

US MILITARY BASES, QUASI-BASES, AND DOMESTIC POLITICS
IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the obstacles for US formal military bases in Latin America. While in the past, the United States managed to establish bases in several countries in the region, despite Washington's efforts every negotiation to open new bases has failed since 2000, and older bases have been terminated, as in the case of Ecuador. Using evidence from Ecuador, Colombia, El Salvador, and other countries in the region, the dissertation finds that shifts in government preferences do not explain this failure. Instead, domestic challenges to host governments in Latin America systematically appear as blocking mechanisms that impede the establishment of foreign military bases, even when leaders support them.

The dissertation builds on the work of Alexander Cooley and others and develops a model of base politics to explain how domestic political calculations affect foreign basing negotiations. Furthermore, the dissertation finds that when formal bases have not succeeded, interested governments have worked around domestic constraints to establish alternative and informal arrangements that allow US military presence and operations in their countries. These alternative arrangements, or quasi-bases, have advanced US security interests in Latin America even in the absence of formal base leases, while at the same time their secrecy and informality protects Latin American leaders from domestic contestation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1999 the US military lost the Howard base in Panama, one of its most valuable operating locations in Latin America, as a consequence of the Torrijos-Carter treaty, which returned US possessions in Panama 100 years after their installment. Soon after, the US used surveillance flights to monitor Venezuelan territory in repeated occasions, making Venezuela's new President, Hugo Chavez, reject US military planes to use its airspace altogether. The loss of the US bases in Panama and Venezuela's reluctance to allow US flights over its territory left a considerable gap in US surveillance capabilities in the area connecting Central America with South America, key to controlling drug trafficking and illegal migration.

The US quickly leased new operating locations with three friendly governments in Latin America. Two opened in the Caribbean Dutch territories of Aruba and Curaçao; one more opened in Comalapa, in El Salvador, and the last one opened in Manta, Ecuador.¹ The new bases in these countries were significantly smaller than the ones in Panama, as most of their operations were transferred to the continental US and Puerto Rico. Instead of building new large bases, according to General Wilhelm of the US Marine Corps, the US sought "air bases where we can get jet aid, where we can arrange accommodations

¹See Lindsay-Poland, 2009

for air crews. Perhaps we can lease a little hanger space.”² The presence of US bases in Latin America decreased in number of troops, and was then further reduced when Ecuador terminated the lease of the base in Manta in 2009.

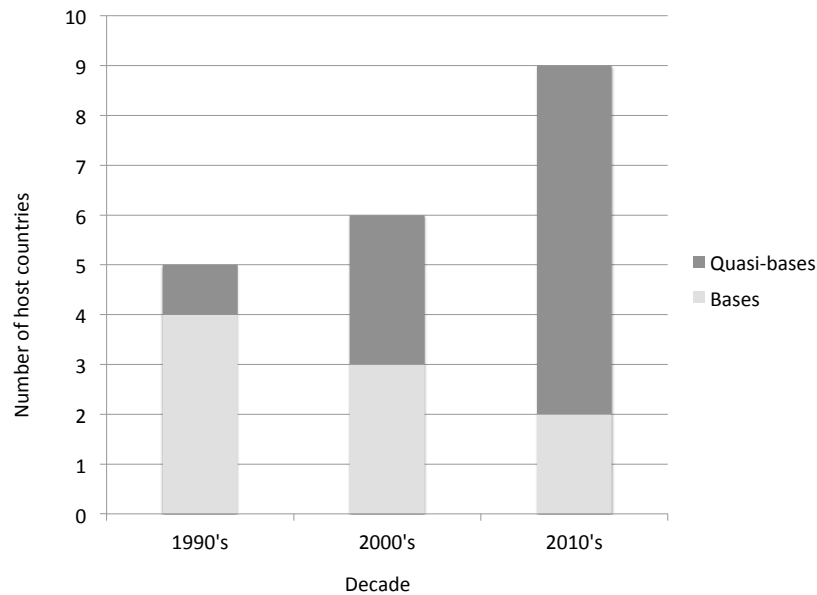
After 1999, all negotiations to open new formal bases in Latin America have failed. This would lead students of US-Latin American relations to believe that security operations of the United States would have been reduced. Instead, the United States military has had permanent or temporary presence in the last three years in bases El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, and has access to airports in Panama, Ecuador, and elsewhere. A traditional approximation to US bases would obscure the fact that the United States has opened informal and secretive base-like arrangements in almost every country in the Pacific coast of the Americas. Heavily armed US operations against drug-traffic are supported by these network of quasi-bases from South to Central America and the Caribbean, such as the *Operación Martillo* and Plan Colombia. These alternative arrangements, or quasi-bases, have provided access to the US military to countries where formal bases were closed or rejected, and at the same time have provided secrecy and lack of oversight for US operations in the region.

These facts raise questions about the effectiveness of US security policy in the Americas, as Latin Americans are no longer welcoming formal US bases in the region, but also about the transformation of US military engagement through secretive and informal bases in Latin American countries. When describing US military global presence and capabilities, scholarship has traditionally concentrated on the network of formal US bases around the globe (Cooley 2008, Calder 2007). These bases include a number of US military installations in US territories beyond the continental US, and also a number of basing agreements between the United States and host countries in every corner of the world. Despite the importance of formal bases for US projection of power, a growing number of quasi-bases,

²The New York Times, “U.S. Seeking New Bases To Offset Panama Loss,” December 02, 1998.

semi-formal agreements that grant tacit access to local military bases without a base lease, are providing essential access to US forces to carry security operations around the globe. Through these quasi-bases, the United States has acquired access to critical locations in Latin America, which today continue to support president Obama's security and anti-drug policies in the region.

In Latin America, as in other regions, formal US bases and base leases are in decline. Apart from its extra-territorial possessions in Puerto Rico and its base in Guantanamo, during the twentieth century the US had heavily manned, town-sized, formal military bases in Panama, and after their closure in 1999 the US managed to negotiate the lease of four new, smaller bases, known as Forward Operating Locations (FOL) in Latin America. A few years later, the government of Ecuador announced its intention to expel the US from the base in its territory, forcing the United States to initiate exploratory basing negotiations in Peru, Colombia, and Panama. Of these three, only Colombia accepted to move to formal negotiations, and despite the government's willingness to grant access to seven military bases in the country, the Colombian constitutional court ruled the new agreement unlawful and terminated the US's last hopes for new formal military bases in Latin America. After Colombia's defection, the only independent countries in Latin America that officially host a US military base are El Salvador, where a minuscule annex to a local airport hosts a radar and serves as temporary parking and fueling station for US airplanes, and Cuba, where the Castro government opposes US occupation of the naval base of Guantanamo. While this appears to be the end of the story for new formal US bases in the region, the parallel history of growing quasi-bases is striking.

Figure 1.1: US Bases and quasi-bases in Latin American countries

1.1 The puzzle

Latin American countries are no match to the powerful US military, not even all of them combined, by far. But still, the United States has attempted and failed to open formal military bases, or Forward Operating Locations, or Cooperative Security Locations, in Colombia, Peru, and Panama, and it lost the base it had in Manta, Ecuador. All the bases that remain in Latin American territory come from the previous century: Colamapa in El Salvador, Aruba and Curacao (in Dutch territory), Puerto Rico, and Guantanamo. US military presence is permanent in Honduras, although not officially in a base. Colombia hosts US personnel, but the attempt to open several permanent Cooperative Security Locations failed when the Colombian constitutional court ruled a security cooperation agreement unlawful. Peru allows Air Force surveillance from its airbase in Piura, but after some negotiations, the hopes of moving Manta operations to Piura vanished as the Peruvian president refused to face domestic opposition to foreign bases. Panama refused

to open a new US base in its territory, although it allowed the US to oversee the creation of local bases to fulfill the needs of US operations in the region without formal US presence.

This has not always been the case. The United States used to be able to materialize its interests in Latin America, either through force or through agreement. A period of US leadership (and coercion) in the region made the Americas be very similar to an ideal-typical hegemonic system (See section 2.3). When the United States ended its military presence in Panama in 1999 after the Torrijos-Carter treaties, several countries in the region offered to host US operations. El Salvador, Ecuador, Aruba and Curacao (through the Dutch government) finalized agreements to formally host US Forward Operating Locations (smaller US military bases where formal control remained in the hands of the local government, even if in practice the bases were operated and maintained autonomously by the United States). Before that, the United States had started a permanent military presence in the Soto Cano base in Honduras that continues to this day.

After successfully installing military bases in Latin America in the past, the failure of the United States to open new ones is puzzling. Why has the United States failed to open new formal military bases in Latin America? And why has it failed to maintain some of the ones it previously installed in the region? This dissertation seeks to help answer these questions.

Two common explanations give some insights and context about why basing negotiations do not always succeed, but ultimately are insufficient to answer the questions at hand. First, the US overall security, counternarcotics, and overseas basing strategy has led the United States to stop seeking formal bases, and instead is relying more and more on informal and secret installations overseas. While this shift in strategic overseas basing is in fact taking place (see sections 2.1 and 2.2), it fails to explain why the United States *did* seek to open new formal bases and renew existing ones in Latin America, but ultimately failed. This dissertation explores the phenomenon of quasi-bases (informal and secretive

base-like arrangements) in Latin America, which are often the alternative arrangement that takes place after formal negotiations break down, but it first tries to explain why the negotiations that did seek formal bases failed.

Second, the hegemonic structure of inter-American affairs seems to be eroding, as old consensus around key issues have been replaced by more contestation and autonomy on the part of many Latin American countries (See section 2.3.2). But while the emergence of new leadership roles and contestation in the Americas seems to be irreversible, some countries in the region have even deepened their structural dependence on the United States, signing free trade agreements, comprehensive security cooperation agreements, and inviting the US to open military bases in their territories.

Is the relative decline of US hegemony sufficient to explain why basing negotiations in the region failed? This investigation finds that while this line of argumentation offers some contextual insights, it is not sufficient to explain the variation in outcomes (i.e. among countries that denied bases to the United States we find both Ecuador, which openly contests US presence in Latin America, and Colombia, which has the strongest relation with the United States in all of South America). Rationalist analyses of a neorealist nature or even more recent approaches to hierarchical relations as a cost-benefit operation, are insufficient as well, given their over-reliance on studying the state as an unitary actor, thus failing to acknowledge the large role of domestic politics in constraining the decision-making of rulers.

A new form of explanation is thus needed to solve this puzzle, one that accounts for the differences in outcomes among Latin American countries, and that also captures the importance of domestic political processes in each of the cases. A recent development in the literature about overseas basing agreements is a promising starting point to help answer the questions posed by this dissertation. This approach is further explored in the next section and in more detail in chapter 3.

1.2 The argument

The answer to why the United States has failed to open the formal bases that it has sought in Latin America is twofold. First, formal bases are increasingly difficult to open and maintain because they are likely to become trapped in political struggles between the host government and its domestic opposition. While in the recent past domestic opposition was repressed in Latin America (often with the support of the United States) through autocratic regimes and non-inclusive political systems, the consolidation of democracy in the region has provided new spaces of political participation. Increasingly, Latin American opposition groups, both in politics and within the civil society, have gained a larger capacity to affect outcomes over the domestic politics and foreign relations of their countries.

As this dissertation documents, different Latin American governments have been willing to accept a US military base in their territories, but they are prevented to do so by their fear of domestic opposition. In the cases presented here, governments feared that the opposition could capitalize on the nationalistic sentiment of the local population and their rejection of US military interventionism, and use such political gains in electoral politics. At the same time, where the electoral strength of the opposition did not pose a significant threat to the government, opposition groups also took advantage of high courts and other democratic institutions to block new basing agreements. The varying results of these strategies are discussed in the following chapters.

Second, the US might have failed to open new formal military bases in the region, but through informal negotiations, tacit agreements, and obscure appendixes to previous military cooperation treaties, the US managed to gain access to local military bases in Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras. In Peru and in Ecuador (after the closure of the Manta base), the US established access to local airports to land and refuel the airplanes that are supporting US' anti-drug efforts in the Andes. Moreover, some 17 radar sites are

spread between Peru and Colombia (Lindsay-Poland, 2009 p. 72). In Colombian bases, the US maintains a permanent force of around 300 US troops, which could potentially be raised to 800 if needed. None of these countries has formally leased base space to the United States, yet the US utilizes and partially controls several military facilities in each one of them. In practice, these military installations, or quasi-bases, function similarly to formal US bases, but their existence is legally ambiguous, and their future is uncertain. Yet it is largely through these alternative arrangements that the US is fighting drug-trafficking and countering security threats in Latin America.

