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# Foreign Policy Analysis in Latin American democracies: the case for a research protocol

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## Abstract

In this article we propose an alternative theoretical path to study contemporary Latin American foreign policies, evoking the notion of 'public policy cycle' to explain how democratic regimes in the region have been able to expand their autonomy over time. For that, we will first identify the sources of a given country's foreign policy, both at home and abroad, as well as its decision-making and implementation mechanisms. With regard to methodology, by replacing sheer deductivism for some inductivism, this approach also innovates in allowing more rigorous comparative politics and, consequently, new general theories about Latin American politics and policies.

**Keywords:** Latin America; Democracy; Foreign Policy Analysis.

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## Introduction

This article has both a conceptual nature and a normative appeal, as it postulates an unconventional approach to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) on Latin American democracies in at least two senses: (a) it emphasizes the need to avoid sheer policy comparison, instead advocating the comprehension of conditions under which each foreign policy is conceived and implemented; and (b) it rejects the determinism of systemic approaches in International Relations (IR), usually responsible for assigning to the Latin American continent the role of either a complement to globalized supply chains or an area under the military influence of global powers. This article argues that a possible way to overcome such difficulties could be an analytical turn toward 'foreign policy cycles', *i.e.* by identifying domestic and international sources of a country's foreign policy (FP), as well as its procedures for formulation, decision-making and implementation, one would be better positioned to assess a

country's FP. It envisages the adoption of an inductive pathway, associated with a methodologically rigorous comparative stance, to lead to new theories and concepts, better able to explain foreign policy choices in Latin American democracies. For that purpose, in this paper's first section we apply the foundations of comparative politics to foreign policy studies. In the second section, we aim to present the latest developments in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) in Latin America, drawing attention to two of its most recurrent traits – reliance on an oversimplified behaviorism and/or on a deterministic version of structuralism. Contemporary Venezuelan foreign policy will then be addressed as a case study to illustrate the shortcomings of Latin American FPA. The third part introduces the building blocks of an alternative analytical model, inspired by the so-called 'public policy cycle' framework, that seeks to offer a more nuanced account of phenomena related to foreign policymaking in democratic Latin American countries. We also discuss some of the foreseeable problems in adopting this alternative FPA model.

## Foreign Policy Analysis as Comparative Politics?

Let us start by discussing the current state of comparative methodology in FPA. James Rosenau (1968), who was a pioneer in the field, pleaded for a radical differentiation between *comparative studies on foreign policy* and *comparative foreign policy*: while the first concept refers to the object (*i.e.* foreign policies in its various aspects), the second dwells on method. In his view, there was no well-established methodology in the discipline, let alone literature, of International Relations which could indicate a tradition of 'comparative foreign policy'. The author regretted that "an unfortunate [comparative] tendency, perhaps also stemming from ill-considered emulation, has developed whereby comparative foreign policy is viewed as a body of knowledge, as a subject to be explored, as a field of inquiry" (Rosenau 1968, 308). Rosenau even admitted that comparisons among two or more objects could deliver analytical gains for its practitioners, but warned against the risk of such an exercise becoming academically innocuous, if not epistemically inappropriate, given its usual lack of methodological rigor. In this sense, Amado Cervo (2008) made a providential caveat to Foreign Policy Analysis: as mainstream theorists of International Relations often put into practice, FPA is derived from universal theories which do not seem to perfectly suit non-hegemonic political societies. According to Cervo, there are rooted biases in academia which strike against locally forged and operated concepts. This polemic discussion embeds the medieval problem of 'universal empiricals' (that is, ensuring comparability between objects which are potentially available around the entire world) and the perennial difficulty the Social Sciences manifest to find a middle ground between detailed descriptions and broad generalizations. As it relates to FPA, this methodological pitfall seems even harder to deal with, as some countries – be they great, middle or small powers – can hijack 'favorable' theoretical narratives which are supportive to certain discourses, thereby making their policies and world-views prevail.

Rosenau (1968) and Cervo (2008) can probably be of help, at least in highlighting some crucial problems one might face in opting for comparative methods to approach FPA subjects. However, there are other reasons for methodological concern. Marcel Merle (1984) elaborated some important remarks about the comparative undertaking in FPA. He noted that the historical dimension of each country, decisive for shaping the contours of its people and the nation, is hardly present in FP comparative analysis. Thus, part of the motivations for a more particular orientation of a state's foreign policy ends up getting lost or being diluted, leading to the employment of more easily operationalized information. In addition, comparison in foreign policy usually flattens processes that often have different historical consistencies. An example offered by him is the case of Australia and Canada – which, despite being founding members of the League of Nations (LN) in 1920, only founded a bureaucracy for foreign policymaking in the 1940s. Therefore, an approach that only takes into account the 'year of admittance to the LN' would not be able to address the presumable immaturity of their foreign policies, not to mention the shadow cast by the United States. It could be argued that a process-focused analysis, rather than one solely concerned with formal procedures and practices, could avoid this sort of misleading comparison.

