

THE ASYMMETRIES OF POWER WITHIN UNITED STATES-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL REALIST PERCEPTION

ABSTRACT

Employing a realist approach in understanding U.S. relations towards Latin America is just one paradigmatic way of conceptualizing policy implementation, but it is an effective way of illustrating a distinct rationale for many political, military and economic phenomena. After defining and framing the realist paradigm, and explaining its predictive use for future U.S. policy, this paper will then use a realist paradigm to explore some specific reasons for why, and to what extent, the U.S. has maintained a disproportional amount of power over Latin America. Three brief historical case studies from different time periods and from various Latin American countries will be used to explain this historical and current asymmetry of U.S. political, military and economic power over Latin America. The realist approach used in analyzing each case study will further help to facilitate the understanding that an evident pattern is destined to continue, although at diminishing rate, between the United States and the Latin American block.

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Many Latin American historians and scholars are reaching the general consensus that the asymmetries of power between the United States and Latin American nations are now changing. Within the framework of a varying historical context of U.S.-Latin American relations, inferences towards a decrease in the U.S. political, military, or economic hegemony in Latin America is prevalent.¹ The notion of a post-Monroe Doctrine era is articulated as a more enlightened policy objective that should be maintained; but is this the real future of U.S.-Latin American relations? To analyze and decipher future U.S.-Latin American relations, a distinct realist logic can be used as a tool to conceptualize what has occurred in the past, and what lies ahead in negotiations between the hegemonic super power and the governments of Latin America. This paper will make the claim that although there seems to be a growing egalitarian and consultative relationship between these two international bodies, a realist paradigm employed to understand the United States' motivations within international relations will demonstrate a continued political, military and economic hegemony over the region. Employing a realist approach in understanding U.S. relations towards Latin America is just one paradigmatic way of conceptualizing policy implementation, but it is an effective way of illustrating a distinct rationale for many political, military and economic phenomena. After defining and framing the realist paradigm, and explaining its predictive use for future U.S. policy, it will then be employed in this paper to explore some specific reasons for why, and to what extent, the U.S. has maintained a disproportional amount of power over Latin America. Three brief historical case studies from different time periods and from various Latin American

¹ Coerver, Don M., Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & The United States*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg. 242. With reference to the issues that lie before U.S.-Latin American relations.

countries will be used to explain this historical and current asymmetry of U.S. political, military and economic power over Latin America. The realist approach used in analyzing each case study will further help to facilitate the understanding that an evident pattern is destined to continue, although at diminishing rate, between the United States and the Latin American block. This paper will then conclude with a general insight into the future of U.S. policy implications toward Latin America by drawing upon the major quandary inherent in the realist approach toward international relations- which infers that it is in the best interest of the United States to cultivate its hegemonic policies at the expense of gross inequality and a lack in overall regional cooperation.

Theory of International Relations: a Realist Approach

According to prominent scholars of international relations, realism is the dominant theory and most scholarship examines concepts derived from realist models.² In one exhaustive study on the development of the realist paradigm since World War II, almost three-quarters of all the phenomena noted, and over 90 percent of the hypotheses tested were identifiably realist in inspiration.³ In light of this paradigm being the most salient and most used to explain phenomena in international relations, some questions still remain. What is realism, and in what way can it be used to explain and predict outcomes in United States-Latin American relations?

The core of realism, within the realm of international relations, can be simplified as a state of war among all states and societies, which is a condition in which war is

² Doyle, Michael. 1997. *Ways of War and Peace*. New York: W.W. Norton. Pg. 41.

³ John Vasques, *The Power of Power Politics: A Critique* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), chap. 5 especially tables 5.1 (indicating that 74.9 percent of the indicators in the field were Realist). 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 (indicating that 92 percent of the hypotheses and 94 percent of the variable tested were Realist).

regarded as a continuous possibility, a threatening prospect, in which each state had to regard every other state as presenting the possibility of this threat.⁴ Realism can be grasped more clearly in terms of popular culture with the words of Christinane Amanpour, a CNN war correspondent, who said during the 1993 violences of Bosnia and Rwanda: “I believe in the law of the jungle. There are strong and there are weak; there is an order in our species and our world. What’s happening now is that no one seems to know what the order is... Whatever anyone says, it’s just about power.”⁵ Besides a mainstream cultural understanding of the realism, there is the common knowledge shared within the realist paradigm that:

1. Relations among states are anarchic, implying the lack of a global state. The dimensions of trade, culture, institutions and international law can exist under anarchy, but none altered its anarchic and warlike character.
2. States are independent units that are treated as strategic actors- struggling for a monopoly of effective or legitimate power.
3. States seek to expand; others seek to just survive. None was prepared to engage in long-term accommodation or cooperation.⁶

It is vital to recognize that within this framework, rational unitary actors are continuously looking out for their own interests. In the case of the history of the United States, this is usually how it operates its foreign policy. Specifically, this implies many things for the way in which the U.S. has directed its interaction with the Latin America. This realist maneuvering has been subject to evaluation since “the birth of the republics of the

⁴ Doyle, Michael. 1997. *Ways of War and Peace*. New York: W.W. Norton. Pg. 209.