In sum, even if formal bases are no longer welcomed by Latin Americans, US operations in the region have been supported by an exponential rise in the number of countries that host quasi-bases (See figure 1.1). Quasi-bases are negotiated with host governments with little publicity and made effective with little congressional oversight or civil society participation, which makes them an attractive option for shorter military operations, more secretive ones, and for those countries where formal basing negotiations have failed.

The second part of this argument helps understand why the United States does not simply force Latin American countries to accept its bases. US operations continue, and in some cases the secrecy and lack of oversight of quasi-bases benefits the US in forms that forcing formal bases would not. With the existence of quasi-bases, US security interests in Latin America are still being protected, and no incentive exists for a more forceful approach from Washington. Even in the cases where formal bases were preferred, quasi-bases became acceptable options from which operations continue.

The dissertation explores the two sides of this argument through three empirical chapters. In chapters 6 and 7 we explore the termination of the formal US military base in Manta, Ecuador and the failure of the negotiations to open seven military bases in Colombia. In chapter 8 we explore the phenomenon of quasi-bases after the option of formal bases failed in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, and the increasingly critical role that

this type of bases is playing in the US' war on drugs in Central America.

1.3 The importance of this study

Few scholars, if any, have studied the failure of the United States to open or maintain military bases in Latin America. At the same time, studies about US military bases overseas have trouble dealing with quasi-bases. Some studies ignore them, because the lack of a base lease makes quasi-bases less suitable for comparison. Other studies treat bases and quasi-bases instinctively, without accounting for the different dynamics that give rise to quasi-bases and the distinctive character of their sustainability. Andrew Yeo's and other analyses of the anti-base movement, for example, would benefit from a deeper understanding of quasi-bases and the particular challenges they pose for civil society oversight (Yeo, 2011, Vine, 2011, Lutz, 2009, Lindsay-Poland, 2009).

Quasi-bases arise in contexts where smaller, more flexible, and more secretive bases are needed for specific operations, or where domestic politics make it too difficult to establish formal military bases. Thus, from their inception quasi-bases are surrounded by an aura of informality, secrecy and lack of oversight. This dissertation attempts to advance a discussion about the distinctive political dynamics that surround bases and quasi-bases. In particular, the stability of quasi-bases is determined by a different set of dynamics than those that affect formal bases.

The stability of quasi-bases is a challenge for US security policy. On the one hand, the secrecy and informality of quasi-bases helps maintain the bases outside of the domestic political arena, allowing the host government to extract benefits from US operations in the country with minimal oversight from the local opposition. But on the other hand, the lack of a formal base contract makes quasi-basing agreements depend on the continuity of friendly host governments and their political allies. If a radical faction of the opposition manages to win a presidential election, all informal agreements from the previous

administrations are immediately in danger. As the case of Ecuador shows (and also the Guantanamo base in Cuba), formal leases serve as semi-legal protections against arbitrary (or even justified) expulsions in the context of changes of government, at least until the initial terms of the base lease expire. While no contract is unbreakable in international relations, formal lease agreements carry much more legal weight than the ambiguous informal arrangements that support quasi-bases.

Quasi-bases are perhaps even more important today than formal bases in Latin America for US security operations. With the exception of El Salvador (and Cuba, where the Castro government opposes US occupation of the Guantanamo base, leased perpetually before the revolution), no other independent Latin American country hosts a formal US military base, Cooperative Security Location, or Forward Operating Location. Instead, the United States relies on a network of quasi-bases, semi-formal agreements that grant tacit access to local military bases without a formal lease. In the last few years, most of the military operations of the US' "war against drugs" have been supported by quasi-bases in Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. Even the Joint-Force Bravo, one of the two South Com's principal divisions, is hosted in the Soto Cano air base in Honduras, a country referred to as "USS Honduras" given its historical strategic support for the US military in Central America (Vine, Expected in 2013), but where no formal lease exists for US bases. Hundreds of marines have been deployed to Guatemala and Costa Rica, and they have been granted access to local military bases, all outside of base agreements. In contrast, the US Forward Operating Location in El Salvador, where the US signed a proper base lease, does not host US ground operations, and instead serves as a radar location and a space for US planes to refuel.

At a time when US authority erodes in the region, Latin American domestic politics are playing a central role in the definition of inter-American affairs, including military basing agreements. Domestic political turmoil in Ecuador resulted in the expulsion of

US troops from the Manta base in 2009 (See Chapter 6). The strength of an independent constitutional court in Colombia resulted in the downfall of an agreement already signed by the most popular president in Colombia's recent history. Fears of domestic opposition and nationalism prevented Peru from hosting US bases, even when its government advanced secret negotiations to open one. And in the cases of Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras, where US military quasi-bases operate (Chapter 8), domestic politics could set the stage for unexpected changes in their bilateral relation with the United States and might produce in the near future outcomes similar to that of Manta in Ecuador.

While the episodes studied here cover most of US bases in Latin America, they also provide an interesting sample of the variety of contemporary US-Latin American relations. Colombia is today the closest ally of the United States in the region, as measured by the level of security and economic cooperation between the two countries. Ecuador, on the other hand, has had turbulent relations with the United States in the last decade, and has established much closer ties with Chavez's Venezuela. Peru enjoys positive cooperation with the United States, although drug issues complicate their relations. Guatemala and Honduras are going through a very difficult security situation, and cooperation with the United States has become critical. Guatemala and Costa Rica are close to the United States, but Honduras experienced a brief shift towards Chavez's ranks, until a recent coup brought the country out of the ALBA and back to the US's sphere. This diversity enriches the analysis developed in this dissertation.

1.4 The goals of the dissertation

This dissertation identifies a gap in the literature about inter-American relations, related to US bases in Latin America and the tensions of their presence in the region. Furthermore, the literature about overseas bases (not only in Latin America but in general) lacks clarity about formal bases and quasi-bases, as well as about the different challenges

that they face for their stability abroad. Thus, this dissertation seeks to help fill this important void in both bodies of scholarly literature.

While interest about military bases is high in both the academic and policy-making worlds, the two most important recent works on the politics of military bases do not include Latin American cases (Calder 2007, Cooley 2008). Other works have looked at social dynamics around military bases in Latin America, such as the antibase movement and the social problems raised by bases, but the international political dynamics of them are still understudied. This dissertation also seeks to show the growing importance of quasi-bases, secret arrangements, tacit agreements, and de facto occupation of bases. While the dissertation concentrates on Latin American cases, media reports show that quasi-bases are growing in number and importance elsewhere as well (See section 2.2).

The dissertation describes the tensions around the agreements to open or renew bases and quasi-bases in Latin America. To this end, it applies contemporary explanations of base politics to the study of US bases in the region. However, as explained in chapter 3, the existing explanations of base politics face limitations when studying variations within democratic regimes. Thus, this dissertation defines mechanisms associated with electoral competition and institutional veto players that allow variation and specify how different characteristics of Latin American regimes lead to more contestation of basing agreements.

Third, the dissertation shows the different political dynamics that determine the stability of bases and quasi-bases. Neither bases nor quasi-bases are more stable per se, but their stability depends on different dynamics. As discussed in chapter 3, bases benefit from semi-legal contracts that specify when and how a base can be closed despite changes of government, while quasi-bases lack specificity and legal standing and can be called into question in case of changes of government.

Finally, the dissertation seeks to give a rich account of the relational and internal political dynamics that affected US basing agreements in Latin America in the recent past.

While mapping all security cooperation of the United States in Latin America would be impossible within the limits of this project, the chapters in this dissertation aim to offer insights about how domestic political dynamics in Latin America have affected US bases in particular and security cooperation in general.

CHAPTER 2

US BASES IN LATIN AMERICA: CONTEXT AND ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Two recent changes in US policy and in its relative power in Latin America could be conceived as sufficient explanations of why formal bases are no longer accepted in the region. The first is a transformation of the US overseas basing strategy, in the context of its war against drugs in Latin America, and the second is the relative decline in US hegemony in the region. While these two shifts are important to contextualize the puzzle of this dissertation, and they provide partial answers that are useful to illuminate it, I argue that they are insufficient to explain why formal negotiations have commonly failed in the region during the XXI century.

In this chapter I explore the context in which basing negotiations take place in Latin America, present these two recent shifts and the ways that they could help understand the issue of declining formal US bases in the region, and highlight their limitations. This way, I seek to clarify further the goals of the approach developed in chapter 3 and the ways it advances previous understandings of US bases in the region.

2.1 The US war against drugs in Latin America

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States started an unprecedented expansion of its network of bases in foreign territories, with a focus on Europe and the Atlantic, but one that eventually reached Latin America in 1953 (Calder 2007, 17). During the Cold War, US policy in Latin America was marked by an anti-communist paradigm that determined to a large extent the faith of governments and societies in the region. With the intention of preventing Soviet expansion into the Americas, the United States established a network of bases in the region from where operations were launched against unfriendly governments and potential threats. Central to that effort were the Howard base in Panama and the Soto Cano base in Honduras, where local “Contras” received training and were sent to bordering Nicaragua in an effort to overthrow the revolutionary Sandinista government.

During the Cold War, the United States intervened directly or through proxy wars in much of Central America and the Southern Cone of South America in operations against revolutionary guerrillas and governments accused of being friendly to communism. With a widespread rejection of US military interventionism after Vietnam, the US turned to covert operations against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, in support of the friendly governments in El Salvador and Guatemala, and in Honduras, where it was invited by a fragile pro-US elite to open one of the most important and durable quasi-bases in the world (See section 8.4). Bumper stickers in the streets of US cities read “El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam,” and US voters did not support US intervention in Nicaragua. As a result, high-ranking military officers advised to avoid direct military intervention but instead rely on secret operations (and informal bases) in Latin America (Grandin 2006). Formal bases were not opened during much of the Cold War, and instead the US used its bases from the early twentieth century, its new quasi-base in Honduras, and a network of small and

informal quasi-bases in almost every corner of Central America, to support anti-communist operations.

As the Cold War ended and new priorities emerged for US security policy, the anti-communist paradigm in the Americas eroded, and with it Latin America was no longer conceived as a theater for bipolar security tensions with the Soviet Union (Loveman 2006, 2; Crandall 2008b). While the United States intervened in every corner of the region during the Cold War to prevent the repetition of a Cuba-style communist revolution, the threat of US intervention today is much less credible. But even if the fear of communism in the region became less important, the United States continues to push for collaboration from Latin American countries on the issue of drug-trafficking. The most important issue that has dominated in the last decades the agendas of Latin American countries, especially those in the Andes and in Central America, is drug trafficking towards the United States and the myriad of security problems it spurs. Organized crime, money laundering, extortion, kidnapping, and other criminal activities remain today at the top of the security preoccupations of many Latin American countries.

Washington's security focus in Latin America shifted from communism to drugs, and many US agencies working on anti-communist security strategies turned their attention to this issue (Crandall, 2008a). The countries located in the Andes (especially Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia) received most of the attention given the concentration of the production of coca base and cocaine in these countries. At the time of this shift of priorities in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the drug transportation routes concentrated in the Caribbean airspace, where drug deliveries were conducted in small planes flying from the producing country to Florida in the US, thus not involving many other transit countries in the way. The focus of US anti-drug policies became combating drugs at the source with intense police and military operations, by then envisioned in George Bush's national drug control strategy as reducing the supply of drugs by attacking trafficking organizations and their

suppliers, destroying key processing and shipping centers, and controlling air and riverine corridors.¹

In many cases, Latin American countries accepted and collaborated with US anti-drug policy. Colombia, for example, did not just welcome US engagement in its drug problem, but was responsible of “inviting” US intervention to combat illicit drugs and organized crime in the country, and overall help with the recovery of the viability of the Colombian state (Tickner, 2007). At the time, Colombia produced approximately 90% of the world’s cocaine and received more resources from the United States than any other in the region (Crandall, 2008a). During this process, virtually all aspects of the bilateral relation between Colombia and the United States became ‘narcoticized’ (i.e. framed within the priorities of the anti-drug agenda), a feature that has only began to change in the last couple of years (Borda 2011, Borda 2012a).