Merle's second practical warning relates to the difficulty faced by researchers to work with data that are often incommensurate, since states adopt different methodological steps and metrics in treating national statistics, and even more troublesome, states use different criteria for allowing access to their national documents and figures. Young states may lack compiled and organized official information, while opaque political regimes may manipulate or omit data to their own benefit. Not to mention the risk of 'state secrecy' and the obstruction of data sources which are by definition confidential, either in democratic or authoritarian states (Merle 1984, 11-13). These externalities are frequently justified by a modern notion of sovereignty, and in particular by the relationship the sovereign state maintains with its own territory, population, and governing bodies. They will set up operational barriers which, as implied above, could only be overcome by a well-trained researcher. After all, comparisons of specific subjects that are even less transparent and accountable to the population, also entail formidable hurdles for data collection, but by no means have prevented researchers from keeping up investigations in rigorous ways. The third and final caveat raised by Merle concerns the scientific legitimacy of pairing, for the sake of analysis and interpretation, two or more subjects as diverse as geographically large and small countries, densely populated or not, militarily strong or weak, rich or poor, politically stable or unstable, and/or pursuing agendas of 'national interest' that are irreconcilable. That is why Merle recommends that if a researcher still wants to compare foreign policies after all these warnings, then he or she ought to take a look at structural issues common to every state in the world rather than focusing on contingent solutions each state delivers in day-to-day international politics.

At this juncture, it may be useful to note that foreign policy probably fully meets one of the most critical criteria for good comparison exercises, that is, *potential global comparability*

(Sartori 1997). There is not a full-fledged sovereign state in the world today that would be able to integrate the international system of states without developing *some* foreign policy. Indeed, it should be seen as a prerequisite for its incorporation into modern international relations. It is plausible, however, very unlikely, that a state does not develop public policies to grapple with issues such as public health, education, national security, among others. But it is simply not reasonable to assume that a national state can survive without putting into practice *any* foreign policy. After all, what happens in their territorial surroundings will stimulate them to provide answers to the ‘outside world.’ Hence the assumption that foreign policies *shall always be potentially comparable*.

How to make this comparative exercise a scientifically fruitful endeavor is quite another matter. In comparing individual elements from a set of democratic public policies, Celso Lafer (2009) states that foreign policy is unique inasmuch as it involves *qualitative* rather than *quantitative* parameters in its making and evaluation. After all, when dealing with foreign policy, it is as if we were thinking of a *synthetic public policy* which condenses within a variety of domestic agendas and systemic constraints (Hill 2002). Moreover, as it is frequently thought of as a state policy rather than as a governmental one, foreign policy is endowed with a special nature. Officers in charge of foreign policymaking are, very often, career officials (not political *protégés*), recruited by open competition based on merit assessment. Therefore, foreign policy is, or should be, less vulnerable to electoral fluctuations than other public policies. On the other hand, its authorship is more difficult to assign to one person or group of actors, since it also is the by-product of historical traditions and collective action. Thus, in carrying out comparisons of foreign policymaking without sociological content, by sticking to procedural formalities and disregarding criteria such as national self-esteem and reputation, one analyst would incur sizable loss of substance, which should be avoided for the purposes of bringing depth to FPA.<sup>1</sup>

In order to conclude this section, an obvious question to be addressed is why should one compare in Political Science and International Relations? The shorter and more compelling answer to this question is found in a classic text by Giovanni Sartori in which he affirms: “Comparison is a method to control generalizations, forecasts or laws. [A] method of control because, of course, it is not the only one. It is not even the most effective one. Still, the comparative method is

1 Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis (CFPA) has arguably developed into a field of study in Anglo-Saxon universities in the 21st century. Beasley et al. (2001) have organized a compilation that illustrates such a move in the discipline. Breuning (2007) also welcomes comparative approaches to assess the role played by national leaders in foreign policy. Brazilian CFPA is still incipiently developed, as evidenced by Faria (2012). Focusing on teaching and research on foreign policy in the country, this author sought to quantify and classify theses and dissertations presented to graduate studies programs in IR, theses and dissertations available at Capes Bank of Theses and Dissertations, and articles on foreign policy published in the four main Brazilian journals in the field of IR. He has convincingly demonstrated through facts and figures how peripheral and residual the comparative strategy remains for the Brazilian academic community. Notwithstanding, relevant recent works also seem to indicate the benefits of comparativism and a possible future turn towards it. Amorim Neto (2011), for instance, has recently published a book whose methodology is based on CFPA, both from longitudinal and transversal perspectives. Pinheiro and Milani (2011) have edited a volume that compares aspects of several ‘public policies’ that intersect with foreign policy. When it comes to Latin America as a whole, reference works to be cited should include the one edited by former Argentinian Foreign Minister Juan Carlos Puig (first published in 1984), and more recently a compilation by Gardini and Lambert (2011) and another by Domínguez and Covarrubias (2015). These are but a few examples of contemporary academic literature which possibly indicate a ‘comparative turn’ in the realm of FPA in Brazil and Latin America.