⁵ Stephen Kinzer, “Where There’s a War There’s Amanpour,” *New York Times Magazine*. October 9, 1994, pg. 58.

⁶ Doyle, Michael. 1997. *Ways of War and Peace*. New York: W.W. Norton. Pg. 209-210, Simplistically outlining the basic core of realist understanding without making reference to the variants within realism.

western hemisphere, questions of control of territory and resources; of asymmetric political, military and economic power; of cultural and ideological differences; even of political sovereignty itself have been disputed.”⁷

The following sections will incorporate case studies that highlight this logic by showing that the United States is a strategic actor- struggling for a monopoly of effective or legitimate power, and has been entrenched in an imperialistic foreign policy toward Latin America in a means of securing its own interests. This realist approach can then challenge the idea that the asymmetries of power between the United States and Latin American nations are becoming more proportioned. The first case will explore the recent undeniable U.S. political influence in the Venezuelan 2002 coup against President Hugo Chavez. This case will exemplify the means by which the United States interests in the region outweigh national political sovereignty within countries that do not adhere ideologically. The second case is a quantitative study that will demonstrate how U.S. military aid toward the Colombian struggle against drugs and terrorism is actually a way of monopolizing military power in the region, as well as way of maintaining U.S. national security. The final brief case study will show the historical economic influence the U.S. has over Latin America by analyzing the detrimental U.S. economic policy toward the island nation of Cuba. The economic influence this hegemon has over Cuba cannot be denied and has set an uneasy tone for the rest of Latin America. Each case study will be discussed at a superficial level, but with the overall intent of demonstrating that there historically has been, and will continuously exist, devastating asymmetries of power between these two bodies on multiple levels. Each case will be rationalized by

⁷ Coerver, Don M., Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & The United States*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg. 3. Introduction to the relationship between the U.S. and Latin America.

employing a realist framework for understanding international relations in the context of U.S.-Latin American relations. This framework can then be used to make generalizations about U.S.-Latin American future interactions.

U.S. Political Influence in the Venezuelan 2002 Coup against Hugo Chávez

After Hugo Chávez assumed the office of the President of Venezuela on February 2, 1999, the diplomatic relationship between Venezuela and the United States progressively worsened. Up until the then, U.S.-Venezuelan relations were marked by an important trade and investment relationship and cooperation in combating the production and transit of illegal drugs. Experts say that prior to Chávez's rise, relations were relatively smooth. But since becoming Venezuela's leader, Chávez has made a practice of challenging Washington's policies, and is critical of what he sees as U.S. interference in Venezuela's domestic politics.⁸ Chávez has blamed the United States for a myriad of plots against Venezuela, including assassination attempts, a campaign to sabotage Venezuela's oil production, and plans to invade his country.⁹ Prior to Chávez, "Venezuela was a submissive player to U.S. policy...[and] the U.S. was on the verge of being the number one benefactor of the lucrative oil industry, which had been nationalized since the 1970s, were privatized."¹⁰ This of course didn't happen because the Venezuelan economy remains almost completely dependent upon oil and this major industry has remained under national control.¹¹

⁸ Excerpt from a question from the Council on Foreign Relations, "Q&A: U.S.-Venezuelan Relations." *New York Times*. November 22, 2005. Web. Dec. 1, 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot1_112205.html

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Golinger, Eva. *The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela*. Olive Branch. 2006. Pg. 4.

¹¹ Venezuela remains highly dependent on oil revenues, which account for roughly 90% of export earnings, about 50% of the federal budget revenues, and around 30% of GDP.