The US anti-drug strategy changed after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (Crandall, 2008b). While in the 1990s US policy was restricted to combating drug production, the 9/11 attacks produced a shift towards combating insurgent groups and organized criminal bands that operated or benefited from the business of drug trafficking. Thus, US operations in the region increased as a more militaristic approach started to guide US security cooperation in the region. This change was especially welcomed by the Uribe administration in Colombia, who had been trying to link the issues of drug-traffic and insurgency in order to maximize the benefit of US resources in the country (Crandall 2008a, Pizarro and Gaitán 2006, Borda 2011). After the 9/11 attacks, anti-drug policy merged with the US post-9/11 security strategy. With the new security strategy of the United States, counter-insurgency, the war on drugs, and transnational terrorism collided into one single security paradigm that guided both drug policy and basing agreements in Latin America. As Donald Rumsfeld declared at the 2004 Conference of Western Hemisphere Defense Ministers,

¹The White House, National Drug Control Strategy, Washington DC, January 1992

The new threats of the twenty-first century recognize no borders. Terrorists, drug traffickers, hostage takers, and criminal gang members form an anti-social combination that increasingly seeks to destabilize civil societies.²

In the late 1990s, the geographical focus of US anti-drug policy also shifted. While in the past the US had been able to target the routes over the Caribbean Sea, drug traffickers from Colombia and elsewhere managed to open new routes through the Pacific and into Central America and Mexico, from where drugs were transported into the United States. This geographical shift brought drug-related crime to Central America and Mexico, and also an expansion of US anti-drug policy toward the region. The military bases of Manta in Ecuador and Colamapa in El Salvador were motivated by this geographical shift toward the Pacific and into Central America.³ From these bases, US radars and surveillance planes monitored sea routes and communicated to the local authorities the existence of motor boats or small airplanes suspicious of carrying drugs. In addition, in the last few years the US military, including armed marines, war vessels, and support personnel have engaged in actual combat operations in the Pacific, including operations based on or supported by quasi-bases in Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica. The largest of these operations is known as *Operacion Martillo*.⁴

The geographical locations of drug cultivation and transportation have made Colombia, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico the primary targets of US drug policy in the region. This has resulted in large packages of security related cooperation between these countries and the United States in the last decade. The US and Colombia negotiated Plan Colombia in 1999, and since then more than USD\$6 billion have flown into Colombia's drugs and security problem. A success story in the eyes of both Colombian and US officials,

²Quoted in Loveman 2006, p.2

³Interview with Hector Silva, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington, DC., Washington DC, October 2012.

⁴Siglo XXI, "Dan marcha a segunda fase de Operacin Martillo" August 20, 2012. Available at <http://www.s21.com.gt/node/265871>. Accessed Oct 19th, 2012.

Plan Colombia is now a model for counter-drug and security cooperation schemes in Mexico with the Merida Initiative, Central America with the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), and in the Caribbean with the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

In all the cases studied in this dissertation, the problem of drug trafficking is central to the operations of bases and quasi-bases. Even if not discussed much in political debates in Washington, the ongoing war on drugs consumes resources from the US military and US tax money. With large operations, like *Operacion Martillo*, the United States is engaged militarily in a dozen countries in the region in aerial interdiction, operation of radars and communications equipment, training of local forces, and in a few cases actual combat in the Pacific with the support of the US Navy's Fourth Fleet.

While drug production and trafficking is concentrated in the region mentioned above, this does not exclude other countries from carrying a heavy weight due to organized crime and new transport routes that include Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. Figure 2.1 shows a map of US security cooperation in the Americas. Regional Security Initiatives, in blue, include Plan Colombia, the Merida Initiative, the Central American Regional Security Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

The US anti-drug policy tells us why the United States would want to have bases or some form of military access in the Americas. This context does not say much, however, about what specific arrangements the United States would seek in each country, the level of formality of it, and *especially* does not say much about why the United States would fail to obtain the formal military bases that it sought in different countries up to the late 2000s.

Figure 2.1: US security cooperation in Latin America

2.2 US strategic overseas basing

Foreign military bases serve three main purposes in US security policy. First, they allow for “Contingency Responsiveness,” in which bases “provide the immediate capabilities needed to counter major acts of aggression by countries that the United States has identified as posing a substantial military threat to U.S. interests.” Second, they contribute to “Deterrence and Assurance,” and signal a clear “commitment and U.S. interest in the security of the area, which speaks to the willingness of the United States to become involved in future conflicts.” And third, bases serve for the purposes of “Security Cooperation,” (Lostumbo 2013) especially in cases of shared responsibility such as anti-drug efforts and

training of local forces. Indeed, bases in Latin America serve this third purpose, as their small size and minimal capabilities do not let them count as major deterrence or contingency responsiveness forces, and the region is not particularly at risk of becoming a major military threat to the United States.

In 2004 President George W. Bush announced a major revision of the US overseas basing strategy, with the intention of reducing “United States overseas forces over a six-to-eight-year period from the numbers and locations of overseas bases left over from the Cold War” (Critchlow 2005, 2). This shift, called Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS) or Global Posture Review, included the return of 70,000 personnel from bases in Europe and Asia, reorganized large bases in these two continents, and created new, but smaller, bases in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Africa. But instead of a retreat of US forward presence around the globe, this shift was intended to update overseas military deployments to the new requirements of US global strategy. Gen. Joseph Dunford, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps justified a continuous US presence abroad in 2011 recalling that, “being forward deployed and forward engaged allows us to shape the environment as opposed to reacting to the environment.”⁵

Whereas in the past overseas basing concentrated in large bases, called Main Operating Bases (MOB), the bases built and operated by the US military overseas in the last few years include both large and small bases. Some bases in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the United States opened 505 military bases from 2003 to 2011, are as large as US towns, with up to “27-mile fortified perimeters, fire departments, bus routes, fast-food restaurants, and internet cafes.”⁶ In Vicenza, Italy, where the Camp Ederle base already exists, the United

⁵Testimony of Gen. Joseph Dunford, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps to Congress. October 27th, 2011. Available at http://www.army.mil/article/68210/Oct__27__2011__VCSA_testimony_to_HASC_Subcommittee_on_military_readiness__budget_cuts/

⁶David Vine, “The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire” The Huffington Post, July 16th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html, Accessed May29th 2013.

States is enlarging its Dal Molin base, capable of hosting more than 2,000 soldiers. In addition, the US continues to operate large bases in Germany, Japan, South Korea, and elsewhere.

In addition to MOBs, the United States has increased the creation of “Lily pads,” smaller bases like Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) or Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs), which are formally recognized by the United States and the host government, and other informal bases which are not.⁷ At a cost of \$140 billion in 2012,⁸ and “annual recurring fixed costs to having a base open, ranging from an estimated \$50 million to about \$200 million per year,” (Lostumbo 2013, xxv) the cost of US bases overseas indicates a massive US investment in expanding the network of operating locations abroad.

The strategic shift towards smaller bases has been accompanied with the pursuit of more secretive bases, most of them lily pads, which has created new forms of operations and engagements for the US military overseas. The goal of this new strategy is to avoid publicity and opposition, both from the local population and from US citizens (Gillem, 2007). The goal of reduced publicity has certainly been achieved, notes David Vine, as Congressional oversight over these bases has been minimal and has received almost no media attention. The result of this unsupervised strategy, Vine continues, is the US involvement in new areas of the world and new conflicts from Djibouti to Honduras, with what he considers potentially disastrous consequences.⁹ Secret US operations in the last few years include drone missions in Pakistan and Mexico, anti-drug operations in Honduras, and tens of

⁷As David Vine notes, the name of these bases recalls a frog jumping across a pond toward its prey. See David Vine, “The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire” The Huffington Post, July 16th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html, Accessed May29th 2013.

⁸David Vine, “Picking up a \$170 billion tab,” The Huffington Post, Dec. 11th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/military-spending_b_2277273.html Accessed May 29th 2013

⁹David Vine, “The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire” The Huffington Post, July 16th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html, Accessed May29th 2013.

millions of dollars for allied civil wars in Africa (Turse, 2012).

Large, permanent, and inflexible military bases overseas are no longer preferred in US policy, at least in part because the global reach of US military capacity is not sustained only from its overseas bases anymore, but from the continental US as well. In the very first moments of the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan, for example, the US military sent B-2 stealth bombers based in Missouri more than 7,000 miles away to destroy the Taliban's air capacity and communications systems (Calder, 2007, p.211). Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UVAs), such as the Global Hawk, can perform strikes and surveillance operations up to 33 hours of uninterrupted flight without landing in overseas bases.¹⁰ The outstanding capacity of the US military to operate from the country's mainland and own territories overseas has led some, like William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, to argue that the United States can reduce its military presence in the rest of the world, and especially does not need to continue to pay the legitimacy costs of maintaining a network of bases in foreign nations (Odom and Dujarric, 2005).

The US military developed its capacity to operate from its homeland into distant territories since the Cold War, and in its aftermath it has continued to strengthen its long range options. Bombers, UVAs, satellites, naval deployments, and communications systems continue to be developed by different agencies and the branches of the US military. Maritime deployments, consisting of US Navy vessels in international waters, seem to be an alternative to land bases in foreign territories under the strategic concept of "Sea basing." The general trend in US strategic thinking, it would seem, favors a long-range and automated strike force to eliminate the need for US permanent deployments of troops in foreign territories (Calder, 2007, p.214).

Opponents of US military bases overseas in US policy circles argue that they are

¹⁰According to data from the manufacturer, Northrop Grumman. Available at <http://www.northropgrumman.com/Capabilities/GlobalHawk/Pages/default.aspx> (Last accessed April 19th, 2013)

expensive, erode US legitimacy, and do not serve to achieve this century's security goals. In fact, after the demise of the Soviet Union the United States vacated around 60% of its foreign bases.¹¹ Permanent, town-sized, and heavily manned bases appear to be a less attractive option to the US military, as smaller, more flexible and often temporary installations have spread throughout the regions where the United States carries security operations. Latin America is not an exception. The large bases in Panama gave way to smaller, yet more numerous, bases at different times being used in almost every country in Central America and in the Andes. The Colamapa air base in El Salvador, for example, is a tiny annex to a civilian airport that serves the capital, San Salvador. This base hosts a radar, a few hangars for US planes, and minimal installations for a few personnel that does not engage in combat operations.

This investigation differentiates between formal US bases, including MOBs, Forward Operating Locations, and Cooperative Security Locations, and quasi-bases, including secret bases and those where no formal lease authorizes the use of a local base by the United States military. In practice, these bases all operate in similar ways, as they all provide physical space overseas for US military operations. Bases and quasi-bases are not fundamentally differentiated by their size either. Some formal US bases in Latin America are very small, like the Forward Operating Location in El Salvador, while some quasi-bases are larger and strategically more important, like the Soto Cano base in Honduras, where the Southern Command deploys its Joint Task Force Bravo. Bases and quasi-bases differ, however, on the contractual validity of formal bases, which quasi-bases lack, and this makes a difference on the politics of bases and in their long-term stability.

¹¹David Vine, "The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire" The Huffington Post, July 16th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html, Accessed May29th 2013.

2.2.1 The shift in US strategic basing as an alternative explanation

One alternative explanation for why formal bases are no longer successful in Latin America is that the United States has shifted its strategic vision about military bases overseas, and therefore would not be seeking to establish traditional formal bases in the region. Indeed, as discussed above, the US strategic vision for forward deployments has shifted since the end of the Cold War, and even more after the attacks of 9/11, and this is important to understand why the US is no longer seeking the permanent, large, and inflexible bases that it once opened in Panama and Cuba. The US is instead seeking smaller and more flexible bases, like Forward Operating Locations and other “lilly-pads.”

