several things at once; the continuation of the most radicalized Liberal fighting spirit of the high Violencia, the response of part of the Colombian left to the Liberal-Conservative oligarchy’s monopoly of legal politics under the National Front, and an opportunity to bring the Colombian peasantry into a socialist project from which they have been excluded.”⁴⁵

Initially, the M-19 attracted more attention and sympathy from mainstream Colombians than the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).⁴⁶ Its larger profile made the M-19 the focus of the state's counterinsurgency efforts. By 1982, the relative success of the government's efforts against insurgent groups enabled the administration of the Liberal Party's Julio César Turbay to lift a state-of-siege decree that had been in effect, on and off, for most of

⁴³ Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958-62), Guillermo León Valencia (1962-66), Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-70), and Misael Pastrana (1970-74).

⁴⁴ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, 1875-2002, 171.

⁴⁵ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, 1875-2002, 191.

⁴⁶ This was due in part to daring operations such as stealing a sword that had belonged to Colombia's Independence hero Simon Bolívar.

the previous 30 years. Under this state-of-siege, president Turbay had implemented security policies that, despite lessening the insurgents' influence, were deemed questionable domestically and internationally due to numerous accusations of military human rights abuses against suspects and captured guerrilla members.

On 6 November, 1985 the M-19 stormed the Colombian Palace of Justice and held the Supreme Court magistrates hostage, intending to put then President Belisario Betancur on trial. Scores of people as well as most of the attacking guerrillas lost their lives in the ensuing crossfire that followed the military's reaction. Following administrations had to contend with the guerrillas, paramilitaries, narco-traffickers and the violence and corruption these administrations had created through force and negotiation. Narco-terrorists assassinated three presidential candidates before César Gaviria was elected in 1990. The M-19 was incorporated into a peace process in the early 1990s, which culminated in the elections for a Constituent Assembly of Colombia with the participation of former guerrilla members. The Assembly wrote a new constitution, which took effect in 1991. It is worth mentioning that the previous constitution had been in effect for 105 years. The new constitution brought several institutional and legal reforms based on principles that the delegates considered more modern, humanist, democratic, and politically open than those existent under the previous 1886 constitution.⁴⁷ It also set the stage for the creation of the multiple political parties that exist today, an act that offered additional legitimate institutional venues for the expression of popular sentiment.

As these events were developing, the growing illegal drug trade and its consequences were becoming more important to all participants in the Colombian conflict. The guerrillas and wealthy drug lords had uneasy relations that led to numerous incidents between them. The kidnapping of drug cartel family members by guerrilla groups led to the creation in 1981 of anti-guerrilla death squads which further exacerbated the already violent reality in Colombia. Pressure from the U.S. government and important sectors of Colombian society was met with more violence. Under the leadership of drug lord Pablo Escobar, the Medellín Cartel bribed or murdered public

⁴⁷ For a good discussion on Colombia's 1991 Constitution, reference: Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 249-253.

officials, politicians and any others who supported the extradition of Colombian nationals to the United States. Since the death of Pablo Escobar in a police shootout on December 1993, cartels broke into multiple, smaller, and, by and large, competing organizations. Nonetheless, violence continued as these drug organizations used violence as part of their operations and as a means to protest against government extradition policies among others.

Colombia's history of internal violence is an intricate part of what makes contemporary Colombia. Elitism, limited government presence in large areas of the interior, the expansion of illicit drug cultivation, and social inequities generated popular discontent and conspired to produce a clash of social forces that produced years of internal violence with repercussions Colombians still experience to this day. Two civil wars resulted from the bitter rivalry between the Conservative and Liberal parties. The Thousand Days War of 1899-1902 cost an estimated 100,000 lives. Up to 300,000 people died during La Violencia of the late 1940s and 1950s. National liberation groups like the M-19, the FARC, and the ELN have been fighting against government forces for more than four decades. These guerilla organizations flourished during the mid-1960s in Colombia's remote and underdeveloped rural parts of the country where government presence was virtually non-existent. By and large, these revolutionary groups provided what the central government was incapable or unwilling to do: security, stability, and the means to subsist via the cultivation, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs in the 1970s and 1980s.

With the election of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez in 2002 and with strong US assistance, the government of Colombia has progressively managed to regain and maintain control of rural areas and bring the gradual increase of security and economic development Colombia so desperately needed. Notwithstanding the country's commitment to democratic institutions, Colombia's history has also been characterized by widespread, violent conflict.

As we have seen thus far, the Spanish conquest resulted in elitism and social divisions in both Colombia and Venezuela and locked them into "political equilibriums unsuited for further institutional development."⁴⁸ These, however, manifested themselves

⁴⁸ Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation State in Latin America*, 17.

differently after their independence. The internal factors of Caudillismo in Venezuela and internal violence in Colombia became part of these countries' national ideologies. Both affected their respective social, political, and philosophical components. In Venezuela, the legacy of tyrannical rulers aligned national interests to personal enrichment. In Colombia, the constant struggle between the elites shifted the state's attention to managing violence instead of developing the society. Both states emerged from their respective struggles with increased levels of popular discontent, mediocre public institutions, and weak governments incapable of exercising its legitimate authority.

While internal forces within Colombia and Venezuela's historical context clearly had an effect on their respective behaviors, there were additional factors worth consideration. As we will see in the following section, United States intervention, in addition to the Conquest, represented another external force with significant impact on these two states' pasts and helped shape their contemporary realities. The US intervention in Latin America and its repercussion in Colombian and Venezuelan politics represent the third and final *history altering event* for these two countries.

Rules from the North: United States Influence in Latin America

In the century after the Latin American wars for independence, the United States emerged as a powerful political and economic influence, using both military force and economic enticement to get its way in the region. The Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary, along with the Cold War's policy of containment, served as platforms for US unilateral intervention in Latin America. However, despite the policies of intervention in the affairs of its southern neighbors, the United States policy towards the region also displayed a great deal of indifference towards Latin America. Historically, the United States has set aside Latin American affairs whenever a "more significant" crisis appears elsewhere. This was the case of US policy towards the region following the Great Depression, WWII, and most recently, 9-11. These kinds of protectionist (some may call them imperialist) approaches and ambivalent policies, coupled with Latin America's historical social division and inability to produce good governance, has served as the basis for US-Latin American relations for almost two centuries.

United States in Latin America: Between Intervention and Indifference

The United States did not get overly involved in the region during Latin America's wars for independence. The United States had just concluded a war with Britain in 1812 and did not want to provoke it any further, particularly given that the British desired to establish economic ties with the new republics and would not tolerate US intervention. Although their eclipsing empires were less of a threat, Spain and Portugal also presented a challenge to the US. Yet, despite these challenges, the United States and Latin America shared a common goal: to restrict European political influence in the hemisphere. The United States saw Europe as a threat to its growing influence in the region. Latin American states saw Europe as a menace to their nascent political and economic sovereignty. Nonetheless, US interests in Latin America have been, by and large, motivated primarily by US goals. Realizing the potential for continued European control and exploitation in the hemisphere, the United States acted accordingly.⁴⁹

The first and by far most enduring US approach to the region came about while the Latin American struggle for independence was still under way.⁵⁰ On 2 December, 1823, while Bolivar's forces were still engaged in Peru's battle for independence, President James Monroe instituted what would later be called the Monroe Doctrine, an act that would set the tone of US-Latin America relations for well over a century. President Monroe stated that further efforts by European countries to colonize or interfere with states in the Americas would represent acts of aggression requiring US intervention. Mares offers that, "After independence the idea of a 'Western Hemisphere,' culturally and politically distinct from Europe, permeated the diplomatic rhetoric, if not actual foreign policy, of the states."⁵¹ Latin American states received Monroe's proclamation with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. On the one hand, it validated their independence and gave the perception of a united front against European powers. On the other, the new established republics questioned the real motives behind such a policy.

⁴⁹ The establishment of the so called "Holly Alliance" between Russia, Austria, France, Prussia, Britain, and to a lesser extent Spain and Portugal to foment counterrevolutionary movements in Latin America was a key motivator for Monroe's doctrine.

⁵⁰ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, (NC, Oxford University Press, 2008), 153-155.

⁵¹ David R. Mares, *"Violent Peace"*, (NY, Columbia University Press, 2001), 29.

The United States assumed a protectionist posture towards Latin America from the start. By and large, American statesmen believed Latin America was a “backward, inferior, and underdeveloped region” in need of close supervision.⁵² Maintaining Latin American independence was important, but “the primary concern of the Monroe Doctrine was to protect the interests of the United States.”⁵³ The Monroe Doctrine served as the foundation of US-Latin American relations for one and a half centuries, and while it did not initially prevent European powers from interfering in the hemisphere, it became the basis for US expansion in later years under the mantra of manifest destiny.

The doctrine was modified several times by US leaders as the situation demanded. Under the guise of Manifest Destiny and following the Mexican-American and Spanish-American Wars, the United States would eventually occupy the territories of Texas, New Mexico, California, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Alaska and Hawaii. The United States emerged from these two conflicts as both a regional hegemon, having demonstrated the ability to wage and win a war in the hemisphere, and a powerful player in international politics. By the time President Theodore Roosevelt assumed office in 1901, the United States was determined to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in order to keep European powers away from the hemisphere and preserve the political and economic opportunities in Latin America for US favor. With Roosevelt, the Monroe Doctrine went from a mostly European “hands-off” policy to a predominantly North American “hands-on” approach to Latin American affairs. Venezuela and Colombia were not excluded.