President Chávez's socialist rhetoric didn't sit well with the United States' Clinton and Bush Administrations, and even more contentious, was an openly close relationship with Cuban president, Fidel Castro. The idea of a government in charge of one of the most important oil industries in the world, being close allies to a Cuban government that the U.S. has been trying to oust for the last 40-years¹² was undoubtedly one of the major catalysts for U.S. political intervention. Fuelling U.S. anger toward Venezuela even further, In August 2000, President Chávez made a ten-day tour of the Organization of the Oil Producing Countries (OPEC) during Venezuela's rotating presidency of OPEC nations.¹³ Along the way he became the first head of state to meet Saddam Hussein since the Gulf War.¹⁴ He took a stance against the most developed nations of the world, to raise the price of oil by pushing OPEC producers towards seeking greater cartel unity in defense of the current oil prices.

After further non-cooperative actions by Chávez, the U.S. government had devised a plan to aid the anti-Chávez movement in a way to negate the economic harms caused by the Chávez protectionist government. The plan consisted of funneling money into the Venezuela's largest labor union, the CTV; the chamber of commerce, and all the other major political parties and social groups- who shared a common complaint against the administration's policies about their own loss of political and economic

CIA World Fact Book: Venezuela. Retrieved from web Dec. 1, 2009.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>.

¹² Golinger, Eva. *The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela.* Olive Branch. 2006. pg. 5.

¹³ Knowlton, Brian. "Chavez, Defiant, Tells OPEC to Show its Power: Venezuelan Visits Iraq, Angering Washington." *New York Times.* August 11, 2000. Web 5 Dec. 2009.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/11/news/11iht-venz.2.t.html>

¹⁴ This meeting seemed to have violated United Nations sanctions during this time because sanctions banning international flights to and from Iraq. To not violate UN sanctions, Chavez first flew to Tehran, then to the border town of Kermanshah, and then took a helicopter to the Mothuriyah area before boarding a black Iranian government limousine to cross the border. Ibid,

power. The funding for the multiple points of opposition was dispersed through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).¹⁵ After various demonstrations, the U.S. supported opposition groups held one of the largest marches in Venezuelan history in a call for President Chavez's resignation on April 11, 2002. He refused to resign after pro and anti-Chávez demonstrations caused casualties to life and he was detained and imprisoned in Fort Tiuna by both military and civilian groups. The presidential palace was taken over by the opposition leaders and the state-owned television channel.¹⁶ The day after, the Bush administrations' spokesman publically announced the U.S. government's support for the main opposition leader Pedro Carmona's new administration and it condemned ex-president Chávez for inciting the violence that forced him to resign.¹⁷ According to *Democracy Now!*, CIA documents indicate that the Bush administration knew about a plot weeks before the April 2002 military coup.¹⁸ In a plethora of information and documents obtainable under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, one can lay out irrefutable evidence that the U.S. knew of the plot to overthrow Chávez and the extent of U.S. opposition funding in Venezuelan government.

The use of these varying historical periods and documentation allude to the realist understanding that when Venezuelan affairs were not in the best interest of the

¹⁵ Golinger, Eva. *The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela*. Olive Branch. 2006. Pg 50-55 and 220.

The NED was established as a nonprofit organization, but its funding is approved by Congress and included in the USAID section of the Department of State budget. The majority of the historic figures linked to clandestine CIA actions have at some time been members of the board of directors for the NED.

¹⁶ Ibid. pg. 73.

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 73.

¹⁸ A syndicated program of news, analysis, and opinion aired by more than 700 radio and television, satellite and cable TV networks in North America. Information found at: <http://www.democracynow.org/shows/1996/2/19>.