strong enough to get where other control methods do not reach.” (Sartori 1997, 206) In other words, in Political Science and specifically in Foreign Policy Analysis, when one is unable to employ methods and techniques such as controlled experiments, comparison strikes as a possible second-best strategy, as it can enable one to test the accuracy of a proposition about political phenomena.<sup>2</sup> Briefly speaking, comparing countries has at least four main objectives, which are mutually reinforcing. First, contextual description allows political scientists to know what the other countries are like, compared to their own. Second, classification makes the world of politics and policies less complex, providing the researcher with scripts to collect empirical evidence in a systematic manner. Third, the testing of comparative hypotheses allows one to overcome competing explanations about specific events, actors, structures, and so forth, apart from helping one to build theories which are more general and open in scope. Last, comparing countries and obtaining inductive generalizations can lead to better probabilistic forecasts, regarding other countries not included in the original group compared, or predicting future outcomes, given the presence of certain background information, and necessary as well as sufficient conditions (Hague and Harrop 2004; Landman 2008). For these reasons, comparative studies currently enjoy mounting prestige in most subfields of Political Science.

## Latin American Foreign Policy Analysis: Somewhere Between Old and New Approaches

In a recent article on the current state of FPA in Latin America, Rita Giacalone (2012) demonstrates how it has been a relatively neglected area. Through a broad sweep of scientific works published from the 1970s until the present in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, the author concludes that it remains an undertheorized field within the disciplines of Political Science and IR. FPA does not receive, for instance, the same level of coverage as issues of International Political Economy, as the enduring importance of Marxist-structuralist readings in Latin-American IR production can testify. Despite the general picture of Latin American FPA, Giacalone also recognizes significant differences among those countries she studied. The author portrays Brazil as a pioneering country in this respect, since Brazilian scholars have developed over the years more sophisticated approaches derived from sociological constructivism and post-modern theories. Another important finding relates to the different impacts that academics and their intellectual constructs have had, throughout Latin America's history, on the foreign policy systems of their respective countries. According to Giacalone, while

2 However, research methodology for the Social Sciences has undergone dramatic transformations over the last 20 years, namely after the publication of the classic textbook *Designing Social Inquiry* (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). Much of what had previously been the target of criticism by ‘scientificist’ discourse – e.g. the overall low quality of inferential reasoning found in academic works – now sharply contrasts with a flourishing scenario where techniques as diverse as in-depth case studies, process tracing and QCA (qualitative comparative analysis), not to mention experiments intensively based on inferential statistics, abound in the literature and have in all probability endowed Political Science and IR with more rigorous and effective research protocols.



researchers in Brazil managed to influence decision-makers to a certain extent, in Argentina they were repeatedly denied any important role in public administration. However, it is not yet clear whether variables such as quality of academic production and access to foreign policy decision-making are correlated in any way (Giacalone 2012, 13-14). If we stick to Tickner's content analysis of IR theory teaching in Latin America, we will find that realist and liberal approaches are overwhelmingly favored in the region, being seconded by Marxist and neo-Marxist frameworks – namely dependency theory. Constructivist and post-positivist accounts of international affairs (including feminism, postcolonialism and poststructuralism) lag far behind, as they “are absent from over one-third of the IR theory courses analyzed and are given only passing attention in most of the other syllabi, adding up to less than 5 percent of the total readings” (Tickner 2009, 42).