At the same time, apart from seeking smaller and more flexible bases, the US has reaffirmed and expanded its secretive military engagements in foreign nations. Covert operations and unsupervised deployments in informal bases encircle the planet in secrecy, while citizens, both in the United States and in host countries, are ignorant of them.¹²

But instead of losing interest in formal bases in Latin America, the United States has pursued *both* formal bases and quasi-bases. In the last decade, the United States negotiated successfully the renewal of the FOL in El Salvador and sought to pressure Ecuador to renew another one. After failing to maintain its presence in Ecuador, the United States pursued the possibility of new formal bases in Peru and Panama, and of several Cooperative Security Locations in Colombia. After these negotiations failed, the US accepted to operate from quasi-bases in each of these countries. In addition, the United States successfully managed to operate from secretive quasi-bases in Guatemala and Costa Rica, and continued to occupy the Soto Cano base in Honduras.

The first shift of the evolution in the US basing strategy towards *smaller* bases explains why we do not see many large bases anymore. The second shift, towards *secretive*

¹²David Vine, “The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire” The Huffington Post, July 16th, 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html, Accessed May 29th 2013.

and informal bases, explains why the United States has sought to gain access to local bases in Central America without seeking a formal basing agreement, as their use is restricted to specific and heavily armed anti-drug operations that do not count with wide public support in either the United States or Latin America. But these two shifts are not sufficient to explain, however, why the United States sought and failed to open formal, non-secretive, bases even when it actively sought them in Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and elsewhere, and it was not until the possibility of formal bases failed that the US accepted informal quasi-bases in these countries.

The United States still seeks to formalize some of its permanent deployments overseas, because this formalization grants more stability and legitimacy to overseas basing. Formal bases provide semi-legal support for US operations abroad, and the formal agreements that back them act as legitimization devices in cases of unexpected politicization of bases in the domestic politics of the host nation. This was the case of Ecuador, where a formal agreement forced the new anti-base government to maintain the US base in Manta for three years, until the expiration of the original base agreement. This is also the case of Cuba, where the local government fiercely opposes—at least discursively—US occupation of the Guantanamo base, as it remains Cuban territory, but the United States uses the formal base lease that gave perpetual control of the base to the US military as an international contract that cannot be ignored by the Castros's government.

This investigation asks why the United States failed to open or maintain *formal* bases in Latin America, even if it sought them actively. The shift of strategic vision in US security agencies explains why the US sought smaller, more flexible bases instead of MOBs in Latin America, and why it accepted quasi-bases where formal negotiations failed, but it does not explain why Latin American countries did not accept the installment of formal bases. Even when their governments desired to offer formal bases to the US, and the United States sought to open them, domestic political processes prevented these Latin American

leaders to conclude a successful deal. An explanation built around these domestic processes is presented in the next chapter.

2.3 Hegemonic decline and inter-American relations

The recent literature on US-Latin American relations highlights a structural change in the relative power and autonomy of Latin American countries vis-à-vis the United States, often conceptualized as an erosion of US hegemony in the hemisphere. According to this literature, as the US capacity to lead in the region is eroding, Latin American countries have succeeded in adopting more autonomous roles. While in the past the US intervened constantly in the Americas to secure compliance from its southern neighbors, the threat of US intervention today is much less credible. And while US military power is still far beyond that of any country in Latin America, and it is even greater than all of them combined, the threat of military interventions, and even covert participation in regime changes in the region, is far less credible today than a couple of decades ago.

An alternative explanation for why formal basing negotiations have failed recently in Latin America could be constructed from the idea of US hegemonic decline and its consequences for attaining its interests in the region. I do not find such an explanation sufficient, although I believe it provides some insights on a number of aspects related to the question of this dissertation. In the following paragraphs I provide a discussion about the literature on hegemony and hegemonic decline, and how these concepts illustrate recent changes in inter-American relations. With this discussion, I seek to both contextualize the issue of basing negotiations within the general changes in the region since the end of the Cold War, and also highlight the limitations of trying to explain failed basing negotiations in particular countries using only the tools provided by narratives of hegemonic decline.

The concept of hegemonic order has been important in international relations theory in the areas of security and international political economy. Instead of the anarchical

international system proposed by Waltz (1979), Robert Gilpin defined the international system as an oligopoly, where “the dominant powers in the international hierarchy of power and prestige organize and control the processes of interactions among the elements of the system” (Gilpin 1981, 29). The number of states at the top of the international hierarchy have varied through time, according to Gilpin, but the most prevalent configuration has been, at least in modern times, the hegemonic system: “A single powerful state controls or dominates the lesser states in the system” (Gilpin 1981, 29). This is the case, for Gilpin, of US hegemony in modern times.

A hegemonic order is not sustained only through the coercive imposition of the preferences of the leading state. Positive incentives have historically been equally important to establish and maintain international hegemonic orders. As John Ikenberry argued, after states have gained a top position in the international hierarchy of power, they “have sought to hold onto that power and make it last, and this has led these states, paradoxically, to find ways to set limits on their power and make it acceptable to other states” (Ikenberry 2009, xi). In order to obtain compliance from less powerful states, hegemonic systems require, first and foremost “some measure of credible and institutionalized restraint on its own exercise of power.” (Ikenberry 2009, xi). Hegemonic orders have ranged from almost completely coercive systems to highly institutionalized, and, Ikenberry argues, the most institutionalized, like the present order advanced by the United States, are more likely to be sustainable in time, as “the more institutionalized the order, the more that participants within the order act according to defined and predictable rules and mod*operandi*” (Ikenberry 2009, 53)

Security guarantees and institutional restraints help maintain hegemony as they provide assurances to weaker states that their participation in the system would make them enjoy some level of protection against abuses from the dominant power. But hegemonic orders usually provide more than just security assurances. Economic incentives, as well

as the provision of public goods are also important to secure the compliance of weaker states with the order designed by the leading power. One common public good offered by hegemonies is building the international infrastructure for free trade, and providing access to subordinates to the hegemon's market. While this benefits most participant states, the hegemon has a clear interest in opening world trade as, as Immanuel Wallerstein argued, under hegemony "the products of a given core state are produced so efficiently that they are by and large competitive even in other core states, and therefore the given core state will be the primary beneficiary of a maximally free world market" (Wallerstein 1980, 38).

Finally, apart from the incentives that hegemonies provide to participants in their international order, it is important that the hegemon is not only capable of maintaining hegemony, but that it be actively exercising leadership to sustain the system and maintain compliance on the part of subordinates. As Keohane and Nye noted, hegemony only exists if "one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, and willing to do so" (Keohane and Nye 1977, 44). Thus, changes of hegemony can come from changes in the material capacity of the leading state to maintain the international order, or they can come from changes on its capacity or willingness to maintain it.

In sum, a hegemonic order results on a semi-hierarchical configuration in which states accept the authority of a hegemon, through a combination of material benefits and a credible but restrained use of coercion.

This configuration is maintained through the operation of three mechanisms. First, the hegemon must find it beneficial to maintain the system, and thus have an incentive to engage in the costly business of building and maintaining an institutional framework far beyond its territory. Second, the hegemon must create an international order that benefits its subordinates, in order to gain their cooperation and prevent potentially violent contestation. In other words, it must persuade its subordinates "to follow a given course of action which might not be in the follower's short-run interest if it were truly independent."

(Kindleberger 1981, 243). Third, the threat of the use of force must be present and credible, if the hegemon wants to persuade reluctant subordinates to think twice before attempting to escape from or overthrow the system.

Autonomy under hegemonic systems is thus curtailed by the workings of these three mechanisms. While all states would want to be fully autonomous to make decisions in their domestic and international policy, hegemonic systems impose upon them the threat of not compliance, while at the same time hegemony benefits subordinate states through access to goods and resources. The lack of alternative sources of much-needed resources also restricts the autonomy of subordinates in hegemonic systems. Given the vast superiority in economic capabilities, hegemons enjoy a privileged position to draw compliance from those who need access to the hegemon's market, financial institutions, and aid. It is only when more potential partners appear in the system that small economies can diversify their economic ties and reduce their dependence on the hegemon.

When hegemony erodes, autonomy shifts. When a leading state cannot or does not provide the public goods needed by subordinates, the incentives for following the interests of the hegemon diminish significantly or downright disappear. Subordinates no longer need to restrict their policies, and might even find that autonomy works better for their interests in the face of declining hegemony. If new leaders appear in the system, subordinates might seek to accommodate their policies to those would-be hegemons, assuming that these leaders can provide similar benefits. The results in the long run might be calamitous and can involve the collapse of the system and eventually a hegemonic war (Gilpin, 1981).

While many analysts in the United States agree that hegemony can potentially offer benefits for both the hegemon and its subordinates, Latin American scholars questioned the convenience for peripheric states to accept the partial benefits of subordination instead of pursuing more autonomous paths. In particular, Latin American leaders and scholars raised questions about the perils or benefits of accepting the hegemony of the United

States. The Dependency movement, led by Fernando Henrique Cardoso (who was both scholar and president of Brazil) and others, argued that the asymmetry between countries in the core and the periphery of the international system perpetuated a state of economic underdevelopment outside the core. Under hegemony, they argued, the periphery's foreign policy was limited to reinforcing relations of dependence through alliances between the core countries and a privileged elite in the periphery (Cardoso and Faletto, 1996).¹³ A model of import substitution and political autonomy was recommended by international organizations and local leaders to break the cycle of underdevelopment, and it was widely adopted in the region until the 1980s.

As a result of the Dependency debate, many in the region supported a radical break from economic and political relations with the United States, but not all scholars in the region agreed. Reviewing the developments of Dependency Theory, Arlene Tickner (2003; 2007) presented an often-understudied branch that actually supported dependent association. Juan Carlos Puig (1980), for example, argued that dependent association allowed Latin Americans to accumulate gains from a special relation with the United States, and use them to develop the early stages of a project of national consolidation. Accepting the dictations of the dominant power over some issues, while retaining autonomy over all other areas of the governments decision-making, could end up benefiting Latin Americans as well. Mario Ojeda (1964), Jaguaribe (1979), and Gerard Drekonja (1993) even argued that the promotion of domestic development required Latin Americans to accept the unequal rules of the game in their association with the United States. Development, claimed these authors, was a prerequisite for autonomy, and the later could not take priority over the former (Packenham 1998:127).

¹³Immanuel Wallerstein also developed a structuralist approach to the modern capitalist world system, based on the dependency debate that arose in the 1950s. In his *The Modern World System* (1974) he argued that a new division of labor between "center" and "periphery" characterized modern capitalism, and that core "hegemons" dominated in periods of hegemony. While this approach can illuminate the structural development of capitalism, its predictive capacity is limited and it lacks insights into specific bilateral relations and agreements, such as military bases overseas.

The strongest formulation of the benefits of dependent association came from Carlos Escude's Peripheral Realism (Escude 1995, Escudé 1997, Escude 1998). Latin American countries should seek above all to solve their own development needs, and as a result they should, he argued, to avoid unnecessary confrontations with the United States even if this undermined their autonomy. According to Escude, peripheral states should 1) avoid interstate military confrontations and militarization, and instead dedicate every dollar to development; 2) abstain from promoting idealistic policies beyond its borders, even if it believed them to be universal; 3) abstain from confrontations with great powers when they threaten universal good causes as long as they do not affect the peripheral government's material interests; 4) avoid confrontations with great powers even if there is no immediate risk of retaliation, because even without retaliation there will be a negative image created; and 5) study the opportunities for alignment or bandwagoning with great powers based on its material interests and its developmental necessities (Escudé 1997).

Escude's approach does not necessarily suggest that peripheral or weak states must subordinate to great powers, but it does make the case that the development needs of peripheral states are best served when they avoid confrontations with more powerful states and dedicate all their efforts to escaping the condition of underdevelopment. As a consequence, weak states should not unnecessarily attempt to defend their independence, but instead accommodate to the best possible deal in its relations to great powers. This might indeed require the peripheral state to accept a condition of subordination or to participate in a hegemonic order led by a great power to the expense of national autonomy. Escude's approach is useful to understand why it is rational for a weak state to accept subordination when it is demanded by a powerful state. It tells us very little, however, about why particular forms of subordination, like hosting formal foreign military bases, might fail even when the powerful state wants them and the government of the weak state is willing to offer them too.