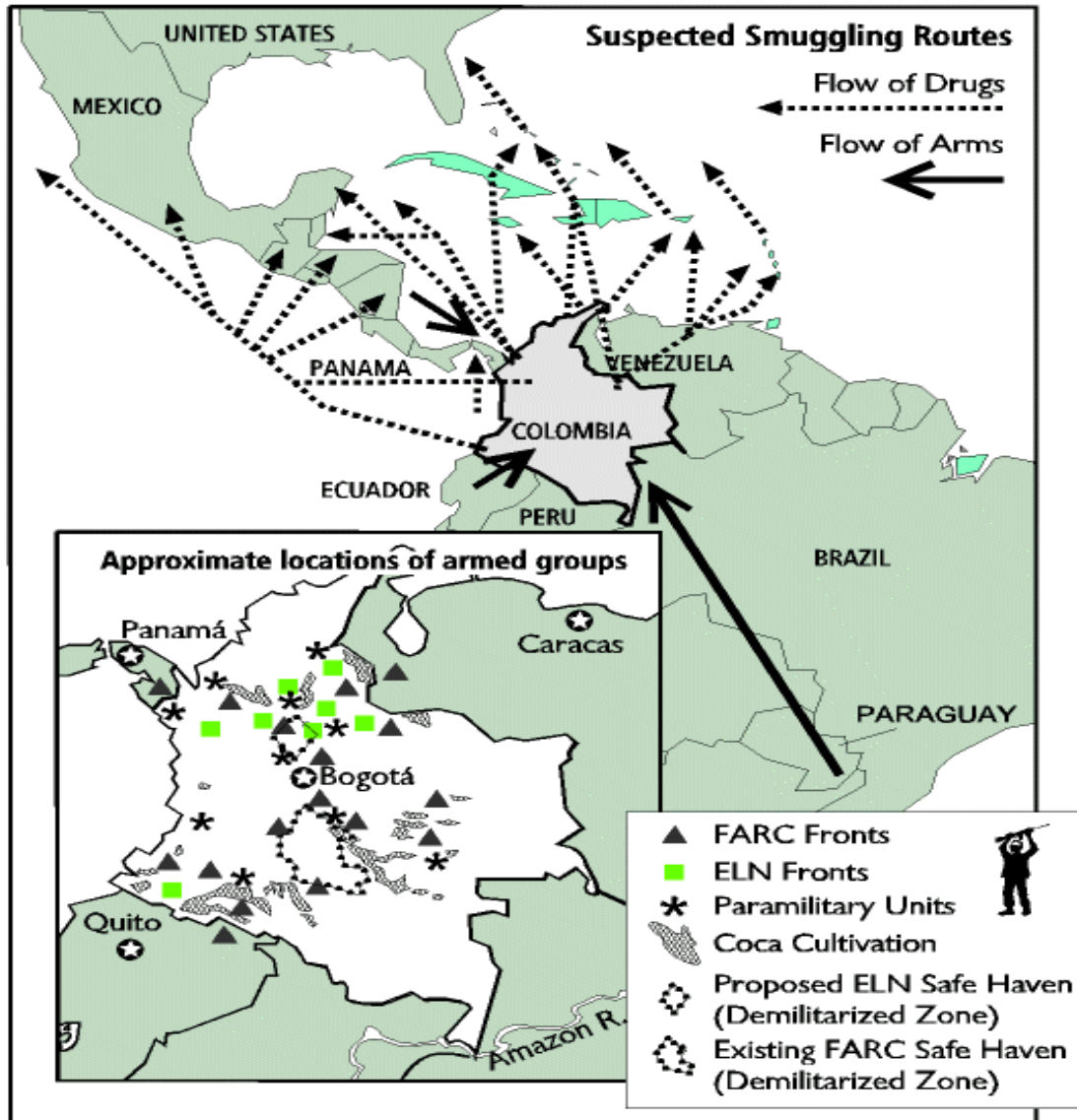
United States, a global anarchic situation would allow for subversive actions to take place in securing those interests. In this Venezuelan case, the U.S. interests were mostly economic ones, which included a liberalization of oil in the Venezuelan market. U.S. interests also included a continuous alienation of Cuba which was not being adhered to by the increasingly open relationship between Venezuelan government and Fidel Castro during this time. To maintain hegemonic power and economic prevalence, a new government that would allow for the attainment of these interests would have to be created. The U.S. used its political penetrating capabilities to finance a massive anti-Chávez movement that would have the potential of transforming the Venezuelan government to one more conducive to U.S. hegemony. Although the U.S. initiatives were not completely successful in this case, this study demonstrates two things: first, how the U.S. can influence the domestic politics of a sovereign nation and can be rationalized in the realist framework of international relations; and second, this study exemplifies the means to which the United States interests in the region outweigh national political sovereignty within countries that do not adhere to U.S. free market and capitalist ideology.

U.S. Military Aid in the Colombian Struggle against Drugs and Terrorism

This case evaluates the time period from 1999-2009 in order to show an increased military funding in the Colombian struggle against drugs and terrorism. The assessment is described in both monetary funding of the Colombian military, as well as, an increased U.S. military presence in Colombia. It is common knowledge that before and after the September 11, 2001, the US government's provided military and economic aid to Colombia for the purposes of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, in addition

to its assistance to the war on drugs. Colombia is America's fourth largest trading partner in Latin America and is the world's largest exporter of cocaine and heroin, as well as, a focal point for money laundering and arms trafficking in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁹

[Figure 1] Drugs, Arms and Conflict in Colombia



Sources: Statement of Rear Admiral Edward J. Barnett (U.S. Navy), Director, Joint Interagency Task Force East, before the House Committee on Government Reform, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, November 17, 1999. *Annual Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Report 2000*, Republic of Colombia, Ministry of Defense, January 2001, pp. 23–25.