There is a broad consensus among Latin American FP analysts concerning the decisive role played by the United States in the region (Amorim Neto 2011; Tickner 2015), and the importance that national autonomy (identified by as many labels as ‘relative autonomy,’ ‘confrontational autonomy,’ ‘autonomy within dependence,’ ‘autonomy through participation,’ among others) has for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela alike (Braveboy-Wagner 2008; Giacalone 2012). Policy proposals that underestimated the weight of nationalism (such as ‘peripheral realism’ in Argentina or ‘interdependence’ in Mexico) were often short-lived, and have soon been transformed into anathemas in electoral campaigns. An important gap in the literature on the relationship between political regime and foreign policy in the region has been spotted by Rafael Villa (2006), who believes that South American countries which have undergone institutional democratization over the last decades may still lack ‘democratic capital’ in their societies, which consequently affects the way foreign policy is made. As stated by Villa, “The low degree of continuity and institutionalization of the so-called ‘rules of the game’ in various countries in the region, especially in the Andean Community, precludes a minimum of congruence between formal rationality (legally expressed in constitutions, clauses or decrees) and effective democratic practices” (Villa 2006, 82). A set of countries which have just experienced (re)democratization can also be found in Central and Eastern Europe. These recently liberalized economies in Europe resort to a concept of public diplomacy which, according to György Szondi (2009), sounds more like an attempt to erase, by means of official propaganda, stains of the past where authoritarianism and Communism were prevalent. Another explicit feature of this type of diplomacy lies in the attempt to present a country as ‘trustworthy’ and ‘an eligible candidate’ for membership of regional institutions (namely the European Union) and other international fora. It may also contribute to identity reconfiguration of the peoples from Central and Eastern Europe, who are still going through this difficult transition from autocratic regimes to representative democracies.

So the trend inferred for countries with young democratic institutions (which is the case of most Latin American countries), based on empirical examples cataloged in contemporary literature, seems to be the following: foreign policies with little or no social articulation whatsoever

may easily end up being manipulated by governments, as there are no consolidated democratic linkages between society and the state. However, here we will not take for granted that the relative lack of studies on connections between society and the state in Latin America's foreign policymaking *is* a mere reflection of social ontology, that is, an outcome of political apathy allegedly found at the level of Latin American populations with regard to international political matters<sup>3</sup>. We believe that in addition to all aspects already listed in the literature, there are others (of theoretical, epistemological, and methodological nature, as well as those related to FP strictly speaking) that have not yet been properly scrutinized. A good way to present this state of affairs in Latin American FPA was coined by Arlene Tickner, according to whom there has been a selective incorporation of morgenthauian realist assumptions regarding the state, the states-person and the national interest into preexisting analytical frameworks (primarily ECLA [UN Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean] and dependency thinking). Therefore, "The hybrid model that emerged from mixing bits and pieces of US and Latin American theories created the foundations for a series of suppositions about Latin American foreign policy, peripheral state dependence and development that informed both academic and political practice throughout the region until the mid- to late 1980s." (Tickner 2015, 78)

Most of the works found in the literature follow a line of reasoning that has long been consolidated among Latin-Americanists. In sum, they tend to approach Latin American foreign policies from a perspective based on their empirical final outcomes – *i.e.* the policies themselves – thus disregarding the processes of policymaking. However, in addressing FP making backwards (*i.e.* by emphasizing on the *outcomes* rather than the *processes*), one may lose sight of what are/were the strategic choices of the decision makers at different moments of a given policymaking cycle. It would compromise the chances to single out and turn all actors involved in the process responsive and accountable for it. While obfuscating identities of specific decision makers, this behaviorist model fails to tell *how one particular foreign policy move is politically and institutionally constructed*. In other words, behaviorism's chief mistake in FPA is to depoliticize its own subject<sup>4</sup>. Concurrently, one will often come across that deterministic reading offered by social structuralism regarding Latin American international politics. With respect to this

3 Dahl (2001) contends that this correlation between two variables – 'political apathy' and 'foreign policy' – is a bit more complex and nuanced than common sense discourse. Examining the literature on the relationship between foreign affairs and democratic control, the author realizes that the 'simple hypothesis', developed way back in the 1950s by Gabriel Almond – *i.e.* foreign policy is perceived as being too far from ordinary citizens' lives, which would explain the low level of participation and democratic control over it – deserves revision, as it benefits from most recent case studies. The author bet on a refined version of Almond's hypothesis, assuming that ordinary citizens can, under certain circumstances, play an active role in (re)formulating foreign policy (see the mobilization around the Vietnam War, in the United States, which remains exemplary). On the other hand, Dahl points out that, most of times, foreign policy brings less commotion than other public policies in democratic states, an idea which could corroborate, at least partially, that old hypothesis about political apathy raised by Almond. Nevertheless, it remains open which circumstances would be able to change such apathetic condition of a population, motivating popular engagement with a state's foreign policy.