Others realized that Latin American countries did not just respond passively to US interventionism, but even at times took the initiative to welcome it. Following Geir Lundestad's idea about U.S.-European relations in the post-war period, Arlene Tickner proposed to frame Colombia's relations with the United States as one of "intervention by invitation," although there is no reason to limit the approach to this country. Tickner focuses on the acceptance of the dominance of the United States, and an invitation for it to get involved in the internal affairs of dependent states, while committing to preserve some of their autonomy and allowing them to influence U.S. decision-making toward the region (Lundestad 1986, Tickner 2007). As a major difference with Escude's approach, Tickner highlights that dependent states could gain more from their relationship when they consider the strategic interests of the United States, and not just wait and hope for the U.S. to always reciprocate when weaker states subordinate.

The dependency debate, and in particular the branch that supported dependent association, offers insights about why peripheric states could prefer to associate with core states in dependent ways. This is a partial explanation of why Latin American states often welcome US bases and would want to formalize basing agreements. This debate does not explain, however, what are the particular domestic conditions that constrain the will of governments, and why if the governments desire to open formal US military bases they end up offering only quasi-bases. My investigation seeks to help understand, beyond the rationalities behind dependent association, the specific mechanisms that have limited the ability of Latin American governments to define autonomously their relationship with the United States in the case of basing agreements.

A third approach to hegemony, from a more critical view, comes from Robert Cox and Antonio Gramsci. According to their perspective, as summarized by one of Cox's pupils, hegemony "designates a system of social control, and specifically the control of the subaltern classes and groups, without the preponderant use of force/coercion" (Persaud

2001, 37). The absence of force and material benefits is the key to understanding this approach. While the more liberal branch, represented by Keohane and Ikenberry, argue that states join hegemonic structures because they benefit from them, Gramsci argued that the subaltern groups are socialized not to question their disadvantageous position in the social structure, and thus they participate, passively, in legitimizing hegemony. Hegemony does not benefit their “real” interests, but instead subalterns are deprived of pursuing their own interests through socialization. The agents of this socialization are, according to Gramsci, organic intellectuals who succeed in spreading the ideas of their class to society as a whole, a process that turns this class into the hegemonic one (Cox 1983, 168).

Before a deeper discussion about the utility and limitations of these three approaches to hegemony for explaining the failure of formal basing negotiations in the Americas, I turn to a discussion about how the Americas can be understood as a hegemonic system, and how the decline of US leadership in the region is opening new forms of inter-American relations, conceivably suggesting the erosion of hegemony in the region.

2.3.1 Hegemony in the Americas

Even if the beginning of the process of building a hegemonic order goes back to the early 19th century, and US interventionism was already well known in the region since then (see Smith 2008, Skidmore et al. 2010), the Cold War represented an era of constant interventionism and promotion of US interests in Latin America characterized both by incentives to friendly governments as well as overt and covert operations to undermine and replace unfriendly ones (Grandin, 2006).

Through active collaboration with friendly governments and the forceful removal of unfriendly ones, the United States led the generation of a series of consensuses in the Western Hemisphere that structured inter-American relations during the later Cold War and were reaffirmed in the 1990s, or as Jorge Domínguez put it, a “liberal democratic,

pro-market consensus, reliant on international institutions for the conduct of foreign policy” (Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro, 2010, 11). In general, the consensus that supported US hegemony in the continent were constructed around the idea of shared security concerns, pro-market economic liberalization, democracy, and the consolidation of the Organization of American States as the main forum for the civilized discussion of inter-American affairs.

First, a consensus around anticommunist security policy solidified in the region as a projection of U.S. grand strategy. Latin American governments joined this consensus voluntarily, forcefully, or through regime change. The consensus continued, however, a decade after the Soviet Union had disappeared, and the threat of a foreign backed socialist government in the region was no longer central to U.S. security. U.S. control of the region continued, even after the communist security threat had disappeared, and as Lars Schoultz argued, “when the Soviet Union disappeared and US security interests no longer required the same level of dominance, Washington identified new problems—everything from drug trafficking to dictatorship to financial mismanagement—and moved to increase its control over Latin America” (Schoultz 1998, xiv).

On the economic side, the U.S. government and international financial institutions in Washington produced blueprints that guided Latin American economic policy in the 1980s and 1990s, collectively denominated the Washington Consensus, after the term coined by John Williamson in 1990 (Williamson 1990, 2000). Very few governments in Latin America experimented with alternative economic regimes throughout the 1990s, and instead liberal policies of democracy and open markets dominated the region. The leadership of the United States in economic affairs remained solid until the end of the 90s (Williamson 2003, Birdsall and Szekely 2003, 65). The United States and the international financial institutions in Washington provided critical assistance during the economic crises in Mexico in 1995 and in Brazil in 1998 (Herz 2006, 206), and Washington increased its financial support to the

Inter American Development Bank and helped channel resources from the World Bank to sustain the economic policies of Latin American governments.

At that time, the United States showed clear interest in structural economic reforms in the region, as well as opening free trade for US goods, in an effort to spread the economic liberalism embedded in the hegemonic order of the post-war period (Hershberg 2010 235). Latin America embraced the so-called Washington Consensus with little dissent. The Free Trade Area of the Americas encompassed the vision of a U.S. led economic integration of the region, a logical step for the advancement of a common agenda expressed in Latin America's commitment to free trade and liberalization during the 90s. This was, in a sense, a continuation of Latin America's firm belief in the Washington consensus, but represented an additional consensus on the need for the economic integration of the Americas.

A final consensus evolved during the Cold War and extended beyond its termination, around the institutional framework of the Organization of American States (OAS) as the main forum for Inter American relations. In particular, the OAS developed widely accepted mechanisms for the promotion of human rights, democracy, and collective security (Tickner 2000), as well as a platform for the Presidential Summits in which other projects developed, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas. In 1991 the member states of the OAS committed to take action to defend democratically elected leaders in the Americas. The OAS effectively used its new instrument to protect democratic institutions in Haiti in 1991, Peru in 1992, Guatemala in 1993, Dominican Republic in 1994, Paraguay in 1996, and during the democratic transition in Peru in 2000 and 2001 (Levitt 2006).

In sum, until the late 1990's, the Americas experienced a period of US hegemony, what Peter Smith has called "Hegemony by default" that albeit often contested, structured inter-American relations (Smith, 2008, 217). As documented by scholars in the region, active US interventionism was complemented by the invitation of many Latin American leaders for the US to provide military cooperation and economic benefits through the

subordination of policy areas. Different leaders in Latin American countries attempted to contest US hegemony, but few examples successfully accompanied Cuba and Nicaragua in the list of radical breaks away from US authority. Power and coercion played a major role in securing the subordination of the region, but as hegemonic orders typically work, coercion alone does not explain Latin America's compliance with US authority. Political leaders often found it in their interest to associate with the United States in a dependent way. Domestic opposition at the time was not strong enough to pose a major threat to the political survival of leaders associated with the United States, with few exceptions such as Cuba and Nicaragua. Other opposition groups, both parties and armed revolutionaries, could never materialize their hopes for a more autonomous relation vis-a-vis the United States, and in some cases when they did they received a lethal authoritarian response from the state with the support of the United States.

2.3.2 The erosion of hegemony in the Americas

Most of the recent literature on US-Latin American relations identifies a structural shift in the capacity of the United States to determine the faith of Latin American countries, as well as marked intentions and capabilities of Latin American countries to conduct a more autonomous political role in the region (Santiso 2007, Crandall 2008b, Weeks 2008, Smith 2008, Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro 2010, Skidmore et al. 2010, Williams 2012). Within this literature, it is possible to identify some common features of a recent political shift towards a more independent region and the erosion of US hegemony after the Cold War, including shifts in US policy, the relative decline of US capabilities, the rise of middle-powers within and outside the region, shifts in the landscape of the international political economy, and a more autonomous international role for Latin American countries. The next few paragraphs explore these transformations.

Shifts in US policy towards Latin America

The events of September 11, 2001, compelled the United States to “refocus its international priorities on the problem of international terrorism. Many U.S. policies toward countries near and far were subordinated to the ‘war on terror’” (Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro, 2010, 13). Latin America was no exception. As explained by Jorge Dominguez, the securitization of US bilateral relations around the world affected all countries in Latin America. Those that did not represent high priorities for US security, like Argentina, became less important for US foreign policy. Those that represented a minor concern for US security, like Paraguay, saw their bilateral relation reduced to dealing with these particular security issues. And for those that represented important security concerns for the US, such as Mexico, Central America, and Colombia, they became security obsessions for Washington where every other aspect of the bilateral relation was forced to be interpreted in terms of its security implications (Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro, 2010, 13).

Another shift in US policy weakened the capacity of the United States to lead the process of economic integration in the hemisphere. In 1994, the ‘fast track’ authority that the US president enjoyed to approve the North American Free Trade Agreement expired, and was not renewed by Congress, making it almost impossible for the Clinton administration to speed the approval of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) (Palmer, 2006, 37). Even if the Bush administration attempted to revive the integration project, the US reluctance to compromise its anti-market agricultural subsidies created conflicting economic interests with Brazil and other South American nations (Schott 2008, 170), and made it impossible for the agreement to advance any further, bringing the FTAA to a permanent stall since the 2005 Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina (Williams, 2012, 235).

In addition, the Washington Consensus became commonly associated in the early

2000's with pro-US economic policy, at the expense of the wellbeing of Latin America's poor. Aversion towards liberal economic reforms increased in the region after the United States changed its policy of assisting Latin American countries experiencing financial crises. The United States denied financial assistance to Argentina in 2001 even after this country had followed the economic reform agenda set by Washington institutions during the past decade, which produced a major disruption of the Argentinian economy, and forced Argentina to default on its debt and devalue the Peso to a fourth of its value. Argentinians learned the hard way the perils of uncritically pursuing a strategy of dependent association with the United States (Tickner 2007, 95).

The literature on US-Latin American relations has called this shift of US policy toward the region a period of 'neglect', which continued, and even magnified, under the presidency of Barack Obama. Even if Latin America had become already a forgotten continent (Reid, 2008), Bush's trade representatives were at least actively negotiating Free Trade Agreements with Central America, Panama, Colombia, Peru, and albeit unsuccessfully, also with Ecuador. At the same time, US foreign officers still attempted to stimulate favorable results in elections in Bolivia and elsewhere in the early 2000s. The Presidency of Obama, however, has been characterized by an extensive neglect of the region (Lowenthal et al. 2011), with no signs of producing any shifts in policy in the near future. Even more than in the Bush years, the United States now gives less importance to contestation in Latin America. Several measures that would have provoked denunciation or even intervention from the United States have materialized with scant resistance from Washington (Hershberg 2010, 244). Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela have carried out nationalizations of US assets, developed agrarian reforms, expelled US agents, flirted with the world leaders most despised in Washington, including Iran, Libya under Gadhafi, and, of course, Cuba. Ecuador even refused to renew the lease of the Manta Air Base to the United States in 2009 (See chapter 6.

During his campaign, Obama promised a region-wide partnership, but so far his approach to Latin America has been characterized by narrow policies tailored to specific issues in four high-priority target regions (Lowenthal et al. 2011, 9): a) Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, b) Brazil, c) the Andean ridge, and d) Cuba. Under the Obama administration, the hemisphere-wide policies of the past continued to be replaced with issue driven, country specific policies that created differentiated areas of influence of the United States in Latin America. Despite all the campaign rhetoric and his promising first months in office, the areas of especial US interest under the Obama administration did not shift significantly from his predecessor.

The rise of China and the relative decline of US capabilities

The 2008 financial crisis, the diversion of resources toward the war on terror in the Middle East, and important losses in US moral standing in the world after the revelations of human rights abuses in Guantanamo and secret bases in allied territories, among other circumstances, have all contributed to a decrease of the US' relative capacity to organize inter-American relations. Meanwhile, favorable prices of commodities, foreign investments, increased foreign reserves, and a diversification of political relations have contributed to the strengthening of the autonomy and international capabilities of Latin American countries. The appearance of emerging middle powers as sources of economic opportunities, especially China, have also provided new chances for Latin Americans to diversify their partnerships and depend less and less on the United States.