Roosevelt’s first foreign policy test came in 1902. The Venezuelan government had borrowed thousands of dollars in foreign loans from European states, including Germany and Britain. Venezuela defaulted on these loans, which prompted the German and British navies to blockade the Venezuelan coast. The situation was intolerable to Roosevelt who quickly threatened to use the US’s new and powerful navy if the European powers did not disengage. The United States, Germany, and Britain proceeded to settle the issue of Venezuela’s debt, much to the dismay of Latin American states, without Venezuela’s consultation. When the Dominican Republic also defaulted on its loan payments, President Roosevelt took the opportunity to act decisively. Fearing that

⁵² Steward Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, (CT, Praeger Security International, 2006), 36.

⁵³ Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 39.

the situation might cause a military response as with Venezuela and believing that European powers would attempt to occupy Latin American territory as a form of debt remuneration, President Roosevelt resorted to what would be later termed “Big Stick” diplomacy.⁵⁴ On December, 1904, Roosevelt officially announced his intended management of the Monroe Doctrine, also known as the Roosevelt’s Corollary, appealing “to the popular notion of the United States as a benevolent father figure watching over the well-being of a child.”⁵⁵ Later, during a speech to the US Senate in February, 1905 he proclaimed: “The United States then becomes a party of interest, [in Latin American affairs] because under the Monroe Doctrine it cannot see any European power seize and permanently occupy the territory of one of these republics; and yet such seizure of territory[...] may eventually offer the only way in which the power in question can collect any debts, unless there is interference on the part of the United States.” However, this was not the only time President Roosevelt would resort to his “big stick” diplomacy in order to assert US influence in the region. As the Venezuela debt crisis was coming to an end, the United States began to pursue the intention of building a canal somewhere in Central America.⁵⁶

In 1846, the United States and Colombia signed the Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty regarding the Colombian territory of Panamá. The treaty stipulated that the United States would have free access to transit, from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, across the Isthmus of Panamá. The isthmus was to remain under the protection of the Colombian government and any US-constructed canal, roads, and railroads would remain free and neutral. In 1855 the United States constructed a railroad line across the isthmus which provided considerably faster transportation from one ocean to the other. In 1879, the French negotiated their own deal with Colombia regarding the construction of a French canal in the territory of Panamá. The French, however, withdrew from the venture in 1889 in great part due to poor planning and economic insolvency. The United States stepped in and began negotiations to build a canal in Panamá. This concluded with the

⁵⁴ By and large, President Taft continued Roosevelt’s policies in the region. He also implemented an economic initiative called Dollar Diplomacy in which the United States flouted loans and bought up debt in several Latin American Countries. The idea was to influence Latin American countries and make them less susceptible to European involvement.

⁵⁵ Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 89.

⁵⁶ David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914*, (NY, Simon and Schuster, 1977), 16-19.

Hay-Herrán Treaty in January of 1903. However, the treaty was not ratified by the Colombian Congress, which claimed that it was overly favorable to the United States and compromised Colombian sovereignty in the canal zone. President Roosevelt became incensed and began looking for alternative options. The Panamanian territory had been the stage of multiple revolutions against Colombia, all of which were quickly put down by the government. An independent Panamá would be free to renegotiate the terms of a canal. With US assistance, the Panamanians declared independence on 3 November, 1903. On 17 November, the United States and the newly formed government of Panamá signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty which allowed the United States to build the Panamá canal. The result of Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine was a series of practically unimpeded military interventions in Latin America for almost three decades. Roosevelt set a precedent in US relations with Latin America from which the United States would not start to retreat until 1933 with the promulgation of the Good Neighbor Policy.

The United States did make several attempts at soothing its relationship with Latin America. Regrettably, most were more counterproductive than beneficial. For example, in 1929, President Hoover turned away from the customary US approach of intervention. His administration resorted to economic motivations such as markets, goods and trade incentives as means to persuade Latin American countries to act in ways favorable to the United States. In general, Latin American countries had historically depended on foreign assistance for their economic well-being. They did have economic ties with other countries, but these tended to be one-sided and "where Latin American colonies had existed as political colonies of Iberia prior to the nineteenth century, they became the economic colonies of Britain and the United States following their transition to nationhood."⁵⁷ In addition, most Latin American nations tended to focus their economic development on cash-crop commodities such as sugar, coffee, and tobacco that were not conducive to industrialization and market economies. Furthermore, most countries were basing their economies on only one or two products, making their economies extremely vulnerable to market fluctuations. To this day Venezuela relies heavily on oil exports for its economic subsistence. This is why the Great Depression

⁵⁷ Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 99.

had such a significant impact in Latin America. President Hoover did have the intention to improve US-Latin American relations during his administration. Unfortunately, when the market crashed in October, 1929, Hoover turned his attention to domestic matters and Latin American countries had no option but to deal with a difficult economic condition on their own.

Realizing that most of the military interventions had not worked as intended and that they were expensive financially, FDR focused his Good Neighbor policy on building stronger trade relations with Latin America. Some of the tensions that had accumulated over 100 years of unimpeded US intervention began to relax. Following WWII, the United States and Latin America enjoyed relative cooperation and cordial relations. The climax of this relationship occurred in 1949 when the United States and twenty Latin American nations met in Bogotá, Colombia to attend the Ninth International Conference of American States where the Organization of American States (OAS) was created to function as the hemisphere's version of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the years following WWII brought back most of the old tensions. The United States had made extensive use of land and resources from Latin American States during the war, with many of the Latin American countries assuming the United States would help them recover their own economies after the war. However, the United States saw the potential spread of communism throughout the devastated European and Asian nations as a greater threat to peace and prosperity than the threat represented by the conditions in Latin America. As the United States dedicated the brunt of the Marshall Plan's financial aid to Europe and Asia, portions of Latin America began to turn to the left-wing ideals of socialism.

The United States had the opportunity to flex its military, diplomatic, and economic muscles again during and after the Cold War. Concerned about the world-wide proliferation of communism, the United States "encouraged, endorsed, and funded" Latin American military dictators for their ability to fight left-wing guerrillas within their countries."⁵⁸ Most of these movements were born out of the frustration generated by post-war indifference from the United States. Certainly, this was the case with Colombia as we shall see later. In turn, the United States saw these popular social movements as

⁵⁸ Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin America Relations*, 127.

evidence of communist infiltration in the region. Starting with President John F. Kennedy and continuing with President Lyndon B. Johnson, the United States developed a new economic proposal, called the Alliance for Progress (for which Colombia was to be a showcase), designed to regulate and encourage the relations between the United States and Latin American countries by offering capital incentives to prevent left-wing revolutions. Unfortunately, many Latin American states saw this proposal as a “watered-down version of the Marshall Plan that came too late” and the program was later dissolved by President Nixon during the 1970s.⁵⁹ Following the Cuban missile crisis, President Johnson determined that, in order to avoid another nuclear crisis, the United States needed stronger measures than the one offered by the Good Neighbor Policy. US military intervention was back in full force and it ranged from overt military action to covert coups supported by the US military and the Central Intelligence Agency.⁶⁰ US-Latin American relations were severely damaged as a result. However, a new paradigm emerged after the Cold War. The United States was left as the sole superpower militarily, politically, and economically. The communist threat to the hemisphere was no more and so the United States turned once again to economic development as the focus of its foreign policy with Latin America.

John Williamson coined the term Washington Consensus in 1989 to describe the specific economic ideas or common themes that he considered were most commonly accepted by Washington-based institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the US Treasury Department and that he believed were necessary to help Latin America recover from the economic crises of the 1980s.⁶¹ Williamson’s recommendations ranged from fiscal discipline, tax reform, and liberalization of interest rates to free trade, privatization, and property rights.⁶² The unintended result of Williamson’s prescriptions was the use of this term to refer to a set of neoliberal policies

⁵⁹ Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 130.

⁶⁰ For example, Johnson’s military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Nixon’s covert intervention in Chile in 1964.

⁶¹ John Williamson is an economist and scholar currently serving as Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Economics. He served as an advisor to the International Monetary Fund, 1972-1974 and Economic Consultant to UK Treasury, 1968-1970.

⁶² For an excellent description of Williamson’s ten reforms reference: John Williamson, “From the Washington Consensus towards a new Global Governance,” Paper commissioned by Fundación CIDOB, Barcelona, Spain, September 24–25, 2004. This paper is available through the Peterson Institute at: <http://www.petersoninstitute.org/publications/papers/williamson0904-2.pdf>, (accessed 5 May 10).

or market fundamentalism that were imposed on Latin American countries (among others) by international financial institutions and that subsequently led these countries to economic stagnation and poverty. Joseph Stiglitz calls Washington's application of these reforms a "one size fits all" approach to individual economies. In other words, a simplistic treatment based on stabilization, liberalization, and privatization, without prioritizing or watching for side effects.⁶³ Williamson himself rejected the use of the term as a synonym of a neoliberal political agenda. Nonetheless, populist leaders like Hugo Chavez, use the term to refer to the United States' imperialistic objectives in the region and as a major justification for anti-capitalist and anti-free market economies. In the end, the Latin American experience with regards to Washington Consensus policies varied from one state to another. In Venezuela, the new economic approach, combined with overly personalized practices of *caudillo*-like politics, only served to increase the gap between the elite and the population. Conversely, successful economic and security practices, the acceptance of US assistance, and most importantly, the government's ability to provide security and stability to its people have allowed Colombia to avoid the perils of becoming a failed state.