4 A tentative explanation for the massive presence of behavioral studies in foreign policy in Latin American countries may rest in the fact that those who used to produce literature on the subject were Latin American diplomats. Besides not counting on the same training as academic researchers, diplomats derive their elaborations from perceptions and professional experiences, which are more often related to the stage of foreign policy implementation than to formulation/decision making procedures. Thus much of the sociopolitical and moral content prior to policy implementation is lost.



simplistic narrative about constrained possibilities for foreign policy making in the region, the following excerpt by Charles Maynes, then an editor of *Foreign Policy*, seems exemplary:

The likelihood is that the US will have to live in the future with a Latin America much less subject to its will than in the past. ... [F]inally, the United States will have to accept that its overwhelming dominance in the postwar period was unique. Because the European powers were so weak after the II World War, their influence in Latin America was temporarily but sharply diminished. Now they have regained their prewar strength and have returned to the hemisphere in a major way. (Maynes 1983, vii)

The editor of a prestigious US publication envisioned a ‘changing of the guard’ as the only alternative for Latin American politics in the early 1980s: as the US tutelage would finally end, so would a shared domination from Western Europe and perhaps the Soviet Union immediately begin. Either way, he completely discarded the possibility of a break from core-periphery domination. Great intellectual effort is not required for one to identify a typical ecological fallacy in Maynes’ reasoning, which can be stated as follows: *if* a given country is located in Latin America, *then* its foreign policy should be subordinated to Western powers.

## Contemporary Venezuela as an Illustration of Latin American FPA’s Shortcomings

All this helps to understand the perplexity of scholars and the media – especially those based in the US and Europe – about Hugo Chávez’s foreign policy after 2002<sup>5</sup>, as well as the perception of Venezuelan Bolivarianism as a radical political movement. One can hardly deny that the former Venezuelan head of state went too far sometimes, both in practice and rhetoric. His virulent diatribes included telling the former British prime minister Tony Blair, and FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas] supporters, to “go to hell”; pronouncing at the UN General Assembly opening session that the pulpit “smelled like sulfur” [an allusion to the previous speech delivered by the President of the United States George W. Bush]; calling the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States José Miguel Insulza, a “real idiot” and “viceroy of the empire”; or saying that the Brazilian Senate, when it criticized his choices, acted as “the United States’ parrot”. All these vastly documented manifestations by Chávez properly summarize his profile in presidential diplomacy. Besides the verbal attacks, Chávez’s Venezuela maintained special relations with countries often considered pariahs in IR – such as Iran and Cuba (Belém Lopes 2008).

Notwithstanding, we can certainly claim that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela’s foreign policy repertoire illustrates an unusual model for any Latin American state in international

5 After Chávez was targeted by a failed coup d’état condoned by the United States.

relations, thus pushing for major revisions in Latin American FPA. If the country remained deeply associated with the United States and major Western powers for a long period since the end of World War II, the years under Chávez marked a depart from that positioning. Venezuela's international standing, from the late 1950s to the mid-1990s, brought about ingredients of what Carlos Escudé once named Peripheral Realism. Briefly speaking, it consisted on the understanding that:

A double distinction should be made: that between autonomy itself and the use a state makes of it and that between the different types of use of autonomy. Autonomy itself (defined as the costs of using an almost limitless freedom of maneuver) is a consequence of power and therefore, to a large extent, of development (insofar as power is insignificant without a minimum economic base). And autonomy thus defined can be put to use (i) to generate more development of power, which Peripheral Realism theory calls 'investment of autonomy'; (ii) or simply exhibited and spent, which Peripheral Realism theory calls 'consumption of autonomy.' (Escudé 2015, 52)

This 'dependent foreign policy' model has been subject to academic research for long. In Latin America, the first attempts of theoretical formulation were openly adept to structural conceptions based on 'core-periphery' binary (*e.g.* Cardoso and Faletto 2001), and were associated with efforts made by ECLA to make sense of the world economy. Bruce Moon has once defined such orientations as follows:

The dependency perspective ... defines the connection [between the strong state and the weak state] as a long-term structural relationship in which the opportunity for the weaker state and the need for the stronger state to bargain in the short term are severely limited. The constrained choice of the weak state is based on a history of relationships that include not only rewarded behaviors – which become increasingly unnecessary and infrequent as they increase dependence – but also a wide range of transactions that deepens dependence, undermining the autonomy of the decision-making unit [from the weaker state]. (Moon 1983, 320)

In most Latin American countries, this international insertion constrained by dependence ties was prevalent during the Cold War years. Although there were behavioral variations (depending on who was the president in office or the specific topic of a foreign policy agenda), the general trend was that Latin American states served the US' interests, which reflected, according to Moon, on their voting pattern at the UN General Assembly. Prospects were worse for Venezuela, an export-led economy reliant on oil. The idea of autonomy as the ability to shape a country's behavioral pattern in international affairs (Araújo Castro 1982) represented a distant aspiration for Caracas, if not a megalomaniacal one. The maximum a realist peripheral country should claim, as taught by Escudé, is the increase of its might and people's well-being. Unsurprisingly, an intensive exploration of oil seemed the most efficient and safe way to accomplish these goals.