The rise of China

Although the United States' economy and military power are still greater by a large margin than any other single country in the world, most experts believe that its 'edge' will diminish in the coming decades, and often refer to the rise of China's economic and military capabilities as the main source of this relative decline (Art, 2009, 340). Although

recently decelerated, China's economic growth in the last three decades has been impressive, surpassing the economic giants of Germany and Japan in GDP and narrowing its distance to that of the United States. This economic expansion has allowed China to play a more visible role in international politics and the international political economy. In Latin America, China has expanded its investments from US\$7.336 million in the two decades ending in 2009, to US\$15.251 in 2010 alone (Source: ECLAC) . China is not only attractive to Latin Americans because of the magnitude of its investments, but because it offers "investment and aid with 'no strings attached', i.e., no political or economic conditions for the receiving countries. The packages are usually related to the building of infrastructure such as roads, rail lines, refineries and ports that directly facilitate exports to and imports from China, as well as the exploration of gas and oil reserves" (Leiteritz, 2012).

China multiplied its exports to Latin America from \$4.2 billion to \$44.4 billion and its imports from \$5.1 billion to \$46.7 billion from 2000 and 2007 (Williams, 2012, 325). China's growing economic opportunities for Latin American countries have not been distributed equally, however. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela have enjoyed the benefits of expanding exports to the Asian giant, but other countries have not seen major increases in economic exchanges, while Mexico has suffered from increased competition from Chinese low-wage labor (Williams, 2012, 325).

Loans and development financing from China to Latin American countries have also started to displace Washington and international institutions from the heart of Latin America's financial health. According to a recent report by Kevin P. Gallagher, Amos Irwin, and Katherine Koleski, "since 2005, China has provided loan commitments of more than \$86bn to Latin American countries. That is more than the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank have provided to the region during the same period" (Gallagher et al., 2012). As China's financial relevance grows in Latin America, Washington's key role to provide financial stability to the region has decreased, to the point that Latin American

countries were able to weather the recent financial crisis quite successfully without assistance from Washington (Porzecanski, 2009).

The US in economic crisis

The loss of US capacity to lead in the hemisphere through economic benefits to Latin American countries has been accompanied by a large increase in their capacity to maneuver through global economic hardship. The international reserves of Latin American countries multiplied in the years before the global economic crisis, thanks to an increase of the price of commodities and Chinese demand. Mexico's reserves doubled, Argentina and Venezuela's tripled, Brazil's grew fivefold, and Bolivia's sevenfold (Williams, 2012, 325). These countries not only were able to come out of the crisis with much less harm than developed nations suffered, but they also relegated the International Monetary Fund 'to the sidelines,' and escaped its conditionality constraints (Williams, 2012, 325). This resulted in an unprecedented autonomy of Latin American countries vis-a-vis a weakened United States, which could no longer "influence Latin American economic policies through this indirect route either" (Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro, 2010, 8)

Autonomy and power in Latin America

Scholars of inter-American agree on the importance of new autonomous roles among Latin American countries. Some of these roles are markedly anti-US, at least in rhetoric, like Venezuela and other ALBA members, while some countries have developed strategies to become relevant actors in regional and even global politics, without necessarily breaking bridges with the United States, like Brazil.

Brazil

The largest country, largest population, and largest economy in Latin America, Brazil has emerged as a global economic and, to a lesser extent, also a political player. With a GDP larger than the much more populous India, Brazil has recently adopted an ambitious

foreign policy aimed at “expanding the country’s presence in global economic negotiations, multilateral institutions and regimes, and in regional affairs” (Hirst, 2010, 126). Since the inauguration of former president Lula, Brazil has established important trade and political relations with emerging economies of the global south, including China, India, South Africa, and has also restructured its economic relations with the United States and Europe (Hirst, 2010).

In particular, Brazil has emerged as a key player in trade negotiations both at the global and the regional level. Brazil was the leader of the Latin American boycott of the 2005 talks on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, since the US plan for trade harmed Brazilian car manufacturers and did not benefit the key sectors of Brazilian orange growers and shoe makers,¹⁴ and it was a dispute between the US and Brazil over the issue of subsidies during the 2003 WTO round in Cancun which finally brought its early termination (Crandall, 2008b, 153). Instead, Brazil has favored South American integration through Mercosur and UNASUR.

In the political front, Brazil has joined other nations in opposing US unilateralism, and has supported only partially the ‘war on terror’ since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Brazil has strengthened its relations with Arab countries and supported Palestinian statehood, and its leadership in these issues was acknowledged by the United States when it invited Brazil to participate as an observer in the 2007 Annapolis meeting on the Middle East (Hirst, 2010, 133).

Venezuela

Ever since Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998, he tried to “create a new model of politics and economics, and to challenge US dominance in the region and in the world” (McCoy, 2011, 69). But while Venezuelan officials often talk

¹⁴Howard LaFranchi, “Cars vs. Juice: US and Brazil find talk easier than trade,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 1997.

about contesting the United States in every aspect, the mutual dependence between the two countries around the issues of oil and trade make it very difficult for this country to wage a total war against US interests. Many of the strong anti-US statements made by Chavez, his successor Nicolas Maduro, or other high ranking officials have been read as targeted to a local audience, in a process of restructuring domestic politics and economic benefits, instead of actual confrontations with the United States (De Escobar and Romero, 2002).

But apart from rhetorics, Venezuela has developed an international structure for the advancement of *Bolivarian* ideals, around the creation of the ALBA as a political forum for like-minded Latin American leaders, and PetroCaribe, a large association of Caribbean and Central American countries that benefit from access to cheaper oil from Venezuela (Borbón, 2009).

More worrisome for Washington, Venezuela has courted Russia, China, and Iran, providing Irani leaders with a safe platform to criticize the United States from within Latin America in every state visit. Caracas has also established a close relationship with Cuba, and its support has been important for the island's economy, particularly its cheap imports of oil from Venezuela. Cuban doctors, sports trainers, political advisors, and security personnel are now prevalent in Venezuela, and many speak of a "Cubanization" of the Venezuelan regime (McCoy, 2011, 76).

Illegal activities are also a concern for the United States, but collaboration from Venezuela has been at best limited. Drug traffic has increased exponentially through the country, making Venezuela one of the principal transit countries in the hemisphere (McCoy, 2011, 77), while covert (and sometimes open) support for the FARC has been documented in several occasions and denounced publicly by the Colombian government (Perez, 2006, 98).

2.3.3 The erosion of hegemony in the Americas as an alternative explanation

A second explanation for why the United States has failed to open formal military bases in Latin America is related to the decline of US hegemony in the region and the more autonomous roles that many leaders in Latin America currently pursue. The erosion of US hegemony in the Americas offers some useful, yet limited, insights to answer why negotiations to open or maintain US formal military bases in Latin America failed. But the erosion of hegemony in the Americas fails to explain the failure of basing negotiations in two important respects.

First, conceptually, debates around hegemony and hegemonic change are based on an assumption of unitary states. Instead of exploring the conflicting forces within states, hegemony discussions assume that states are unitary actors that behave rationally seeking to maximize their gains under a system of mutual benefits between a hegemon and its subordinates. This assumption is problematic to answer the question about the failure of basing negotiations, because as it is explored in the conceptual chapter and in each of the cases, Latin American governments often *welcomed* US bases, and it was the domestic political dynamics of their countries what restricted their choice to comply with US expectations. Instead of seeking to escape US hegemony, Latin American countries rejected US formal bases because they were forced to by the expectation of political losses in domestic politics.

Explanations based on the concept of hegemony take into account only the preferences of rulers in each country, and thus they are not suited to explain why formal negotiations can still fail even if both the basing nation and the host government prefer to open a military base. In order to overcome the limitations of this framework, this investigation studies domestic political dynamics and provides an explanation for the failure of basing agreements that does not rely exclusively on governments' rationale.

The erosion of US hegemony in the Americas also fails to explain the failure of basing

negotiations through an empirical test. One can expect countries like Brazil and Ecuador to oppose US bases as an indication of increased autonomy and rejection of US hegemony. But formal base negotiations also failed in Colombia, a country that continued to subordinate to the United States after the end of the Cold War and even deepened its subordination “by invitation” through the 2000s under Plan Colombia, a free trade agreement, and the presence of US troops in the country. Negotiations to open formal US bases in Colombia did not fail because Colombia sought to contest US hegemony in the region (quite the opposite, in fact), but because Colombian independent institutions restricted the autonomy of the Colombian government to negotiate agreements with the United States without an domestic political debate. In contrast, Ecuador is one of the leaders of the movement against US interventionism in the Americas, and despite its rejection of a US formal base in its territory it accepted US military presence in its territory through quasi-bases, and collaborated fully with the US led anti-drug campaign in the region.

The pay-offs to contestation shift when hegemony erodes. States might recalculate their strategies and find that the threat of repercussions is becoming low enough that they can change their obedience for open contestation. While this could seem like an explanation for why we do not see more formal bases in the Americas, it would be misleading, because it would indicate that Latin American governments are rejecting systematically US military presence in their territories. This is not the case. Most of the countries studied in this dissertation are not contesting US military presence in the region, but instead they are the ones inviting it. Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica, Honduras, among others took the initiative to offer bases to the United States and did not contest US hegemony at all. The failure of formal basing negotiations is thus not the result of hegemonic decline and new contestation roles. Some other mechanism must be at work when Latin American governments want a US formal base, but fail to materialize one.

Even in the case of Ecuador, which did change radically its relations with Washington

and became a leader of Latin American contestation against US interests, is not sufficiently explained by the erosion of US hegemony in the Americas. As discussed in chapter 6, domestic political instability, organized social opposition, and a series of coups led to the collapse of traditional political structures in this country.

It was only when the traditional political parties could not maintain order that a new political structure arose under the leadership of Rafael Correa. Anti-US rhetoric accompanied the rise of Correa, but it was a domestic political transformation that opened the opportunity for his nationalistic campaign to succeed. The failure of the renewal of the Manta base in Ecuador is not, thus, only a consequence of the transformation of the international system, but mostly a consequence of the domestic political transformation of the country.

Explanations of hegemony do not predict that all security relations would collapse when hegemony erodes. Instead, they suggest that new players will attempt to change the rules of the hegemonic system and will eventually lead to its rupture and replacement. Particular binational relations are not necessarily damaged or interrupted when hegemony erodes, even if it might be more likely that revisionist states take actions against the declining hegemon. As a result, explanations of hegemony are not conceptually suited to explain why specific relations changed, nor why specific agreements around specific issues failed.

From the critical perspective of Robert Cox and Antonio Gramsci, one could argue that opposition groups in Latin America no longer accept the class vision of the ruling elites and thus are challenging the social order in which Latin American governments accept US military bases in their territories. The capacity of ruling elites to spread their class vision to society would have eroded, and thus new forms of social orders would be socialized in the Americas.

This might well be the case, and perhaps this might explain why many new govern-

ments from the traditionally excluded left are transforming power politics within several Latin American countries. Indeed, in Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador, social structures advanced by the traditional elites have collapsed and have opened political space for alternative visions of social order.

But this approach does not tell us much about the specific domestic institutions that have obstructed particular basing agreements between Latin American countries and the United States. The mechanisms that have blocked formal basing agreements, I argue, are not so much related to the transformation of ideas of class in each country as they are about the specific institutional capabilities of opposition forces to block government actions. Thus, formal bases have been denied in countries that have experienced collapses of their traditional elites, like Ecuador, but they have also been denied in countries where the class structure and the traditional ruling elite remains stable, like Colombia and Peru.

For these reasons, the decline of US hegemony in the Americas is not sufficient to explain why formal basing agreements have failed in the Americas in the last decades. A more comprehensive must incorporate more than just government preferences in order to explain the bases' failure. In particular, it must be able to account for the tensions of domestic politics that restrict the autonomy of governments to conduct the foreign policy of their countries, including their ability to negotiate basing agreements.

Chapter 3 develops a new model of “base politics” that constructs an ideal-typical representation of the processes that led to the failure of basing negotiations between the United States and Latin American countries. It starts from the intention of both the US and the host government to open formal military bases, and builds an analytical pathway through the mechanisms related to domestic politics that play a role in allowing or blocking the materialization of US bases in Latin America.