Conclusion

A close examination of the history of Colombia and Venezuela reveals that three fundamental episodes significantly altered the progress of their history and help shape their national ideologies: the Spanish Conquest, independence from Spain, and US intervention. I have termed these episodes *history altering events* to distinguish them in both importance and impact in the evolution of both Colombia and Venezuela from colonialism to their contemporary times.

The Spanish Conquest created a spirit of expansionism and self-interest that failed to foster an environment conducive to institutional development. Instead it served to foment elitism and division by social class. These elements became part of Colombian and Venezuelan national ideology yet manifested themselves differently following the wars for independence. *Caudillismo* became an important part of Venezuela's national

⁶³ Joseph Stiglitz, "Challenging the Washington Consensus - An Interview with Lindsey Schoenfelder", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Winter/Spring 2003, Vol IX, Issue 2, (7 May 2002): 33-40.

identity. This identity, in turn, was expressed in the form of tyrannical rulers that, with various degrees of efficiency, shaped Venezuelan society to this day. Unlike Venezuela, Colombia's tradition of a stronger reliance on institutions and the advent of capitalism replaced the old colonial structure and *personalism* as the main political trait.

Regrettably, the institutions were incapable of closing the gap between the elite and the population. Popular discontent coupled with ideological differences between the political elites led to the decades of violence that have torn Colombia to this day and set the stage for the popular revolutions and drug trafficking that followed.

Like the Spanish Conquest, American intervention in Latin American affairs, and in particular in Colombia and Venezuela, had a tremendous impact in determining who these two countries are. They also had an equally important role in shaping what these two countries want. In other words, they are an integral part of their social components and have helped shape their political and philosophical components. As with their post-independence experience, the manifestation of these national interests have taken different paths. This is an important point as it shows that the same external force can have different effects on different countries. Thus, there should be no one-size-fits-all policy towards Latin America or any other region. The point does not invalidate international relations theorists' efforts to explain state behavior. It simply underscores the importance of understanding the historical context of the country in question when formulating foreign policy.

US influence in the region also helped shape the political components of both states. In Colombia, the need to win the insurgency led to the acceptance of US hegemony and assistance. This is still in line with realist propositions that the state will look to its own security first. It also means that sometimes states choose to do so by aligning itself to the hegemon. The search for power, it seems, does not negate the possibility of cooperation. This was not the case in Venezuela. Here, the context of the US as a hegemon and the dissatisfaction with previous liberal doctrines led to President Chavez's adoption of an alternate regional political philosophy that would balance US influence in the region. This demonstrates that bandwagoning can also occur in order to balance the hegemon's influence.

While it is clear that external factors have been important in the evolution of both Colombia and Venezuela, overemphasizing the role of foreign powers negates the role Colombians and Venezuelans had in determining their own history. As Marshall C. Eakin offers “the relationship between Latin America and these foreign powers has always been very unequal, but it has not been straight forward, one-way relationship with the external forces largely determining the fate of Latin Americans.”⁶⁴ How the state decides to handle their specific reality through its political leaders is also informed by internal factors. In short, the combination of external and internal forces along with the particular realities of each state defined their national ideologies. In the final chapter, I will address how these elements have translated into contemporary times.

⁶⁴ Eakin, *The History of Latin America: Collision of Cultures*, 240.

Chapter 4

Colombia and Venezuela: A Contemporary Outlook

“The convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office.”

- Henry Kissinger, 1979

As evidenced in the preceding chapter, Colombia and Venezuela’s shared historical background helped define the social components of their national ideology in similar ways. Nonetheless, their respective experiences with the Spanish Conquest, their wars for independence, and United States-led policies have led Colombia and Venezuela to develop different political philosophies that steer them into fundamentally divergent security and economic paths. In Colombia, the need to save the country from a long and bloody insurgency has led to the acceptance of US assistance and the strengthening of democratic policies. In contrast, Venezuela’s popular dissatisfaction with the democratic governments’ inability to satisfy the non-elite population, coupled with the perception of failed neoliberal doctrines, has led to the acceptance of socialism as an alternate political philosophy designed to counterbalance US influence in the region. In this chapter I examine the contemporary context that has resulted from the historical factors previously discussed.

The Bolivarian Revolution: Venezuela’s “Turn to the Left”

Why does a country, who once was showcased as an “exceptional democracy,” ends up at the total opposite side of the political spectrum? What sort of historical events prompt the leaders of a state to undergo such political revolution?¹ I have already pointed out that some of those reasons reside within the state. Venezuela’s overreliance on the individual and poor public institutions have certainly impacted the cause of democracy in the country. Ironically, the United States often presumptuous foreign

¹ Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez often uses the term “revolution” when referring to his Bolivarian-style socialist movement. He does not refer to the violent and bloody revolutions of the past (which he claims to despise and blame on the oligarchic elites, despite having tried to orchestrate one himself), but a “peaceful revolution” signifying a break from the US-sponsored neoliberal agenda.

policies have also contributed to the dissolution of the political philosophy it has so vehemently pushed for in the region, particularly in Venezuela. The adoption and poor application of neoliberal policies advocated by the Washington Consensus played a crucial role in Venezuela's turn to the left.

The transformation into an oil-producing state, which started during Juan Vicente Gómez's 27-year tenure, redefined Venezuela's conception of stability and order and influenced its domestic and foreign policies. Subsequent Venezuelan governments "recognized the realities of world power and slowly abandoned isolation" as the primary means of state security.² The United States established trade negotiations with Venezuela in the "context of free trade, free repatriation of profits, and minimal restrictions on U.S. imports [that] produced a trade balance that favored the United States."³ The period of relative democratic stability that followed the Gomez regime brought political and economic benefits to Venezuela. With stability came US investment in the form of major oil companies. The oil industry became the source of national success and by extension, the improvement in "the social standing of oil workers, and the upper and middle classes" even following the resurfacing of military dictators in Venezuelan politics.⁴ WWII, the Korean War, the nationalization of Iranian oil (and later Mexican oil), and the Suez Canal crisis increased the demand for Venezuelan oil and its importance to the United States. By 1958, when members of several political parties composed of Acción Democrática (AD) and the Comité de Organización Política Independiente (COPEI), and the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD) ousted the last military dictator, oil dependency had already shaped the views of the rising political elite. In turn, the United States and US oil companies welcomed these "reformists parties" because of their ties to local labor movements and because they offered "the best antidote to communism in Venezuela."⁵

Unfortunately, the benefits produced from a booming oil economy were not evenly distributed. The government's inability to address these issues, coupled with scandals of corruption and the collapse of banking institutions, antagonized the

² Frank O. Mora and Jeanne A. K. Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, (NY, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2003), 146.

³ Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and The United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire*, (GA, University of Georgia Press, 1996), 170.

⁴ Steve Ellner and Miguel Tinker Salas, *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an "Exceptional Democracy"*, (NY, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, inc, 2007), 35.

⁵ Ellner and Salas, *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an "Exceptional Democracy"*, 54.

population. There was, in short, a difference between national interests as perceived by the political leaders, and the people's permanent interest of security, stability, and prosperity. The wave of riots and looting that took place in Caracas on 27 February 1989 (commonly known as *El Caracazo*) and that ended up with the death of up to 3000 people—most of them at the hands of the national security forces—marked the lowest point in the relations between the political elite and the population.

The adoption and poor application of neoliberal policies advocated by the Washington Consensus also played a crucial role in Venezuela's turn to the left. The reduction of the government's role in the state's economy was a common practice in Latin America during the late 1980s and 1990s. Venezuelan political parties, by and large, supported neoliberal economic programs. Despite nationalizing the oil industry in 1976, its management was kept independent of government interference. Until the early 1990s, the directors of the state-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)*—who were kept on from the foreign companies Exxon, Shell, and Gulf—were able to keep the appearance of company policies that were in line with national interests. As a result, the political parties, the Venezuelan Congress, and even the Ministry of Energy and Mines gradually lost interest and its capacity to establish policy “and ended up as a mere rubber stamp for decisions made by the company managers.”⁶ *El Caracazo*, along with the failed military coup of 1992, was a manifestation of the growing popular dissatisfaction and the undermining of public institutions. The result was distrust of democratic institutions, the United States' “oligarchic” policies, and the overall rejection of capitalism as the economic basis of the state. Hugo Chavez broke the pattern of neoliberal policies that were the accepted political philosophy in Venezuela prior to his election in 1998.

Venezuela's Twenty-First Century Socialism, a term coined by Heinz Dieterich in 1996, represents Hugo Chavez's political alternative to US-led democracy and, according to its proponents, a break from the past Soviet-style socialism of the Twentieth century. According to Dieterich, neither “industrial capitalism” nor “real socialism” have managed “to solve the urgent problems of humanity, like poverty, hunger, exploitation, economic oppression, sexism, racism, the destruction of natural resources,

⁶ Ellner and Salas, *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an “Exceptional Democracy”*, 62.

and the absence of a real participatory democracy.”⁷ James Petras summarizes Twenty-First Century Socialism’s critique of neoliberal policies as follows:⁸

- Markets should not have precedence over the state. The collapse of the “market driven capitalism in the recession of 2000-2001” caused the bankruptcies of banks and businesses and prompted the unemployment of workers and peasants and discredited neoliberal policies.
- Deregulation is counterproductive to a state’s economy. Neoliberal practices cancelled the regulatory policies in place since the Great Depression in favor of a “self-regulated regime in which market players set their own rules” leading to the “pillage of public and private treasuries.”
- Production should focus on creating value for social utility not earning wealth without producing goods and services.
- The privatization of public enterprises and the denationalization of strategic resources were conducive to the “massive growth of inequality.
- Neoliberal practices “surrendered the economic levers of economy to private and foreign bankers (like the IMF) who imposed deflationary measures instead of re-inflating the economy through infusions of stale spending.”