¹⁹ Johnson, Stephen. "Helping Colombia Fix Its Plan to Curb Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Insurgency". The Heritage Foundation. April 26, 2001. <http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/BG1435.cfm>. Web. Dec. 5, 2009

The massive flow of drugs and arms in [Figure 1] illustrates the importance of U.S. intervention policy in the region.

According to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)²⁰, in 1999, the U.S. State Department began sharing intelligence about guerrillas with the Colombian military as a means to help alleviate the issues inherent in Colombian intelligence. That same year the Colombian President Andres Pastrana announced the details of a plan that was designed to counter the country's drug and security crisis through a comprehensive 6-year, \$7.5 billion plan. According to the United States Government Accountability Office, this *Plan Colombia*²¹ was linked to three objectives: (1) reduce the flow of illicit narcotics and improve security, (2) promote social and economic justice, and (3) promote the rule of law.²²

In conjunction with the Colombian government, the U.S. has poured billions of dollars into helping to curb the problems of drugs and terrorism. Within the context of a realist interpretation of this military assistance, important questions should be addressed. Primarily, what motivation does the U.S. have to continually donate to the Colombian effort? And what is the rationale for the U.S.' continuous spending in this region? Obviously, answering these questions would be difficult without both

²⁰ DIA's mission is to provide timely and objective military intelligence to war fighters, policymakers, and force planners. It is considered to be a member of the Intelligence Community. The director of DIA is the main adviser to the United States Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on matters related to military intelligence. Info found out website: <http://www.dia.mil/>.

²¹ Most often used to refer to the U.S. legislation aimed at curbing drug smuggling by supporting different Drug War activities in Colombia.

²² United States Government Accountability Office. *Plan Colombia*. "Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance." Report to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate. October 2008. Pg. 11.

understanding where the military aid is actually going, and without quantifying how much actually is being given annually.

In 2000, the Clinton Administration called for a \$1.6 billion emergency assistance package for Plan Colombia -making Colombia the world's third largest recipient of U.S. aid.²³ In [Figure 2], U.S. assistance to the Colombian military can be assessed as an overall gradual increase between 2000 and 2008.

[Figure 2] U.S. Assistance Provided to the Colombian Military and National Police- Fiscal Year Appropriations 2000-2008

Dollars in millions

Service/fiscal year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (Est.)	Total ¹
Colombian Military	\$683.5	\$192.8	\$257.1	\$443.4	\$445.5	\$394.7	\$382.8	\$373.5	\$268.4	\$3,441.7
Army Aviation	*	*	78.0	140.8	155.2	127.5	143.2	129.6	69.7	\$844.1
Army Ground Forces	*	*	9.7	6.3	18.1	13.4	22.2	17.7	16.4	\$103.7
Infrastructure Security	*	*	6.0	93.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	\$115.0
Air Interdiction ²	No program	No program	14.0	8.0	7.1	0.0	4.6	18.8	10.0	\$62.5
Coastal and River Interdiction	*	*	0.0	0.0	26.2	11.8	19.1	19.2	13.0	\$89.3
Other ²	134.9	190.9	149.4	195.4	234.8	238.1	189.7	184.4	159.2	\$1,676.8
Not allocated ⁴	548.6	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	550.5
Colombian National Police	\$134.3	\$40.0	\$138.8	\$164.5	\$172.2	\$190.9	\$204.5	\$217.6	\$155.0	\$1,417.8
Eradication	*	*	37.4	63.7	44.2	82.5	81.7	82.0	66.5	\$457.9
Air Service	*	*	67.5	62.3	71.2	70.0	70.5	69.0	52.5	\$463.0
Interdiction	*	*	24.3	21.0	41.0	16.9	16.5	16.5	16.5	\$152.7
Police Presence in Conflict Zones	No program	No program	4.8	15.5	13.8	20.1	19.4	18.7	0.0	\$92.1
Other ²	18.7	0.0	4.9	2.0	2.0	1.4	16.4	31.5	19.5	\$96.4
Not allocated ⁴	115.6	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	\$155.6
Total	\$817.8	\$232.8	\$395.9	\$607.9	\$617.7	\$585.6	\$587.3	\$591.1	\$423.4	\$4,859.5

Sources: State and Defense.

²³ Johnson, Stephen. "Helping Colombia Fix Its Plan to Curb Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Insurgency". The Heritage Foundation. April 26, 2001. <http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/BG1435.cfm>. Web. Dec. 5, 2009.