And how to explain, in the light of peripheral-dependence or realist theoretical frameworks, this foreign policy shift of Venezuela, correlated to the rise to power of Hugo Chávez? In her work on Ecuador, Jeanne Hey (1993) lists at least two other historical types of foreign policy orientation in Latin America over time: *counter-dependence* and *compensation*. Jamaican popular reaction to negative economic effects after the implementation of a national development plan formulated by the US in the 1960s, is an example of counter-dependence. In response to that economic debacle, people massively voted for the socialist candidate Michael Manley, whose electoral campaign for presidency displayed the motto ‘third-world solidarity’ and rejected practices that would generate more dependence on Western powers. An illustration of compensation would be Mexican foreign policy under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – the hegemonic political party in Mexico from 1929 to 2000. In order to craft social cohesion at the domestic level, but still bearing in mind all structural links kept with the United States – perceived as unfavorable to Mexican citizens – PRI rulers embraced an aggressive anti-American rhetoric as a form of discursive compensation to empirical dependence. Whether in the Jamaican or in the Mexican case, the outcome is what matters: a foreign policy that sought to depart from US structural influence toward greater decision-making autonomy. Academic notions such as *counter-dependence* and *compensation* help interpreting this innovative Bolivarian foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They clearly shed light on causal mechanisms that may have precipitated this shift in Venezuela. First, it is worth considering the failure of President Carlos Andrés Pérez in implementing an agenda of neoliberal reforms in Venezuela in the first half of 1990s. That agenda was advocated by multilateral banks, which have major world economies as their creditors. As the former Venezuelan President once said:

When I took office, I had already planned a program. Before swearing in, I had already started talks with the IMF, with President Bush, with President Mitterrand [from France], with President González [Felipe González, Prime Minister of Spain]. I had my plan established. I was aware of the nebulous situation I was facing [a serious economic crisis] ... I was looking for people in accordance with the things I had to do. (quoted in Amorim Neto 2006, 168)

In other words, the rise to power of Chávez, in 1999, could be correlated to the direct association made by Venezuelan voters to an unsuccessful state reform orchestrated by the United States – just as in the Jamaican case. Even so, if Hey’s (1993) concepts can capture the quality of the phenomenon under discussion, they may add little to explaining Hugo Chávez’s verbosity, as well as his compulsion to confront the United States directly. For the argument’s sake, one should also consider the concept of the ‘political’ adopted by Chávez and his allies as implicitly referring to a well-known Schmittian concept based on ‘friend-enemy’ dichotomy.

In sum, by blaming the US and its allies (that is, ‘enemies’ in the Schmittian sense) for the scars of the nation and the continent altogether, Chávez managed to build a successful discursive relationship of antagonism with the international-systemic *status quo*. Drawing on Schmittian

logic and Bolivarian rhetoric, Venezuela's former president was able to play a significant role as a regional leader, while defending a common identity for oppressed Latin American peoples, and fighting Northern/Western 'imperialism'. It nonetheless strikes the IR analyst how present and alive this old structural metalinguistic component of Venezuela's foreign policy remains. If the dichotomous, Manichean and fatalistic narrative (underpinned by dyadic categories such as victor/vanquished, winner/loser, core/periphery, colonizer/colonized, master/slave, developed/underdeveloped, North/South, among others) were finally replaced by a new narrative that emphasizes roles performed by different social actors in regional and international politics, especially in comparison to other cases from Latin America, then much of the *Chavista* discourse on foreign policy would lose its appeal and effectiveness. All in all, the example of Venezuela showcases the shortcomings of conventional FPA in/on Latin American countries, as it does not grasp important moves made by their agents and recurrently resorts to the same old categories, instead of revising and refining its pillars.

## The 'Foreign Policy Cycle' Framework: Pros and Cons

To account for the difficulties and inconsistencies identified in Latin American FPA in the previous discussion, we seek hereafter to sketch an analytical framework which draws on the latest literature. Thus, we clearly admit that our proposal is not to be taken as something entirely novel or groundbreaking<sup>6</sup>. Instead, it is an attempt to generate residual innovation in regard to both the long-established behaviorist tradition and structuralist theories of IR (namely Neo-Realism, Neo-Liberalism, and Marxism), which have pervaded much of the literature on foreign policy in the region. The framework we put forth herein is based on the understanding that Latin American foreign policies, just as other public policies developed within democratic societies, can and should be assessed from the perspective of 'cycles'<sup>7</sup>, whose scope contemplates every stage of public policymaking since the identification of its social sources until the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of its implementation. Apart from expectedly providing density and depth to FPA, once it does not turn a blind eye to politico-sociological contents that lie behind foreign policymaking, it blends in an original fashion FPA and conventional Public Policy Analysis techniques so as to ensure meaningful comparisons among research objects (countries,