Dieterich suggests the construction of “four basic institutions within the new reality of [a] post-capitalist civilization”; all of which revolve around an “equivalence economy [...] based on Marxian labour theory of value and which is democratically determined.”⁹ Consequently, Twenty-First Century Socialism is neither neoliberal capitalism nor “old” socialism. However, this does not invalidate the acceptance of certain democratic traits.

⁷ Chile Hoy Tv, interview with Heinz Dieterich, 10 March 2007, <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=57133>, (accessed 9 February 2009).

⁸ Petras also provides an excellent overview of Twenty-First Century Socialism as perceived by Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. There are subtle differences between the three, which points out to the fact that governments (and by extension, states) have a say on how a particular political philosophy is to be applied. A political ideology may frame the overall concept, but states themselves define their application based on their particular realities. The application of democratic practices in a “social” context as evidenced by Brazil’s social democratic style suggests that this is a shared trait by all political philosophies. James Petras, “Latin America’s Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective”, in *Global Research*, 12 October 2009, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=15634>, (accessed 16 February 2010).

⁹ Chile Hoy Tv, interview with Heinz Dieterich.

Venezuela's current political reality equates to an authoritarian democracy with a socialist market economy. Chavez's idea of socialism is "informed and legitimized" by the actions and writings of Simon Bolivar, the conception of breaking up with imperial powers, and the importance of popular support against domestic (and foreign) elites.¹⁰ This idea includes extensive nationalization of the oil industry and key enterprises (like steel, cement, and telecommunications) and the development of a land reform that aims at ensuring greater food security. His social programs, funded with oil revenues, are designed to increase the living standards of the country's poor, self-employed, minorities, and working class and include state-provided universal free medical care and education.¹¹ Conversely, Chavez's political agenda includes the formation of a competitive socialist party within the framework of a multi-party system. The formation of non-sectarian communal councils is supposed to encourage local self government and bypass the inefficiencies of bureaucratic organizations. In short, Chavez's practices are not completely devoid of democratic values. In fact, the poorest sectors of the country may be getting more democracy out of Chavez's version of socialism than they did under the previous democratic regimes.¹² Hugo Chavez's intent is not so much the dissolution of representative democracy, but the development of a political approach based on self-management where local self-governance is encouraged and where the electoral process is not controlled by the political elite.

In addition, Twenty-First Century Socialism's promise of breaking with neoliberalist capitalism does not necessarily mean breaking with capitalism of another kind. In the economic realm, Chavez's overall oil policy is to use the local market to provide the goods needed in the public sector. His reaction over the US-proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) clearly shows his preference for local versus foreign capital. The *Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas* (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas or ALBA) is Chavez's proposed alternative to FTAA and differs from the latter

¹⁰ Petras, "Latin America's Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective".

¹¹ Chavez's government contracted over 20,000 Cuban doctors, dentists, and technicians and started the development of clinics, hospitals, and mobile units throughout the country with priority to the poorest sectors, often forgotten by previous democratic administrations.

¹² "The Deepening of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution: Why Most People Don't Get it," in *Open Democracy*, <http://opendemocracy.net/print/4292>, 3 May 2007 (accessed 16 February 2010).

in that it advocates a “socially-oriented trade block.”¹³ ALBA appeals to poor countries like Bolivia and Ecuador whose economic disparities cannot compete with the world’s economic powerhouses like the United States. ALBA’s aim is to “achieve a free trade area in which all members can benefit (a win-win alliance).”¹⁴ ALBA proponents dislike terms such as “Most Favored Nation” and “National Treatment” that the FTAA proposes, arguing that they challenge a state’s ability to pursue policies that capture their own national interests. In short, ALBA is a means by which Latin American states can establish a common economic ground, on their terms, and with the purpose of achieving their national interests first vis-à-vis the interests of the richer capitalist states.

In addition, Venezuela still relies heavily on oil for roughly 70% of its export earnings which it gets through a market-based construct (the United States is still one of the biggest consumers). Furthermore, the private sector still controls the banking, agricultural, commercial and foreign trade sectors.¹⁵ These types of protectionist policies are not uncommon for caudillo-like leaders like Chavez who have historically pointed out the “oligarchic elites” as the source of popular misfortunes. It also shows Chavez’s perception of the role of government as it pertains to national sovereignty and security. Yet, they do not necessarily reflect a complete break from the capitalist practices he so ferociously attacks. In this regard, Twenty-First Century Socialism is neither novel nor revolutionary.

Venezuela’s oil-based economy has also impacted Venezuela’s defense spending. Clayton K.S. Chun argues that states that base their economies predominantly in oil exports may not demonstrate a reduction in defense expenditure following a drop in oil prices.¹⁶ Venezuela is a good example. Despite fluctuations in the price of oil, Venezuela demonstrated only a limited degree of responsiveness to changes in oil revenue relative to defense spending from 1997 to 2007. Venezuela has bought more

¹³ Teresa Arreaza, “ALBA: Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean”, Banco de Comercio Exterior, 30 January, 2004, <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print/339> (accessed 16 February 2010).

¹⁴ Arreaza, “ALBA: Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean”.

¹⁵ Petras, “Latin America’s Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective”.

¹⁶ Doctor Chun’s study on encompasses Venezuela, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Nigeria using each country’s data from 1997 to 2007. For more information, reference: Clayton K S Chun, “Do Oil Exports Fuel Defense Spending?”, Strategic Studies Institute, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=947> (accessed 22 February 2010).

than \$4 billion worth of Russian military equipment since 2005. President Chávez entered negotiations to purchase thousands of Russian-made missiles and rocket launchers, T-72 Russian tanks, 24 Sukhoi fighter jets, and dozens of attack helicopter. Russia also opened a \$2.2 billion credit line for Chávez to purchase more arms.

In addition, Chavez's defense expenditures have been motivated by internal and external forces. He blames the United States for the failed coup attempt in 2002 and complains that Colombia and the United States are plotting a military offensive against Venezuela. Colombia's extension of base leasing rights to the United States has exacerbated the situation. As Kelly and Romero posit, "Greater involvement in Colombia [is] matched by greater distance from Venezuela."¹⁷ Internally, labor strikes, complaints about lack of political freedoms, and protests over the nationalization of businesses have also prompted President Chavez to increase his means to maintain order and ensure his regime's survival. As Chun argues, "this state of affairs has provided a rationale for supplying more funds for defense and security."¹⁸ Nonetheless, Venezuela's increased defense spending will not be able to counter the effects of Chavez's over-centralization of control over his security apparatus. President Chavez has successfully purged those opposing his policies, thus, increasing the level of polarization in the military.¹⁹ The result has been a decrease in the professionalization of the members of the armed forces whose performance is measured by their loyalty to the regime.

That Venezuela has developed such a different perception of democracy than the one held by the United States is a significant event. Understanding this disconnection may illuminate why US attempts at democracy promotion can prove counterproductive in certain cases. The irony in Venezuela's case is that US-sponsored neoliberal policies, as expressed in the Washington Consensus contributed to the emergence of Twenty-First Century Socialism. The United States became a symbol of the power and wealth of hungry elites allowing Chavez to portray himself as a new *caudillo* poised to liberate the people. This fact, however, does not mean that US intervention has always been a cause for apathy in Latin America. Colombia is a case in point. However, while US foreign

¹⁷ Jannet Kelly and Carlos A. Romero, *The United States and Venezuela*, (NY, Routledge, 2002), 142.

¹⁸ Chun, "Do Oil Exports Fuel Defense Spending?", 37.

¹⁹ Lt Col Alejandro Alemán, JCS/J5, Western Hemisphere Branch, Pentagon, interview with the author, 18 February 2010.

policy in Venezuela is centered on oil, its policy towards Colombia is predominantly motivated by historical friendship and a mutual interest in counter-drug efforts.

Colombia: Between US Subordinate and Autonomous Actor

Just like with Venezuela, US policy in Latin America has also influenced Colombian national interests, though in different ways and for different reasons. Politically, Colombia and the United States have historically been on the same ideological side. Their national interests have, by and large, been complementary. The loss of Panamá made Colombia realize the level of US influence in the region and, in the view of its political leaders, the impossibility of going against a superpower. Colombia's alliance with the United States proved to be the safest bet on maintaining domestic and regional security. Yet this has not always being the case. Colombia has, at times, displayed levels of political and economic autonomy, some of which have brought the country to counter some of the US policies in the region. Regardless, Colombia's perceptions of the United States, combined with the interpretation of their own national interests, have served as the main drivers in both subordinate and autonomous behaviors. Contemporarily, the United States and Colombia are connected by a common goal. The need to rescue the country from the grasp of drug traffickers and insurgent groups have prompted Colombia to assume policies that go parallel to the US interest of winning the war on drugs and terror. The fundamental question is: How long will Colombia continue to align its national interests with those of the United States? The answer, of course, is still to be determined.