CHAPTER 3

BASE POLITICS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

US military bases overseas sustain the projection of US power on a global scale. Ranging from full size towns with multiple facilities to small installations for pieces of strategic equipment, US military bases around the globe serve as multipliers of the capacity of the United States to act as the only global power in the international system (Lutz, 2009). But in order to sustain a network of bases, the United States has had to establish different forms of legal and semi-legal arrangements where the host nation permits the use of a part of its territory for US installations. In many cases, these arrangements are not problematic, but in other cases they become major problems for the US military. First, host nations might demand increasing rents or benefits from the United States in order to open a new base or maintain an existing one, and the possibility of eviction is always present. Second, even when governments in the host nation are willing to maintain a US base, the domestic opposition might turn it into a political issue and challenge the government on the grounds that it is compromising the sovereignty of the country.

The argument of this dissertation is that even if both the United States and Latin American governments want a formal US base, there can only be one if there is no electoral challenge or institutional veto capable of blocking it. Formal US bases can still exist in

Latin America opposition forces perceive benefits from the basing agreement and accept it, but if the opposition does not accept bases, it might be able to block them if it represents an electoral challenge to the government or it counts with institutional mechanisms to do so.

Furthermore, this investigation argues that more aggressive power dynamics, like imposing a base in the cases where one is blocked by the domestic opposition, have not been necessary due to the availability of informal and secretive quasi-base arrangements, often used as second best options after formal bases were wanted but failed to materialize.

This chapter develops an abstract conceptual framework that explores how the preferences of both the basing nation (the United States) and host government (in Latin America) are subject to constraints from domestic dynamics in the host nation. The chapter then elaborates a model of base politics that seeks to help understand why some of these negotiations succeeded and others failed, and the mechanisms involved in the process. The chapter moves beyond explanations based on the rationality of unitary states, as it is needed to explain why if Latin American governments were often willing to open new bases, domestic political processes constrained them in ways that standard explanations of state behavior in international relations do not typically capture.

Five propositions guide the conceptual framework of this dissertation and are introduced and discussed in this chapter. The empirical chapters that follow explore the empirical support for these propositions and the ways that they help understand the cases of basing arrangements in Latin America.

3.1 Domestic explanations of foreign policy

The decision to open a foreign military base lies within the realm of foreign policy. It establishes a particular site where a foreign nation conducts operations, and thus reshapes the bilateral relation between the two countries. It also has consequences for the perception

of threat (or positive gains) for the host's neighbors, and thus impacts the foreign relations of that country's neighborhood. Foreign policy decisions have traditionally been explained using a state-centric paradigm that attributes most decisions to the desire of states to preserve their security, either by adopting defensive foreign policies, or by attempting to establish global domination (Mearsheimer, 2001). But the state-centric paradigm obscures the fact that governments make decisions not only based on international considerations, but also based on their perception of self benefits. Leaders need to survive politically, and foreign policy decisions serve this purpose as well (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). Thus, considerations about the consequences of foreign policy decisions on domestic politics, and vice-versa, have started to populate International Relations theory in the last decades (Kissinger 1966, Rosenau 1967, Hughes 1978, George 1980, Risse-Kappen 1991, Fearon 1998, Nye Jr et al. 2012).

One key observation about international negotiations came from Robert Putnam's 1988 article, *Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games*. In it, Putnam argues that domestic politics and international relations are "inextricably entangled," and that state-centric theories do not account for these linkages. In the particular case of international negotiations that must be ratified by national legislatures, Putnam argues, there is a limited set of choices that the government can make when offering a deal to an international counterpart, restricted by the range of alternatives that the local legislature would in effect approve. Foreign policy decisions would not be explained by the "state" preferences, or by the individual choices of leaders, but would be constrained by domestic politics through the mechanism of congressional ratification (Putnam, 1988).

Putnam's logic forces us to look at the constraints that local legislatures would impose on foreign basing agreements. In most Latin American constitutions, international treaties must be ratified by the national legislature, and thus domestic politics would always be in the way of formal treaties allowing the installment of bases. However, as we will see in the

empirical chapters, governments can try to bypass congressional ratification through disguising basing treaties as continuations of previous treaties. The strength of the opposition and the existence of independent institutions will be critical to prevent basing agreements to escape domestic political debate. On the side of the United States, in contrast, this logic does not apply. Since the US government is not required to seek congressional ratification of every basing agreement, US bases in foreign nations are open and renewed without triggering open-ended political debates among parties and political factions.

Alexander Cooley's *Base Politics* studies the interactions between the domestic politics of countries that host foreign military bases in order to account for the stability of US military bases abroad. Cooley builds on Putnam's two level games and Bueno de Mesquita's logic of political survival to help explain when leaders in host nations would support or contest US occupation of military bases in their territories. Cooley studies the benefits of hosting bases, and the level of dependence of the host regime on those benefits, plus the characteristics of the regime. A more detailed discussion of Cooley's contribution to the study of domestic sources of foreign policy is developed in the following sections.

3.2 Base Politics

Alexander Cooley's explanation of the politics of foreign military bases, which he calls "Theory of Base Politics" (BPT)(2008) explains when negotiations over formal military bases between the United States and other countries are likely to be stable or not.¹ In "Base Politics," Alexander Cooley asked under what circumstances do basing agreements get politicized (i.e. trapped in domestic political turmoil in the host nation), and consequently, when do domestic politics in the host country threaten the stability of foreign military bases. This question is central to this dissertation, because in the cases of Ecuador and Colombia,

¹ Alexander Cooley's approach fits into a growing literature about hierarchy in international relations. Proponents of this body of literature include from different perspectives David Lake (2008, 2009), Jack Donnelly (2006), Daniel Nexon and T. Wright (Nexon 2011, Nexon and Wright 2007), Jordheim 2011, Prys and Robel (2011), and Spruyt (2008)

basing negotiations failed as they became major sources of contention between the national governments and the local opposition. While other frameworks provided answers limited to the rationality of rulers of unitary states, Cooley's approach allows the study of oppositional dynamics and the calculations of leaders based on their expectation of domestic political losses.

Cooley's answer to these questions is centered on two dynamics: political survival and two level games (Putnam 1988, 1993. First, base politics assumes that rulers of base-host countries value and pursue, above all else, their own domestic political survival (p. 10). This is important because self-protecting leaders are in charge of negotiating new base agreements and of re-negotiating and terminating, existing basing contracts from previous administrations. Second, BPT argues that when rulers in host countries negotiate base agreements they simultaneously deal in one level with the country seeking to open new bases and in another level they deal with their domestic clients and political allies. This two level game generates tensions between what the government would like to negotiate with the foreign country, and what domestic political actors might demand in exchange for not opposing the base.

For BPT, the stability of basing contracts depends on the political institutions of the host country. In general, consolidated democracies offer the most credible environment for a base agreement, as they are more likely to honor international contracts. Also, in consolidated democracies the management of foreign relations will likely be in the hands of technocratic bureaucracies, instead of being managed to the president's own political benefit, or captured by domestic struggles among political fractions. Autocracies, on the other hand, provide stable grounds for basing agreements, as long as the autocrat or its close supporters do not lose power. Strongmen who monopolize decision-making in autocracies are likely to maintain a base agreement that helps them maintain political dominance. But sudden regime changes and transitions from autocracy to democracy are likely to create

an aura of illegitimacy around international contracts signed by the deposed autocrat, and thus regime transitions are the least stable environments for base agreements.

For the cases of this dissertation, this categorization is problematic. None of the countries in Latin America is considered a consolidated democracy. Most countries are commonly regarded as deficient or even dysfunctional democracies.(Whitehead, 2003) Yet, none of the countries in the region, with the exception of Cuba, is under an authoritarian regime. Every country in the Americas, except Cuba, is formally a democracy, but the qualities of Latin American democracies vary largely. Thus, instead of the formal label of the regime, one must look at the consolidation of democratic institutions in the country to determine the role that regime type plays in base politics. To build Cooley's theoretical model, three types sufficed: Authoritarian regimes, consolidated democracies, and countries experiencing a recent transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

Most countries in Latin America, however, do not fit any of these categories. Colombia, for example, transitioned from military rule to democratic elected civilian rulers more than fifty years ago, yet is hardly a consolidated democracy. Similarly, most of the countries in South America transitioned from military rule to democracy in the eighties. Since then, competitive elections have produced changes of governments several times in each country. One of the operative reasons why transitions to democracy are important for Cooley's Base Politics is because he assumes that past basing agreements in these countries were negotiated by recently deposed authoritarian rulers, and thus lack legitimacy to the new elected leaders, but this is not the case in Latin America, where military bases in the last decades were accepted by elected leaders.

For these reasons, this dissertation does not use the Cooley's categorization of regime types, but instead inquires how democratic processes and institutions have provided new spaces for opposition forces to contest US bases in their countries. The dissertation looks at the strength and independence of the judiciary, the party system, as well as the level of

organization of the civil society. This dissertation broadens the concept of base politics to study the role of domestic opposition forces in the host nation in the definition of the status and operations of US bases. Apart from the United States, the process of base negotiations involves two sets of actors in the host nation: the government and its political allies on one side, and opposition forces on the other. In each of the cases in this dissertation, governments were at some point keen to the idea of a US military base in their territories, but the strength of the opposition forces and their capacity to challenge the ruling elite differed considerably.

3.3 Definition of basic terms

Following Cooley's base politics approach and concepts, I present a brief definition of basic terms used below in the conceptual framework of this dissertation.

A *basing nation* is the country that seeks military bases overseas. It is often a great power. Its interests around bases overseas are defined by its grand strategy, and can range from a minor presence in adjacent territories for defensive purposes, to full scale global domination.

Host Governments are the local counterparts of basing nations, as the rulers of the territories where foreign bases are installed. Local rulers benefit from base agreements in different ways. First and foremost, the presence of foreign bases provides security to the host country, by deterring external aggressors and by outsourcing a part of security operations to the basing nation. This allows the government in the host country to divert resources from security matters to social spending or greater benefits to its domestic clients. Second, base agreements might have informally attached some form of economic aid or trade opportunity for the host country. Third, bases might provide legitimacy to the host government, as a country supported by powerful partners, like great powers, or as a country that collaborates to address transnational security threats. At the same time,

however, bases might delegitimize the government, as nationalists in the host country would inevitably highlight the loss of sovereignty associated with the presence of foreign troops in their territory, or the incapacity of the government to solve its security problems on its own.

The *local opposition* is the group of politically relevant actors that are not included in the host government's political coalition. Opposition groups might be political parties with large constituencies, but can also be groups from the civil society such as unions, non-governmental organizations, indigenous groups, etc. The politically relevant actors that form the local opposition are not predefined, but are a matter of study in each case. The local opposition has an interest in maximizing its political gains from opposing, and sometimes supporting, government actions, as their ultimate objective is to replace the ruling party in government or gain political influence within the civil society.

A *foreign military base* is a physical installation where foreign troops carry out operations with a high level of autonomy from the local military. It need not be a large installation used exclusively for this purpose, but there must be at least a functional part of a military installation dedicated to the operation of foreign troops. These operations do not necessarily include open combat (except in self-defense), but can also be limited to communications, surveillance, station of airplanes or military vehicles, or training of local forces.

Formal Bases are foreign military bases that are supported by a formal agreement between the basing nation and the host government, which specifies the terms of use of the base and the type of operations allowed in it. These agreements are usually international treaties, ratified by congress in both countries, but can also be lesser formal agreements signed within the legal frameworks of each host nation. Formal bases include large Main Operating Bases and smaller Forward Operating Locations and Cooperative Security Locations.

Quasi-bases are foreign military bases that are not supported by a formal agreement. These bases can operate in practically the same way as formal bases, but there is no formal agreement specifying the terms of use of the base and the type of operations. They are often supported by obscure annexes to previous cooperation agreements or by tacit agreements between the basing nation and the host government without legal specifications.

Institutional veto players are institutions within the host country that are independent from the government and have the capacity to rule against government's decisions. These are often the highest courts in the country, such as supreme courts or constitutional courts, with a tradition of respect for their decisions even when they are not in the interest of the government. These are often associated with consolidated democracies, where the systems of checks and balances regulate the actions of both the government and the legislative.

3.4 Conceptual framework

Even if both the basing nation and the host government prefer to open a military base, there can only be one if domestic politics do not block the way. It is only if the opposition perceives benefits from the basing agreement, or if the opposition represents no electoral challenge to the government, and no institutional mechanisms block a basing agreement, that formal bases can still exist overseas.