6 It is by no means the authors' intention to nurture such a thing as an aspiration for full originality. To refer to one work we have benefited from, and relied on, for the development of this analytical framework to assess Latin American democracies, we could cite Hudson's and Vore's seminal article (1995). While recognizant of how indebted we remain to those thinkers who preceded us in this matter, we are comfortable in claiming that this contribution promotes a leap forward in the literature, be it for placing emphasis on Latin American contemporary democracies – which today remains quite unusual in the literature –, be it for indicating a research procedural road map to all of those interested in endowing FPA production in/on Latin America with empirical as well as methodological consistent grounds.

7 "The 'policy cycle' approach has been central to the so-called 'policy sciences' since the early 1950s, when it was first formalized by Harold Laswell, one of its reputed founding fathers. A policy cycle comprises, according to De Leon, "the functional stages or phases that a given government policy (or program) would go through during its policy life (1999: 20)." For a review of pros and cons of the policy cycle approach, see De Leon (1999).

governments, diplomatic corps, foreign policies, decision-making procedures, institutions, and the like). Our approach is admittedly inspired by several studies in Social Sciences which sought to solve classical disciplinary problems regarding the integration of levels of analysis and the never-ending agency-structure debate. Below Mahoney and Snyder (1999) have summarized the conceptual road map on which this work is referenced (See Table 1). In this table one can hint at the full diversity of independent variables that can possibly account for variance in foreign policymaking in a democratic country.

**Table 1: Integration of analytic levels and examples of explanatory variables**

Analytical Approach		Level of Analysis	Examples of variables
Integrative Approaches	Structuralist Approaches	Macro-Structural	Position in the World-System; National Culture
	Voluntarist Approaches		
		Domestic-Structural	Bourgeois; Middle Class; and Workers
		Institutional	Party Systems; Military; Constitutional Rules
		Social Groups	Military Factions; Grass Root Movements; Ethnic Groups
		Leadership	Government; Parties; Military Leaders

Source: Mahoney and Snyder (1999).

A renewed framework for Latin American FPA should then be conceived and put into effect: one which encompasses formal and informal inputs to foreign policymaking in the region, taking into consideration a fairly homogeneous set of countries – namely Latin American constitutional democracies. Despite the recurrent claim that Latin America is now facing a critical situation with regard to democratic institutions – the case of Venezuela under Chávez and Maduro being the chief example offered by critics –, we believe that it is just one more reason to justify the need for more academically-oriented empirical work rather than relying on official, ideological or mediatic discourse. Not to mention that by gathering evidences and comparing them, an analyst is certainly in a better position to reach consistent conclusions about the state of affairs in Latin American politics. Thus, we have transformed the general contents found in Table 1 into a single applied research protocol, by assembling in Table 2 (see below) two dozen ‘heuristic questions’ (Kahneman 2011) whose ambition is to lead the researcher into meaningful findings about Latin American foreign policies, but in a way that moves away from behaviorism and structuralism. It also helps the adept to freely compare the most diverse aspects about FPA, avoiding or diminishing the methodological risk of incommensurability. These questions, which



aspire to cover the three main stages of a public policy cycle (*e.g.* formulation, implementation, M&E), must not be taken as exhaustive, but rather merely as tentative and illustrative.

**Table 2: Exemplary list of heuristic questions (uncodified explanatory variables)**

*1. Identifying social and political sources of a country's foreign policy*

Heuristic questions:

- a) What is the topic under public debate?
- b) Is there a history of discussions about the subject?
- c) Who are the main actors involved (institutional and extra-institutional, national and international) and what are the interests at stake?
- d) What is the relative availability of power resources (considered governmental and non-governmental, domestic and international resources)?
- e) How intense are these actors' preferences?
- f) What level of information do these actors enjoy?
- g) What kind of access do they have to FP deliberative bodies?
- h) Are all relevant actors in FP making collective entities or are there individuals whose preferences should also be considered?