Colombia and the United States have a long history of mutual cooperation, particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century. The loss of Panamá in 1903 caused Colombia to change the perception of its role in the world. Before this event, Colombia was considered to have significant potential on a global level given its strategic location and abundant natural resources.²⁰ The loss of Panamá, however, underscored the country's impotence compared to the United States. In the eyes of Colombia's political leaders US hegemony was inevitable and as such, "constituted a sine qua non of

²⁰ Mora and Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, 168.

development.”²¹ Consequently, Colombia’s national interests were redefined with the United States in mind. In the 1920s, Colombia’s economic policies revolved around attracting US companies and aligning the country’s economic interests to that of the United States. During the Cold War, the United States was committed to maintaining its “special relationship with Colombia, mainly because both the Liberals and the Conservatives were committed to repelling communism at home.

This unconditional alignment with the United States manifested itself internationally as well. Alberto Lleras Camargo, the Colombian President from 1945-1946 and 1958-1962, was appointed the first general secretary of the OAS and was a key contributor in the crafting of the Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca (Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty or TIAR), Camargo was also invited by President John F. Kennedy to participate in the creation of the Alliance for Progress. Colombia was also the only Latin American country to send troops to Korea in 1951. It participated in the United Nations-led emergency force deployment to the Suez Canal and supported the US military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965. As a result, Colombia was the second largest recipient of US aid (after Brazil) from 1949 to 1974. The special relationship between these states was mutually beneficial.

However, Colombia has also displayed periods of political and economic autonomy. Beginning in 1966, during the administration of Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Colombia began to refocus its foreign policy to encompass its Latin American neighbors. Restrepo implemented economic policies concentrating on liberalization of imports, the increase in the country’s exports, and the regulation of multinational investment into Colombia.²² In 1966, Colombia rejected the IMF’s recommendation for the devaluation of the Colombian peso. Instead, it adopted a crawling peg system of gradual devaluations that turned out to be incredibly successful. Politically, Colombia re-shifted its posture towards countries in the Soviet bloc, arguing that increasing trade relations with these countries did not imply the acceptance of their political ideology. Colombia even supported Cuba’s reentry into the OAS after having supported its expulsion in 1961. Mora and Hey associate the shift in Colombia’s foreign policy orientation with the

²¹ As quoted in Mora and Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, 169.

²² Mora and Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, 170.

apparent decline of US hegemony and the political leaders' perception of the need to create "relative distance" between Colombia's foreign policies and Washington's.²³ In 1982, President Rómulo Betancur urged President Ronald Reagan to abandon US interventionism in Central America, was critical of the US counter drug policies, and even refused to enforce the extradition treaty of 1979.²⁴ In the end, however, the country's rampant drug problem combined with the state's counterinsurgency efforts against violent revolutionaries in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought Colombia back to political and economic policies that were much closer to those of the United States.

National liberation groups like the M-19, the FARC, and the ELN have been fighting against government forces for more than four decades. These guerilla organizations flourished during the mid-1960s in Colombia's remote and underdeveloped rural sectors where government presence was virtually non-existent.²⁵ In the 1970s and 1980s, these revolutionary groups provided what the central government was incapable or unwilling to do: security, stability, and the means to subsist via the cultivation, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs. In other words, the insurgents gained legitimacy by satisfying the permanent interests of the population: survival. At the same time, the insurgent groups were satisfying their own organizational interest of wealth, power, and most importantly, the will of the Colombian peasantry.

To talk about the Colombian guerrilla is to talk about the Colombian drug trade. The guerrillas' strength is directly tied to their control of the production, processing and sales of illegal drugs. Groups like the FARC use the drug-generated income to fund their subversive activities against the Colombia government.²⁶ In this sense, Colombia's national interest in the elimination of insurgent groups and the US national interest in winning the wars on drugs and terror are intertwined. Consequently, for the past two

²³ Mora and Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, 170.

²⁴ President Betancur reinitiated the extradition of Colombian nationals to the United States following Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla assassination, which highlighted the country's drug problems and brought Colombia back much closer to the United States. Reference Mora and Hey, ed., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy*, 173.

²⁵ The Cuban revolution had an unprecedented impact in the guerilla operations in Colombia as it inspired the revolutionary groups of the post La Violencia years, which in turn, prompted the government's aggressive armed response to the insurgency. The insurgency was also response to the oligarchy's monopoly of national politics under the National Front, and an opportunity to bring the Colombian peasantry into a political platform from which they have been historically excluded.

²⁶ Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth, The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and the Implications for Regional Stability*, (CA, RAND, 2001), xiii.

decades, US foreign policy in Colombia has been counter-drug oriented. In fact, since its inception in 1999, the United States has contributed \$7 billion dollars in foreign assistance to Plan Colombia.²⁷ A Center for Strategic and International Studies' report on Colombia concluded that "support for Colombia is in the National Interest of the United States" and that "while Colombia's accomplishments since the late 1990s are due primarily to the efforts of the Colombian people, the United States played an important support role."²⁸

This assistance, however, does not come for free. The United States has constantly pressured Colombia to improve its Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law records. The requirements imposed by the Leahy Law on US aid to Colombia are certainly a key consideration in President Uribe's decision making process.²⁹ On 5 March 2009, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, reminded the Colombian Ministry of Defense of the importance of improving Colombia's human rights record, urging that the Colombian military incorporate human rights criteria in its promotion process.³⁰ The former Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos' announcement of his Ministry of Defense Directive 208 was done, in part, to satisfy the United States' and United Nations' request for progress in this area.³¹ Furthermore, the Colombian government even changed from an inquisitorial (law 600) to an accusatorial (law 906) criminal judicial system based on US State Department recommendations and with the assistance of the US Department of Justice.

²⁷ Adriaan Alsema, "Plan Colombia Not Mentioned in US 2011 Budget Proposal", *Colombia Reports*, 1 February 2010, <http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/7975/plan-colombia-unmentioned-in-2011-budget-proposal.html> (accessed 7 May 2010).

²⁸ CSIS is a bi-partisan foreign policy think-tank in Washington, DC. Reference: Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back From the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007*, (DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 54. Available online at: <http://www.csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/071112-backfromthebrink-web.pdf>

²⁹ In 1997 the US Congress approved an Amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act which banned the United States from giving anti-narcotics aid to any foreign military unit whose members have violated human rights. The Amendment was called the Leahy Provision or Leahy Law after Senator Patrick Leahy, who proposed it.

³⁰ This information was captured in a classified cable by the author, during his tenure as a Human Rights Officer at the US Embassy in Bogotá. The data above is unclassified.

³¹ On 17 November 2008, Minister of Defense Santos announced fifteen measures to improve the Armed Forces' human rights performance and eliminate extrajudicial killings. The announcement followed recommendations of a special commission appointed by Santos to investigate the murder of civilians in the Soacha region. The commission found numerous errors in the verification and implementation of intelligence, operations, and logistics procedures used for the planning, execution, and evaluation of military operations in that sector. This information was captured in a classified cable by the author, during his tenure as a Human Rights Officer at the US Embassy in Bogotá. The data above is unclassified.

In turn, the Colombian government has made remarkable progress in fighting the insurgent groups that have challenged its government's legitimacy for over four decades. It has maximized the government's legitimacy by successfully extending the presence of security forces in remote regions long in control by insurgents, in addition to significantly reducing the levels of violence to include, murders, kidnappings, and massacres. Colombia's demobilization program has successfully disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated close to 43,000 guerrilla fighters without the benefit of a formal peace treaty.³² In the economic realm, the Government of Colombia has managed to reduce unemployment, increase foreign direct investment and trade levels, and lower the effects of inflation.³³ Colombia's security forces have also benefited from US aid efforts. As part of then Minister of Defense Santos' "15 measures" to improve the Armed Forces Human Rights record and overall Armed Forces performance, the Ministry of Defense and the Colombian government have, among other actions:³⁴

- Approved Directive 208, which defines the roles and responsibilities of military personnel under Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
- Approved Law 1288, which establishes a formal legal framework for intelligence and counterintelligence operations
- Created Service-level Human Rights directorates and signed an agreement with the Escuela Superior de Administración Pública (School of Public Administration) to conduct graduate-level human rights training and certification course for security forces members.
- Modified Directive 300-28 to emphasize the collective and individual demobilization of members of illegal groups, instead of enemy kills, as a measure of success of military operations.

³² Sergio Jaramillo, Yanet Giha, and Paula Torres, "Disarmament, demobilization, and Reintegration Amidst the Conflict: The Case of Colombia", Research brief for the International Center for Transnational Justice, <http://www.ictj.org/en/research/projects/ddr/country-case/2379.html#TOP> (accessed 8 May 2010).

³³ DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back From the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007*, IX.

³⁴ This information was captured in a classified cable by the author, during his tenure as a Human Rights Officer at the US Embassy in Bogotá. The data above is unclassified.

- Created Comisiones de Inspección Inmediata (Immediate Investigation Commissions) charged with evaluating operations where there are allegations of violations of Human Rights or the IHL.
- Established a Human Rights certification program that mandates all candidates to promotion from Lieutenant Colonel and above obtain Human Rights and IHL certification based on polygraph assessment and a thorough verification of the individual's operational history.