Specifically, a major increase can be seen in 2001, when the Bush administration introduced the Andean Regional Initiative (ARI),²⁴ which broadened U.S. intervention throughout the entire region, and directed \$800 million to the project over Plan Colombia. Analysis of this data answers the questions pertaining to the quantity of specific military aid granted annually, and where the funds are being allocated. However, the questions pertaining to a U.S motivation to spend and the rationale for continued spending still remain.

According to the report given to the United States Government Accountability Office in 2008, Plan Colombia's goal of reducing the cultivation, processing, and distribution of illegal narcotics by 50 percent in 6 years (through 2006) was not fully achieved. However, major security advances have been made.²⁵ U.S. military aid spending in Colombia has heavily continued after 2006, even though the goal of reducing the cultivation, processing, and distribution of narcotics by 50 percent was not achieved. It can be inferred here that the U.S' motivations for a continued military spending are contingent upon the increased security advances that have been made.

The answer to the question pertaining to what is the rationale behind the United States continued military assistance in Colombia can be found in the realist explanation of international relations. One of the major policy goals of the U.S. is the continued maintenance of its national security. This quantitative case study has depicted how U.S.

²⁴ The ARI supplies military support and economic assistance to seven Andean countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

²⁵ United States Government Accountability Office. *Plan Colombia*. "Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance." Report to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate. October 2008. Pg. 4.

military aid toward the Colombian struggle against drugs and terrorism is actually a means by which the U.S. has monopolized its military power in the region; doing so by making the Colombian government economically dependent on its military aid in order to maintain internal peace within the country. The maintenance of a relative peace in Colombia is achieved at the economic expense of the U.S., but attributes to a heightened physical U.S. military presence in Latin America. This military presence also helps in securing U.S. policy goals of eliminating overall drug proliferation and terrorist activities in the Western Hemisphere, by engaging in a less hazardous situation of combating terrorism and drugs from outside the borders of the United States. By maintaining this apparent military power imbalance, in terms of both capabilities and recourses, the U.S. will be able to maintain its overall national security and its military superiority in the region for years to come.

U.S. Economic Control over Cuba: Historical Impositions of the Embargo

In general terms, the historical economic influence the U.S. has had over Cuba is a devastating one. The United States' relationship with the island nation since the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 has deteriorated substantially, and has since been marked by tension and confrontation ever since. The economic influence this Superpower has over Cuba cannot be denied, and this relationship has arguably set an uneasy tone for the rest of Latin America. There is substantial realist logic behind an asymmetrical economic relationship between the U.S. and Cuba and this will be explained in further detail following a brief history.

The U.S. emerged from World War II as the world's greatest military and economic power. But for Cuba, the years after the war were marked by bipolar periods

of economic prosperity and instability; oppressive and revolutionary governments; and malicious covert activities aimed at overthrowing the Castro government.²⁶ Preceding the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially recognized the new Cuban leader, but relations between the two governments deteriorated rapidly. The U.S. government became increasingly concerned by Cuba's agrarian reforms and the nationalization of U.S. owned industries. In response, the U.S. began to impose gradual trade restrictions on the island. On September 4, 1959, Ambassador Bonsal met with Cuban Premier Fidel Castro to express "serious concern at the treatment being given to American private interests in Cuba both agriculture and utilities."²⁷ Each time the Cuban government nationalized American properties, the American government took economic countermeasures, resulting in the prohibition of all exports to Cuba on October 19, 1960.²⁸ Consequently, Cuba began to consolidate trade relations with the Soviet Union and a commitment to communism- leading the U.S. to break off all remaining official diplomatic relations.²⁹

In 1961, Cuba resisted an armed invasion of about 1,500 CIA trained Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs.³⁰ After the massive public failure, President Kennedy established the Cuba Study Group to review the episode and also informed the press that the Bay of Pigs disaster will not deter him from trying to emasculate Castro.³¹

²⁶ Coerver, Don M., Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & The United States*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg 116-125.

²⁷ Department of State. Cable Ambassador Report on Meeting With Fidel Castro. September 4, 1959. Web. Dec. 9, 2009. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/bayofpigs/chron.html>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Coerver, Don M., Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & The United States*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg 125.

³⁰ Gibbs, Stephen. "Castro Marks Bay of Pigs Victory." BBC News. Havana. April 20, 2006. Web Dec. 12, 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4925262.stm>.