*2. Identifying the formal constraints of a country's foreign policy making*

Heuristic questions:

- i) How is the FP agenda set?
- j) Who are the actors that trigger the process of agenda setting?
- k) What are the formal procedures for aggregating actors' preferences?
- l) What are the institutional responsibilities of each FP institutional representative?
- m) What are the institutional channels for communication and influence to link up society and government?
- n) Who decides what? How exactly is a FP decision taken?
- o) Where are the veto points in FP decision making?
- p) How does the Constitution regulate the legislative process on international affairs (on issues such as declaration of war, celebration of peace, ratification of international treaties etc.)?
- q) How does ordinary legislation deal with the state's international affairs?
- r) Once a decision in foreign policy is made, who implements it?
- s) How does this implementation occur in practice?
- t) How may it deviate from the original decision or plan?

*3. Monitoring and evaluating the social impact of a country's (already) implemented foreign policy*

Heuristic questions:

- u) How does national society react to an implemented foreign policy?
- v) What are the available means for one to manifest evaluative judgments?
- w) How do those judgments guide the country's foreign policy (or, is there any social responsiveness to FP)?
- x) Are there governmental mechanisms for foreign policy self-evaluation?
- y) How can civil society evaluate FP?
- z) Are there horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms applicable to foreign policy?

Source: The Authors.

It is certainly premature to speak of a ‘new disciplinary synthesis’ within the field of FPA, especially if one takes into account the problems that potentially affect this alternative approach we have proposed. First of all, one should note the problem with the ‘ghost formulator’ (Clarke 2000), *i.e.* the existence of numerous empirical situations in which one cannot identify the person behind a given foreign policy. This happens because inertia – that is to say, all diplomatic traditions, symbols, bureaucratic routines, and so forth – is indeed an important variable in foreign policymaking and analysis. In mainstream Political Science, Helmke and Levitsky’s definition for ‘informal institutions’ could possibly shed light on an analytical problem which is similar to the one mentioned by Clarke – as they are understood as “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels” (Helmke and Levitsky 2006, 1). In Brazil, for example, it would be virtually impossible to write about the history of the country’s external relations while ignoring the symbolic role played by ideas attributed to the Baron of Rio Branco (Moura 2007). Besides, as elucidated in the classic work of Graham Allison on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (Allison 1971), it is not always easy to break from standard operating procedures. Public administrators are often reproducing bureaucratic routines whose formulation happened long time before the bureaucrat joined the public service. In short, the weight of history and unintentional actions should be considered for a better grasp of public policymaking – and particularly of FP.

Secondly, the concept of ‘public policy cycle’ has been criticized more than once in the literature for being too ‘artificial’ (DeLeon 1999) since public policy stages frequently do not depict real empirical processes. However, since it may be an instrument that organizes empirical complexity, the analyst should not wear it as a straitjacket, otherwise it could impair – rather than contribute to – a full understanding of FP phenomena. For example, in a recent statement about “currency wars” made by Brazil’s Finance Minister facing a domestic audience, the contents of his speech leaked and eventually reached external audiences, generating side-effects for international politics and the Brazilian diplomatic agency<sup>8</sup>. In this case, despite not having been formulated and/or implemented through conventional channels, Brazil’s foreign policy did materialize, creating a situation of interest to the analyst. This sort of event could hardly be captured by this tentative framework.

Nonetheless, this framework can still provide its users with some advantages in relation to other approaches. This ‘foreign policy cycle’ perspective helps strengthen FPA’s empirical basis, by introducing controlled variance (with respect to independent variables), thus avoiding too abstract hypothetical-deductive approaches to foreign policy. This endorsement of induction (*en lieu* of blind reliance on deduction) does not mean rejecting canonical theories, but instead reclaims the constant problematization and adjustment of mainstream theoretical lenses to Latin America’s peculiar social reality. Another potential contribution of this model is the

8 For press coverage of the episode involving Brazil’s Finance Minister Guido Mantega, see <http://www.economist.com/blogs/buttonwood/2015/02/currency-wars>. Accessed March 3, 2016.

fertile crossing-over between FPA and Public Policy Analysis techniques it entails. This attempt brings about some immediate gains to the analyst, *i.e.* the chance to explore Latin America's FP phenomenology from original angles, therefore enriching the understanding of events and providing better explanatory and predictive capacity, not to mention that it clearly strengthens the branch of FPA that prioritizes connections between society and state, seeking to offer interpretive accounts of democratic foreign policies. We also recognize that both *within-case* and *cross-case* comparisons of foreign policy cycles are effective antidotes against what Rosenau (1968) once identified as the primacy of 'comparative studies on foreign policy' (that is, loose not rigorous comparisons of foreign policy traits), as opposed to Comparative Foreign Policy – which should necessarily be based on rigorous methodology, constituting a field of study.

All else considered, we posit that this 'foreign policy cycle' approach could prove to be an important tool for future theory- and concept-building on international politics in Latin America. Model trials and case studies are more than welcome.

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