In addition, the experience gathered through years of internal violence, the fight against insurgent guerrillas, and years of US-monitored training and advice have turned the Colombian military into a very capable, professional, and operationally tested force.

However, the existence of a common security objective and US assistance do not compel unquestioning compliance from the Colombian government. There is resentment in some Colombian political sectors. Ambassador Myles R. R. Frechette argues that many Colombians consider U.S. counterdrug policy hypocritical and ideologically driven. A sense pervades that the United States expects more of Colombia than it expects of itself.³⁵ President Uribe himself has expressed concern. In December 2005, he publicly admonished the American Ambassador for making public comments about paramilitary interference in Colombia's congressional elections. President Uribe indicated the United States should not use its bilateral assistance to pressure Colombia.³⁶ Also, on 15 March 2009, following the US Congress' refusal to ratify the free trade agreement between the two countries and the proposal to cut Plan Colombia funds for a second year in a row, Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos called for the end of the US multi-million dollar anti-drug program in Colombia. Plan Colombia has been the US main effort in its fight against illegal drugs in Latin America. Santos indicated: "I know the President and Minister of Defense will box my ears for this, but the cost to the dignity of the country is too great. [...] We are not just friends and allies (with Washington), but we are the only country in Latin America where the image of the

³⁵ Ambassador Myles R. R. Frechette, *Colombia and the United States—The partnership: But What is the Endgame?*, (CA, Strategic Studies Institute, February 2007), 7. Also available online at : <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>

³⁶ Ambassador Frechette, *Colombia and the United States—The partnership: But What is the Endgame?*, 7.

United States is positive. But still, they mistreat us [...].”³⁷ Finally, Colombia’s Ley de Justicia y Paz (Justice and Peace Law), which has been a cornerstone of Colombia’s demobilization program, has been criticized for allegedly being overly beneficial to human rights abusers.³⁸ All this indicates that while Colombia has a history of cooperation with the United States, this should not be viewed as Colombia’s unconditional support to US policies in the region. Colombia, like Venezuela, is a sovereign state and will continue to adopt policies that meet its national interests. Thus far, they have been mostly consistent with those of the United States. However, history shows that this has not always been the case.

The United States, as the global hegemon, does have the ability to influence the domestic and foreign policies of Latin American states. Yet, its interaction with Colombia and Venezuela show that the outcomes tend to be elusive and sometimes unpredictable. In Colombia, the need to save the country from a long and bloody insurgency led to the acceptance of US assistance and the strengthening of democratic policies. Conversely, Venezuela’s popular dissatisfaction with the democratic governments’ inability to satisfy the non-elite population coupled with the perception of failed neoliberal doctrines led to the acceptance of socialism as an alternate political philosophy designed to counterbalance US influence in the region.

In the end, both Colombia and Venezuela’s national ideologies are a product of their history, their experiences with external actors, the interaction of their own internal forces and their visions for future security and stability for their countries and the region. The United States would do well in heeding the lessons from its past experiences in Latin America. This does not deny the US government’s aggressive pursuit of the nation’s security and prosperity. After all, as I argued in chapter one, this is the primary interest of the state. What this entails, however, is a commitment by US policy makers to make an effort to understand the intricacies involved with other states’ behavior and realize that this is informed by more than just the traditional variables offered by the predominant schools of international relations. In other words, national ideology does matter.

³⁷ AFP. “Colombian VP calls for end to US anti-drug program.” 16 March 2009, received via mailing list from Alert Colombia, alert-colombia@rendon.com

³⁸ The Justice and Peace Law offers reduced sentences to leaders of insurgent groups that voluntarily turn themselves in and provide valuable intelligence.

Conclusion

Political philosophies influence, but do not determine, the range of strategies available to the decision maker. Chavez's definition of a "new brand" of socialism serves to display a marked contrast with US-led liberal policies and market economic structures, yet it is ambiguous enough to allow Chavez to resort to some of the same market-oriented strategies he so vehemently attacks. It also shows that strong nationalism is not incompatible with international institutionalism. As Kacowicz offers, "The essential norm of international society is the principle of state sovereignty."³⁹ Indeed, given the anarchic character of the international environment, the major institutions of international society are the nation-states themselves.⁴⁰ New regional institutions such as ALBA and the FTAA suggest that "the concern for a narrow national autonomy has given way to a focus on regional autonomy and the voluntary cession of degrees of sovereignty in the pursuit of development as dominant themes in the foreign relations of Latin America [...]."⁴¹ Both are an attempt at regional-level institutionalization. This is an important point for it indicates that while power is a means to achieve security, ideology is a means to secure power through unity of effort.

One must keep in mind that while there is often a connection between external and internal forces, the former does not determine the later. *Caudillismo*, personalism, and elitism are all social traits emanating from a common historical background, yet, they manifested themselves differently in each country. In Venezuela, they fomented the rise of Hugo Chavez as the epitome of Simon Bolivar, the liberator. In Colombia, the legacy of robust institutions may have prevented Alvaro Uribe from running for a third presidential term, but were not capable of effectively dealing with the internal violence that affected the country in the decades preceding him.

Equally important is the fact that the social component of national ideology cannot be undone, yet it evolves as the experiences of states accumulate. For example, as Colombians relate security and economic development to democratic values, the

³⁹ Arie M. Kacowicz, *The Impact of Norms in International Society: The Latin American Experience, 1881-2001*, (University of Notre Dame Press, IN, 2005), 46.

⁴⁰ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, (Macmillan, London, 1977), 74.

⁴¹ Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, ed., *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, (CO, Westview Press, 1996), 13.

likelihood of the Colombian population accepting an alternate political philosophy diminishes. Yet, this tendency is by no means certain. Venezuela is a case in point. Once an exemplar of democracy in Latin America, Venezuela's association of US-led neoliberal policies with a democratic philosophy have conspired to shape the contemporary socialist state, albeit one with certain democratic traits. In short, it transitioned from "exceptional democracy" to a state at the opposite end of the political spectrum. It will be safe to assume that the continued popular support for socialism will depend in good measure upon the socialist struggle to regain government legitimacy, one that leads to a more robust and legitimate government with equally legitimate and experienced military forces. As with Colombia, Venezuela's fate is still yet to be determined in this regard.

Chapter 5

Beyond National Ideology: Concluding Thoughts and Implications for Foreign Policy

“Individual perceptions and evaluations of foreign policy objects are influenced by values and beliefs that may be the result of historical, cultural, and ideological factors, as well as personal experience. No single cause explanation could pretend to capture so complex a combination of elements, in Latin America or elsewhere.”

- Hernando Muñoz and Joseph Tulchin, 1996

Throughout history, states have used ideology as justification for their behavior, whether it is to advocate warfare, appeal for cooperation, or promote peace. This tendency is not likely to change. Yet, ideology is a concept that historically has been difficult to articulate and explain in spite of the myriad effects it is claimed to have produced. Despite its importance among the social sciences, theorists have failed to produce a generally acceptable definition of the term. Sociology, psychology, and organizational theory devote considerable efforts and provide a good deal of explanation on the concept of ideology as it pertains to individuals and organizations. Unfortunately, they do not provide a useful framework with which to analyze how ideology informs state behavior. Lastly, the predominant IR theories have lacked a proper consideration for the role of ideology in international politics, largely due to their emphasis on other variables such as power, institutions, individuals, beliefs, or economic interdependence. The most important reason to study the role of ideology in state behavior is to draw lessons for future foreign policy formulation. Thus, a fundamental question remains: does ideology matter in international politics?

The answer is a qualified yes. This thesis has advanced the argument that ideology can play a strong role in the behavior of states. Furthermore, it can also help explain differences in states' policy decisions. Ideology can be constructed by political leaders in order to rally support to a particular cause, but can also be determined by conditions emanating from the past. Lastly, ideology influences, but does not determine state behavior. However, one cannot reach these conclusions in a vacuum. While the intention behind this study is not the formulation of a new theory of international politics, it has been necessary to develop a framework with which to analyze the role of ideology

in the relations between states. This is perhaps the biggest contribution of this exercise; the development of a conceptual framework that helps explain the role of ideology in the behavior of nation-states.

National Ideology: A Framework for Understanding State Behavior

Because ideology is an abstract concept, I have defined the term based on its function in state behavior. Doing so has allowed for a more even application of the term and most importantly, objective observation and analysis. I have offered a working definition of national ideology that focuses on the identification of three components important in understanding the term: the social, political, and philosophical components. The first emanates from the social aspect of the nation, that is, how the peoples of a state define their national identity based on community and territoriality. It *identifies* individuals as members of the state. The second resides within the political dimension, is framed within the desire for security and prosperity, and expressed in the form of national interests. Furthermore, I have argued that the state needs to define its national identity before it can determine its national interests. I have also offered that the *permanent* interest of the state is that of securing its own survival.

Conversely, states also have *variable* interests, which change from one administration or regime to another and are more susceptible to external pressures from other states, non-state actors, or international organizations. The political component *unites* the members of a state and helps direct individual, organizational, and governmental efforts to common goals. Finally, the national government sets the direction the state is to take to achieve its national interests by claiming a political philosophy which *guides* the domestic and foreign policies the government adopts with the purpose of reaching national goals. Thus, national ideology is the combination of the social, political, and philosophical components. In short, the social component determines *who the state is*; the political component is determined by *what a state wants*, with the political philosophy component influencing *how a state achieves its goals*. These components interact with each other interdependently and, when observed in combination, represent what I hereby term a *National Ideology*.