³¹ White, Mark. *The Kennedys and Cuba: The Declassified Documentary History*. Ivan R. Dee, Publisher. Chicago. 1999. Document 14. Memorandum for the Record Prepared by the Chief of Naval Operations

Shortly after, tensions between the two nations reached their peak in 1962, after U.S. reconnaissance aircraft photographed the Soviet construction of intermediate-range missile sites. This discovery led to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the most dangerous episode of the entire cold war epoch.³² Resulting from this extreme situation were increase economic constraints on Cuba. It was at this time that trade relations between the two nations deteriorated to a point of no return. President John F. Kennedy broadened the partial trade restrictions imposed after the revolution, banning all trade with Cuba for non-subsidized sale of foods and medicines. A year later travel and financial transactions by U.S. citizens with Cuba was prohibited.

In terms of its economic impositions toward Cuba, the United States embargo against the island nation has varied in strength since 1958.³³ As it is controversially still in operation today, recent critics of the embargo see it as a major failure by every measure:

"It has not changed the course or nature of the Cuban government. It has not liberated a single Cuban citizen...[it] has made the Cuban people a bit more impoverished, without making them one bit more free...it has deprived Americans of their freedom to travel and has cost US farmers and other producers billions of dollars of potential exports."³⁴

Admiral Arleigh. Pg. 30. And Document 22. President Kennedy's Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Pg. 40.

³² White, Mark. *The Kennedys and Cuba: The Declassified Documentary History*. Ivan R. Dee, Publisher. Chicago. 1999. Pg 169.

³³ Entitled the Cuban Democracy Act, the embargo was codified into law in 1992 with the stated purpose of maintaining sanctions on the Castro regime so long as it continues to refuse to move toward "democratization and greater respect for human rights." Retrieved from the State Department: http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/cuba/democ_act_1992.html. Web. Dec. 5, 2009.

³⁴ Griswold, Daniel. "The US embargo of Cuba is a failure Obama should lift the embargo. Allowing more travel and farm exports to Cuba will be good for democracy and the economy." *www. Guardian.Co.Uk*. June 15, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/jun/15/cuba-us-trade-embargo-obama>. Web. Dec. 6, 2009.

Although, the overall net economic effect the embargo has on Cuba is difficult to calculate, there are methods by which it can be relatively quantified and measured. In terms of economic control by the U.S., the embargo has restricted Cuba's ability to purchase foods and medicine. Studies show a direct causal link between an economic embargo of a country and a direct negative effect on its public health.³⁵ Other findings show that medical exports are limited because they remain subject to other statutory restrictions.³⁶

According to United States Government Accountability Office's Report to Congressional Requesters on Economic Sanction, the U.S. embargo on Cuba has been in effect for nearly 50 years as an expression of overall U.S. foreign policy toward the Castro regime. It aims at deny resources to the regime by prohibiting most trade, travel, and financial transactions within Cuba.³⁷ Data from [Figure 3] shows that the total U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba over the 7 years totaled more than \$1.5 billion. In 2000, U.S. exports to Cuba consisted mostly of donated items, electric machinery, and cereals. The agricultural date in [Figure 3] shows that exports to Cuba rose substantially after embargo rule changes were implemented in mid-2001 before declining somewhat in 2005-2006. After Cuba began importing U.S. agricultural products in late 2001, exports to the island jumped to \$144 million and increased to about \$400 million by

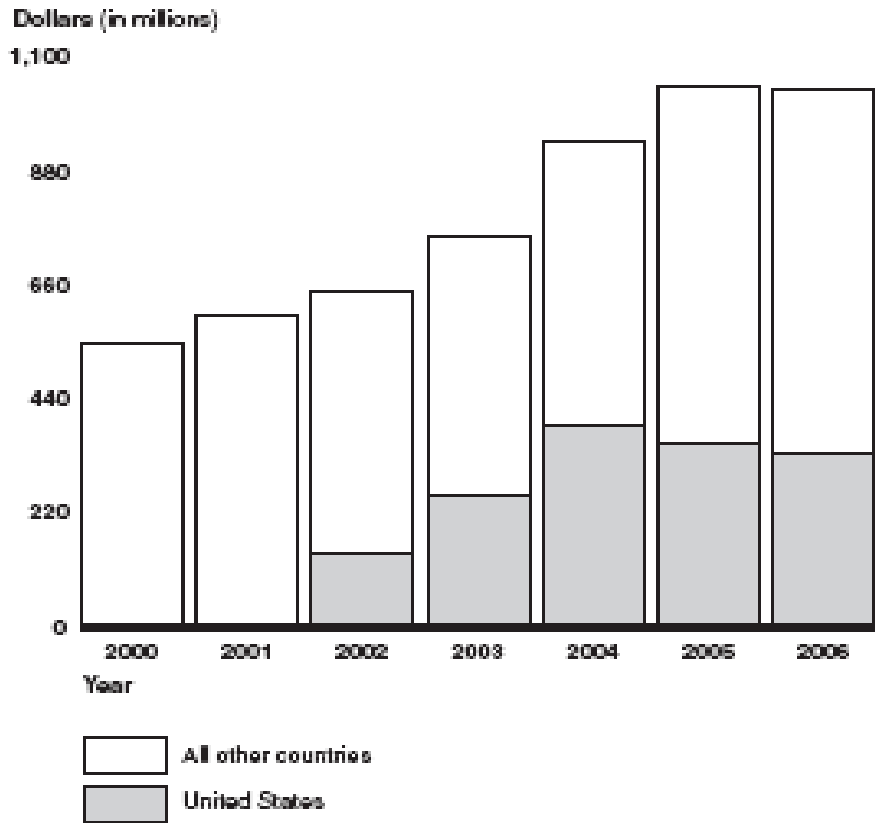
³⁵ Kirkpatrick, Anthony F. "Role of the USA in shortage of food and medicine in Cuba." *The Lancet*. November 30, 1996. Pg.1489–1491. <http://www.cubasolidarity.net/Kirkpatrick-lancet.pdf>. Web. Dec. 6, 2009.