Context Matters

A central argument of this examination relates to the importance of observing ideology in a specific context. I have chosen to do so in the context of Colombia and Venezuela relations for three main reasons. First, geographic proximity, economic interdependence, and shared security concerns mean the United States' future is irrevocably linked to that of Latin America. The region is important to US interests, even if contemporary foreign policy is not indicative of it. Second, the role ideology plays in the behavior of states has not previously been applied to cases involving countries of similar national identities, but with diverging interests and political philosophies. Consequently, the discussion of these two states helps to isolate the impact of ideology. Third, despite a shared historical background no other two countries in the region provide more divergent political ideologies, economic basis, and military structures. As such, the presence of these three factors creates a strong rationale for studying the dynamics between these two countries. Understanding how national ideology shapes Colombian and Venezuelan behavior will provide a key insight into the future of US relations with these two countries and others in the region.

State behavior is a function of how internal and external forces influence decision making and shape national ideology. A close examination of the history of Colombia and Venezuela reveals that three significant episodes altered the progress of their history and helped shape their national ideologies: the Spanish Conquest, independence from Spain, and US intervention. I term these episodes *history altering events* to distinguish them in both importance and impact in the evolution of both Colombia and Venezuela from colonialism to their contemporary times.

The Spanish Conquest created a spirit of expansionism and self-interest that failed to foster an environment conducive to institutional development. Instead it served to foment elitism and division by social class. These elements became part of Colombian and Venezuelan national ideologies yet manifested themselves differently following the wars for independence. *Caudillismo* became an important part of Venezuela's national identity. This identity, in turn, was expressed in the form of tyrannical rulers who shaped Venezuelan society to this day. In Colombia, a tradition of stronger reliance on institutions and the advent of capitalism replaced the old colonial structure and became

its main political trait. Unfortunately, the institutions were incapable of closing the gap between the elite and the population. Popular discontent coupled with ideological differences between the political elites led to the decades of internal violence that have torn Colombia to this day and set the stage for the popular revolutions and drug trafficking that followed.

The United States' intervention in Latin American affairs, and in particular in Colombia and Venezuela, had a tremendous impact in determining their social components and also helped shape their political and philosophical components. As with their post-independence experience, the manifestations of these national interests have taken different paths. This is an important point as it shows that the same external force can have different effects on different countries. For example, in Colombia the need to win the insurgency led to the acceptance of US hegemony and assistance. Conversely, in Venezuela, the context of the US as a hegemon and the dissatisfaction with previous liberal doctrines led President Chavez to adopt an alternate regional political philosophy that balances US influence in the region. Thus, there should be no one-size-fits-all policy towards Latin America or any other region. The influence of Colombian and Venezuelan external and internal forces in these states' behavior underscores the importance of understanding the historical context of the country in question when formulating foreign policy.

One must keep in mind that while there is often a connection between external and internal forces, the former does not determine the later. *Caudillismo*, personalism, and elitism are all social traits emanating from a common historical background, yet, they manifested themselves differently in each country. In Venezuela, they fomented the rise of Hugo Chavez as the epitome of Simon Bolivar, the liberator. In Colombia, the legacy of robust institutions may have prevented Alvaro Uribe from running for a third presidential term, but were not capable of effectively dealing with the internal violence that affected the country in the decades preceding him.

Context matters. Similar historical backgrounds do not necessarily translate to similar national ideologies. Divergent ideologies mean different outlooks and expectations. This requires different approaches and policies tailored to the realities of each country. It is hard to say whether Colombia and Venezuela, devoid of their

respective ideological backgrounds, would have turned out the way they have. What is evident is that national ideology has been an important consideration of these states' policies and has, either directly or indirectly, been summoned to increase influence and support to the state's government. National ideology, however, does not have primacy over other elements that also influence state behavior.

National Ideology Informs, but does not Determine State Behavior

While social, political, and philosophical elements influence decision making and state behavior, they do not individually determine it. Different theories of international politics bring forth convincing arguments that also explain state behavior using a variety of independent variables. The concept of national ideology in its social, political, and philosophical contexts do not specifically addresses the *means* by which states achieve their goals. Likewise, it does not invalidate the importance of other behavior motivating factors such as power, institutions, beliefs, or economic interdependence that also influence decision makers. In short, theories of international politics and the concept of national ideology are not mutually exclusive.

The impact of international relations theory on foreign policy making cannot be overstated. Political leaders and public commentators use elements of these theories when articulating solutions to national and international security dilemmas. Furthermore, they influence the thinking of public intellectuals who then transmit academic ideas based on these theories' main propositions. Theorists will often emphasize one theory over another by underscoring a specific variable as the key to state behavior. However, formulating policy based on one set of variables alone is dangerous. Not all states are created equal, and state behaviors seldom follow easily identifiable patterns. Furthermore, despite their explanatory power, IR theories fail to capture the role of national ideology in state behavior accurately. When considered in isolation, they tend to overemphasize or underestimate its importance.

In this light, another major claim in this examination is that no theory of international politics can fully explain the complexities of state behavior (or state interactions). For example, realism helps explain Venezuela's attempts to balance US influence in Latin America. It also explains Hugo Chavez's attempts to export his

Twenty-first Century Socialism to Ecuador, Bolivia, and Iran, because international legitimacy translates into power to act as he sees fit at home and abroad. The foreign policies adopted by the Colombian government favor Colombia first; this is considered normal behavior given the anarchic international environment. However, while realism emphasizes the role of power and security concerns in relationships among states, it minimizes the role other elements, such as institutions or ideology, play in shaping state behavior. Realism helps explain why states can resort to force to guarantee their security in a “self-help” environment. However, even in an anarchic society, states can also achieve their goals by cooperating.

Liberalists offer that institutions and economic interdependence are essential in maintaining peace. Liberalists find a clear example of the power of robust democratic institutions in Colombia’s constitutional court, which did not allow President Uribe to run for a third term. They offer that the alliance between Colombia and the United States is based on similar political philosophies and shared national interests. Liberalists posit that Colombia’s remarkable increase in foreign direct investment in recent years is due to increased overall security and the government’s efforts to revamp its economic basis based on trade and investment. However, liberalism does not account for historical elements that may jeopardize the authority of government institutions. For example, Venezuela’s historical overreliance on individuals instead of institutions has allowed Chavez to hijack the same political democratic process that accounted for his election in 1999. In Colombia, democracy has made the government accountable to its more politically sensitive population, particularly in the face of the internal violence produced by over 40 years of insurgency and drug trade.

Finally, constructivism can provide great insights about ideas and values and how these help define a state’s identity and national interests. It helps explain the influence charismatic individuals like Hugo Chavez have on state behavior. Constructivism also explains why states with similar national ideologies are likely to have common interests and follow common norms and practices, and how ideological differences with other states can lead to conflict. That Colombia and the US share an interest in putting an end to the drug trade exemplifies the former. Chavez’s push for a Bolivarian Alternative to counter the US-sponsored Foreign Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA)

exemplifies the latter. Nonetheless, constructivist thought tends to overemphasize the impact of values and beliefs in state behavior. Constructivist policies can assert one group's beliefs over others, limit the possibility of cooperation, or impose norms on groups with converging beliefs. This can lead to conflict. This was the case with US attempts to "democratize" Latin America during the Cold War. Similarly, constructivism can lead to the belief that individuals and organizations have primacy over other elements of state behavior.

This is not to say theorists of international politics disregard the context in which states make decisions. The theories mentioned in chapter two do well in explaining general patterns of behavior that may or may not fully capture the details that are useful to explain behavior in a specific case, for example, that of Colombia and Venezuela. Arguably that is not the goal of these theories, and thus one cannot simply disregard them based on this fact. Nonetheless, like the theories that inform them, a one-size-fits-all foreign policy approach is likely to fail. No theory of international politics can fully explain the complexities of state behavior or state interactions. While power, institutions, individuals, economic interdependence, values, and beliefs do influence, they do not by themselves determine state behavior. The reader should keep in mind that "[...] deterministic approaches that attempt to explain the workings of Latin American foreign policies according to monocausal variables [...] seem doom to failure."¹ International relations theories offer their greatest explanatory power when synthesized in consideration of a specific context. Effective foreign policy accounts for particular elements of all international relations theories applied in a specific context and with a clear understanding of the historical background.

Implications for the United States

That Venezuela has developed such a different perception of democracy than the one held by the United States is a significant event. Understanding this disconnection may illuminate why US attempts at democracy promotion can prove counterproductive in certain cases. The irony in Venezuela's case is that US-sponsored neoliberal policies, as

¹ Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, ed., *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, (CO, Westview Press, 1996), 55.

expressed in the Washington Consensus, contributed to the emergence of Twenty-First Century Socialism. The United States became a symbol of the power and wealth of hungry elites allowing Chavez to portray himself as a new *caudillo* poised to liberate the people.

Chavez's idea of socialism is informed and legitimized by the actions and writings of Simon Bolivar, the conception of breaking up with imperial powers, and the importance of popular support against domestic (and foreign) elites. However, Chavez's practices are not completely devoid of democratic values. In fact, the poorest sectors of the country may be getting more democracy out of Chavez's version of socialism than they did under the previous democratic regimes.² Hugo Chavez's intent is not so much the dissolution of representative democracy, but the development of a political approach based on self-management where local self-governance is encouraged and where the electoral process is not controlled by the political elite.