³⁶ United States Government Accountability Office. *Report to Congressional Requesters*. "Economic Sanction Agencies Face Competing Priorities in Enforcing the U.S. Embargo on Cuba." November 2007. Pg. 26.

³⁷ United States Government Accountability Office. *Report to Congressional Requesters*. "Economic Sanction Agencies Face Competing Priorities in Enforcing the U.S. Embargo on Cuba." November 2007. Pg. 1.

2004, making the United States the largest exporter of food to the island and Cuba's fourth-largest trading partner.³⁸

[Figure 3] Cuban Agricultural Imports from the United States and Other Countries 2000-2006



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other data.

Several major factors give the U.S. a gargantuan economic advantage over Latin America as can be inferred from the Cuban case. With the economic ability to impose severe economic sanctions by a 50 year-long embargo (which prohibits most trade, travel, and financial transactions in Cuba), this will most likely continue to be the U.S. policy of choice; especially when there is increased revenue from the exportation of agricultural goods into the embargoed nation. The economic repression of Cuba is

³⁸ Ibid. Pg. 27

beneficial to the U.S. economy and therefore the realist argument should be that this economic policy should be maintained. Understanding this asymmetry of economic power and influence through the realist lenses justifies how the U.S. national interests of Cuban isolationism and U.S. economic growth are both achieved, albeit at the expense of the health of the Cuban people. The historical information and statistical data provided in this case exemplifies the immense economic power that the United States wields over Cuba, and in some sense, Latin America. The realist approach to understanding international relations from the historical context of the embargo on Cuba, to the ability for the U.S. to dominate as Cuba's largest exporter of food, solidifies that U.S. self interests will continually be met under an anarchic state; where dimensions of trade do not alter the anarchic and warlike character inherent in relations among states.

Tentative Conclusions

This paper set out with the intent to forecast a more realist conceptualization in determining the future of U.S.-Latin American relations. The basic argument disputed the scholarly inference that U.S.-Latin American relations is moving towards an observable decrease of U.S. political, military, or economic hegemony in Latin America.³⁹ This paper argued that although there seems to be a growing egalitarian and consultative relationship between these two international bodies, there actually is not. A realist paradigm was employed to comprehend the United States' motivations within international relations by analyzing three case studies under this same realist

³⁹ Coerver, Don M., Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & The United States*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg. 242. With reference to the issues that lie before U.S.-Latin American relations.

framework. The conclusions reached demonstrated that there are, and will continue to be a U.S. dominated political, military and economic power over the Latin American region.

This paper only employs a realist approach to understanding the case studies, which is only one paradigmatic way of conceptualizing international relations. The outcome attained by adhering to this realist approach gave a distinct rationale for many political, military and economic phenomena. Specific reasons for why, and to what extent, the U.S. has maintained a disproportional amount of power over Latin America has been answered with this realist paradigm. The use of three brief historical case studies, from different time periods, and from various Latin American countries has added to the overall saliency of these findings. The adherence to this one paradigm in analyzing each case study has also facilitated the development of a general pattern which is presumed to continue in the relationship between the United States and the Latin American. Each case study has drawn upon the major quandary inherent in the realist approach toward international relations. It infers that because it is in the best interest of the United States to cultivate its hegemonic policies, even at the expense of gross inequality and a lack in overall regional cooperation, this will be the direction of U.S.- Latin American relations in the future.

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