In addition, Twenty-First Century Socialism's promise of breaking with neoliberalist capitalism does not necessarily mean breaking with capitalism of another kind. Chavez's intent behind his Alternativa Bolivariana para las Americas (ALBA) is to provide the means by which Latin American states can establish a common economic ground, on their terms, and with the purpose of achieving their national interests first vis-à-vis the interests of the richer capitalist states. Venezuela still relies heavily on oil for roughly 70% of its export earnings which it gets through a market-based construct; with the United States still one of its biggest consumers. Furthermore, the private sector still controls the banking, agricultural, commercial and foreign trade sectors.³ These types of protectionist policies are not uncommon for caudillo-like leaders like Chavez, who have historically pointed out the "oligarchic elites" as the source of popular misfortunes. Yet, they do not necessarily reflect a complete break from the capitalist practices he so ferociously attacks. In this regard, Twenty-First Century Socialism is neither novel nor revolutionary.

² "The Deepening of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution: Why Most People Don't Get it," in Open Democracy, <http://opendemocracy.net/print/4292>, 3 May 2007 (accessed 16 February 2010).

³ James Petras, "Latin America's Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective", in Global Research, 12 October 2009, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=15634>, (accessed 16 February 2010).

Venezuela is not an existential threat to the United States.⁴ Chavez's Twenty-first Century Socialism, however, represents a viable alternative to US-like democracy, especially in poorer countries where populist caudillos have greater acceptance. Nonetheless, political philosophies influence but do not determine the range of strategies available to the decision maker. Chavez's definition of a "new brand" of socialism serves to display a marked contrast with US-led liberal policies and market economic structures, yet it is ambiguous enough to allow Chavez to resort to some of the same market-oriented strategies he so vehemently attacks. It also shows that strong nationalism is not incompatible with international institutionalism. New regional institutions such as ALBA and the FTAA suggest that national autonomy can sometimes give way to regional autonomy. This is an important point, for it indicates that while power is a means to achieve security, ideology is a means to secure power through unity of effort. The United States has done this somewhat successfully in Colombia.

Colombia and the United States have a long history of mutual cooperation, particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century. Following the loss of Panamá in 1903, Colombia's national interests were redefined with the United States in mind, because, in the eyes of Colombia's political leaders, US hegemony was inevitable. Colombia's participation in the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS), its contribution to the crafting of the Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca (Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty or TIAR), its participation in President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, and its contributions during the Korean War demonstrate Colombia's alignment with the United States both domestically and internationally. However, Colombia has also displayed periods of political and economic autonomy. Colombia's refocusing its foreign policy during the Cold War to include cooperation with its neighbors (including countries in the Soviet bloc), its rejection of International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommendations in 1966, its support to Cuba's reentry into the OAS, and the establishment of free trade agreements with other countries pending ratification of the US-Colombia FTA are a few examples.

This goes to show that the existence of a common security objective and US assistance do not compel unquestioning compliance from the Colombian government. It

⁴ Lt Col Aleman, JCS/J5, Western Hemisphere, interview by the Author, 18 February 2010.

indicates that while Colombia has a history of cooperation with the United States, this should not be viewed as Colombia's unconditional support to US policies in the region. Colombia, like Venezuela, is a sovereign state and will continue to adopt policies that meet its national interests. Thus far, they have been mostly consistent with those of the United States. However, history shows that this has not always been the case.

The United States, as the global hegemon, does have the ability to influence the domestic and foreign policies of Latin American states. Yet, its interaction with Colombia and Venezuela show that the outcomes tend to be elusive and sometimes unpredictable. In contemporary times, Colombia's need to save the country from a long and bloody insurgency led to the acceptance of US assistance and the strengthening of democratic policies. Conversely, Venezuela's popular dissatisfaction with the democratic governments' inability to satisfy the non-elite population, coupled with the perception of failed neoliberal doctrines, led to the acceptance of socialism as an alternate political philosophy designed to counterbalance US influence in the region. Attaining favorable political outcomes is less a function of establishing a "silver bullet" policy, and more a function of continuously setting conditions and accruing potential. Sure enough, capabilities, when strong enough, can create potential. Yet, this assumes that other states will allow the United States to exploit this potential unhindered. Similarly, it would be folly to use a state's capabilities to "force" favorable political outcomes when not doing so can get us there as well. This is hard to do when foreign policy focuses on a predetermined and final outcome (e.g. democratization), but doable if focused on continuously setting favorable conditions, identifying opportunities, and taking advantage of potential in terms compatible with US interests. There is no such thing as finality in foreign policy. Actions may be labeled a success in the immediate future, but only time can tell whether these actions translate into long-term favorable political outcomes. In short, the ulterior purpose of US foreign policy is to preserve what Dolman calls "continuing advantage."⁵

⁵ Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age*, (NY, Frank Cass, 2005), 6.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research:

This study is not devoid of setbacks. Defining the concept of national ideology as utilized in this study is indeed important. One cannot explain its role in the behavior of states without a clear idea of what the concept entails. Unfortunately, definitions also constrain. Thus, the major limitation of this study is precisely that by accepting the definition of national ideology hereby espoused, I have limited analysis and conclusions to those abiding by this definition. As such, I make no claims of primacy of this thesis nor the concepts expressed herein over those expressed elsewhere. This fact does not degrade this study's explanatory power; it simply focuses it to the context in which it is observed.

The concept of national ideology may not explain state behavior in other contexts. For example, this thesis does not explain the concept of ideology and the role it plays in non-state actors. Non-state actors often display elements that identify, define and united them in purpose. Non-state actors are also gaining agency in an international environment. Is there a difference on how ideology influences the behavior of non-state actors versus nation-states? Similarly, this study did not explain the concept of ideology in regional terms. Do regional identities like Latino, Muslim, or Asian inform and affect the behavior of their respective states? What are the implications for states that do not share a common regional ideology? Can regional ideologies change the notion of states as the primary actor in international politics?

During the course of this examination, I did not place much emphasis on the influence and importance of pre-colonial Venezuela and Colombia and whether it had any impact in forming their national ideologies. Both of these countries have very little remaining indigenous peoples. Yet one of the effects of globalization is precisely the rise of these groups, not so much in number, but in participation via institutions and unity based on expanded communication means like the internet. While not a big impact in Colombia in Venezuela, they may be so in countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru where their populations are considerably larger.

Similarly, this thesis did not look at how the concept of national ideology affected Ecuador. Following its independence from Spain, the military and intellectual centers of society in the Republic of Gran Colombia were located in different locations: "Venezuela

had the barracks and Colombia the universities.”⁶ Ecuador represented the religious center of the new Republic. As this thesis has shown, *Caudillismo* in Venezuela and institutionalism in Colombia had an impact on the outlook of these two countries following their independence. Did religion play a similar role in Ecuador? How does it compare to its influence in Colombia and Venezuela? How has Ecuador’s national ideology influence this equation?

Finally, this examination did not expand on the role of government organizations in shaping a state’s national ideology. This is particularly applicable to organizations in the national security field. The armed services, for example, are responsible for maintaining the territorial integrity of the state and protecting the nation’s interests abroad. On the other hand, the Foreign Service is charged with establishing and maintaining foreign relations and pushing the state’s interests in diplomatic channels. In order to accomplish their respective missions, organizations need to maintain a determined set of capabilities. Since an unrestrained budgetary environment is seldom a reality, “all organizations seek to have greater influence in order to pursue their objectives.”⁷ Arguably, these institutions’ interests are often thought to be *in the nation’s best interest*. Consequently, the *push* and *pull* between organizations within the government also have an impact in the political and philosophical components of a state’s national ideology and by extension, on its behavior.

Concluding Thoughts

Following an extensive analysis of the theoretical and historical facts that influence a state’s national ideology, it is possible to summarize a few additional takeaways. I have already mentioned them in chapter two; I have thought it convenient to include them one more time.

- States are the dominant actors in international politics.
- However, this does not negate the existence of regional approaches to national security

⁶ Lt Col Eliot Benavides, Colombian Air Forces, interview by the author, 23 April 2010.

⁷ Morton H. Halperin and Priscilla A. Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, (DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 26.

- Power remains an important element in state-to-state relations.
- Individuals, especially individuals in high government positions impact the foreign policy of states.
- National ideology influences the decision making process of political leaders.
- National ideology, however, does not determine state behavior.
- Domestic policy influences foreign policy.
- Foreign policy also informs domestic policy.
- The social aspect of national ideology and the *permanent* interest of the state (survival) are integral parts of the state's identity and are not changed or modified by purposeful human interaction, though can change "subconsciously" over a long period of time.
- The *variable* interests of the state and the philosophical aspect of national ideology are socially constructed.

Formulating foreign policy is no easy task. States are motivated by different elements in different fashion. Thus, I cannot claim that national ideology is the sole and primary motivator in state behavior. Nonetheless, the theoretical basis and historical analysis presented herein represent a good framework with which to analyze the relations between Colombia and Venezuela and affords this study relevance, practicality, and most importantly, significant explanatory power. In the end, effective policy making requires an understanding of all the elements that influence state behavior. National ideology is one such element. This thesis has demonstrated that ideology does matter in international politics. Understanding its proper place in international relations will get policy makers one step closer to achieving national interests in terms favorable to the United States.

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