Domestic politics is, thus, crucial for our understanding of foreign basing agreements. Traditional approaches to International Relations, including several discussed in section 2.3 obscure domestic dynamics, and concentrate on state behavior as the result of a rational calculation from an unitary actor based on an undefined concept of "national interest." These approaches miss the fact that the possibility of mutual benefits for the basing nation and the host government is not in itself sufficient for a formal basing agreement. Even when governments are willing to host foreign bases, domestic politics might present obstacles that

make it impossible for willing governments to materialize formal bases.

But the challenges that domestic politics pose to formal basing negotiations are not insurmountable. When both the basing nation and the host government are interested in allowing the use of bases, but formal negotiations are blocked domestically, quasi-bases provide an alternative that fulfills partially the objectives of formal basing negotiations. These alternative arrangements do not provide the semi-legal stability and legitimacy of formal bases, they can function in a stable way as long as the parts remain interested in the base. But potential changes of government or regime in the host nation, or shifts in the preferences of existing governments, would jeopardize quasi-bases in ways that formal agreements typically are not, because of the formal specification of the terms of the use of the bases and the existence of a formal date for the expiration of the agreement.

The causal logic of this dissertation, summarized above, can be better understood as a series of abstract propositions about the dynamics that I expect to find when basing negotiations take place amidst potentially obstructive domestic politics:

3.4.1 General Propositions

1. When the local opposition perceives benefits from opening foreign military bases it will not block negotiations carried out by the government and a foreign nation, and formal bases are possible.

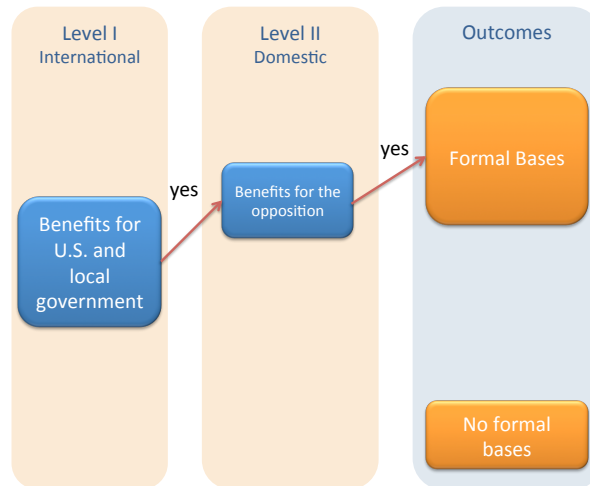
Opposition forces in consolidating democracies are much better organized, and they enjoy a much more favorable institutional setting in which their struggles are channeled. Whereas autocratic regimes in practical terms made opposition illegal, the end of the era of dictatorships and civil wars in different regions of the world permitted a remarkable progress of democratic institutions. Contemporary governments now realize they need to respond to the necessities and preferences of their population. Whereas good relations with great powers supported autocratic governments in the past, few countries today rely

exclusively on foreign support to appease its population.

Gains from accepting foreign military bases can be concentrated in the government and a small group of political allies, or they can spread to different political groups even if they are not participating in the ruling coalition. In some situations, the benefits of US bases benefit political groups regardless of their connections to government officials. In contrast, and more often, the political benefits of foreign bases are concentrated on the ruling coalition, or even the leader and his or her family and close political allies. When basing negotiations benefit all or most politically relevant groups, including the opposition, one should not expect US bases to become highly politicized issues. One could even expect the basing agreement to be openly debated in the legislative body of the country, including participation of the opposition, and in this way gain the legitimacy of congressional ratification.

But foreign military bases do not need to always be trapped in political struggles within the host country. When the benefits of military bases are perceived by both the government and the opposition, I do not expect to find major political obstacles to basing agreements. While intense political debate can still take place, and the specific terms of the base lease might be subject to fierce opposition, when the political gains of military bases are also perceived by the opposition one could expect that some changes to the intended agreement would take place but it will ultimately be successful. Figure 3.1 represents graphically this proposition.

2. When the opposition does not perceive benefits from foreign military bases, and it is strong enough to veto foreign agreements through the threat of electorally defeating the government, the government will deny formal bases to foreign nations, even if it was in its interest to open them.

Figure 3.1: Model A: Formal bases and benefits to the opposition

As explained before, if the domestic opposition perceives political gains from basing agreements, these are more likely to be successful and stable. But when bases benefit only the government and its clients, the opposition is likely to oppose the base and seek political advantages from challenging the legitimacy of the basing agreement. It can also be the case that, even if they acknowledge small potential benefits from supporting a base, the opposition would perceive more political benefits from weakening incumbents by defeating them in this highly contentious issue, for example, by publicly opposing foreign bases as signs of diminished sovereignty. If this is the case, two new mechanisms related to the strength of the opposition play a role in explaining when agreements succeed or fail. First, the opposition might attempt to block the base agreement in Congress if it has sufficient votes, or impeach ministers or even the president if the agreement is not sent in for congressional approval. This of course requires that the opposition is widely represented in the legislature, and that it can rally enough votes. If it is not, the opposition can still appeal to the electorate and seek either a referendum or support in general elections. Common electoral tactics for the opposition include accusing the government of compromising the

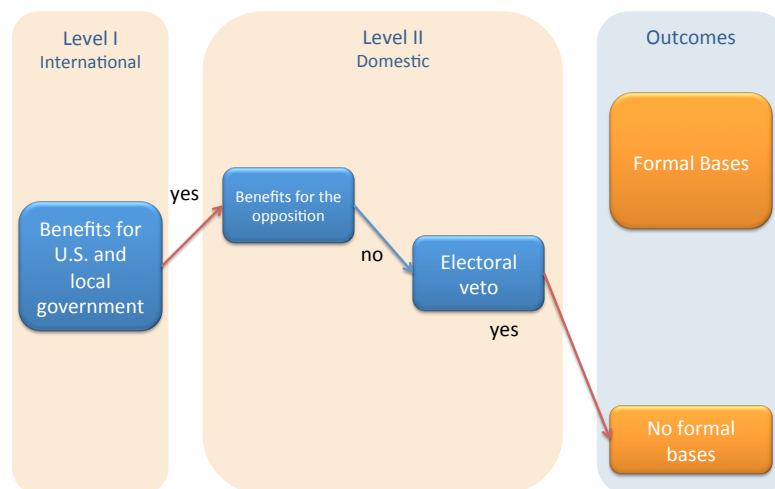
sovereignty of the people and mobilizing nationalistic sentiments in the country.

When the benefits of opening foreign bases are offered to, or concentrated in, only the ruling elite, basing agreements are more difficult to “sell” to the public. Authoritarian regimes do not often worry about political gains for the opposition, but where domestic political opposition might erode the government’s support from the electorate, I expect that when the opposition is excluded from political gains, these groups will mobilize the population against bases and against the government for offering them to foreign powers.

However, if the opposition is not strong enough to pose a political or electoral challenge for the government, this mechanism does not work, and the government can still approve a formal basing lease that concentrates its benefits in the government and its clients. If this is the case, one might expect the agreement to be implemented by the government but not put to a vote in congress, where the opposition could magnify its political power by exposing the contents of the agreement as violations of the state sovereignty.

Figure 3.2 builds on the previous proposition and shows the path described in this proposition.

Figure 3.2: Model B: Formal bases and electoral veto



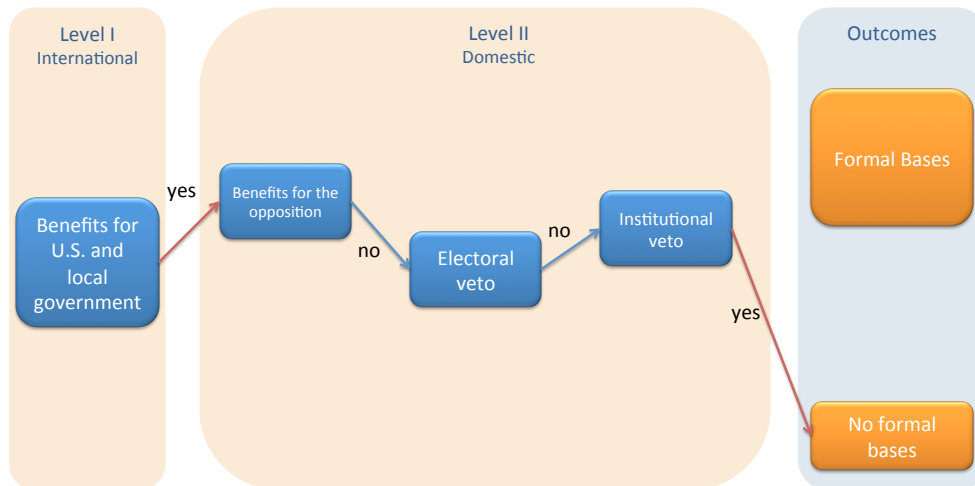
3. When the local opposition does not pose an electoral challenge to the government, but can successfully use institutional mechanisms to constrain the actions of the government, and opposes foreign military bases, the costs of offering bases to foreign nations will increase, making it more likely that alternative agreements would be preferred.

The second mechanism that can help the opposition block the agreement is the use of the country's institutions to challenge the validity of US bases. In more consolidated democracies, independent courts will have the final say about the legality of a basing agreement, and their rule is to be accepted by governments despite their political dominance. In particular, when basing agreements are not ratified by the legislature, the opposition is likely to make the case that new treaties need to be ratified before they acquire legal validity. If strong independent institutions exist in the country, the validity of basing agreements might be questioned and the bases rejected even if the opposition is not strong electorally or politically.

Figure 3.3 completes a new path of the basing agreement that leads to formal bases not being feasible.

4. When the local opposition is too weak electorally and does not count with institutional mechanisms to constrain the actions of the government, bases are possible if the host government and a foreign nation agree on them.

Formal base negotiations are still possible in non-authoritarian regimes, but only when the opposition is too weak to contest them or when the opposition perceives the possibility of political gains from accepting the base. The consolidation of democratic institutions is uneven among countries. In many cases, governments are able to manipulate high courts and other institutions to force them to abstain from reviewing basing

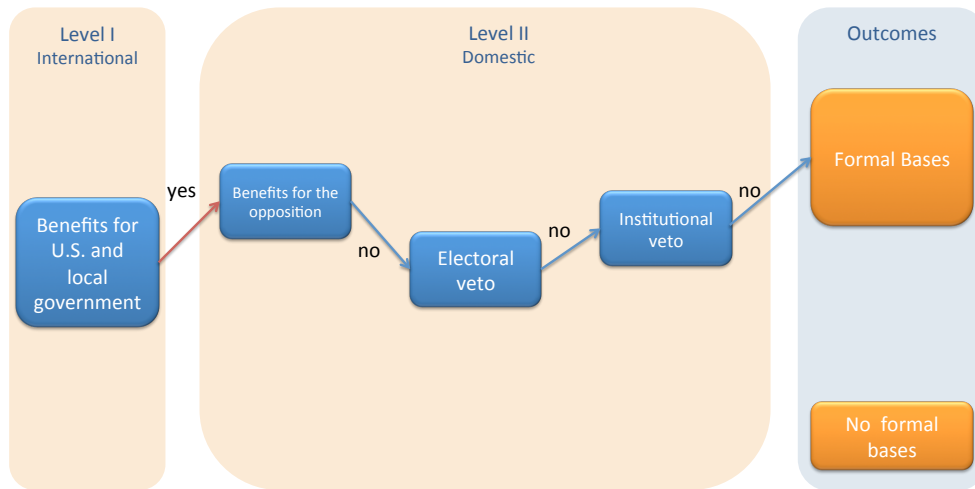
Figure 3.3: Model C: Formal bases and institutional veto

agreements or they can ignore their rulings. If no independent institutions can “veto” the government’s actions, this mechanism fails to magnify the claims of the opposition and formal basing agreements are likely to succeed even if they are opposed by political groups and their legality is questionable.

Figure 3.4 represents a path in which formal basing negotiations succeed despite the exclusion of the opposition from the benefits of foreign bases.

5. When formal basing negotiations fail because of 3. or 4., interested governments will seek alternative arrangements that escape domestic oppositional dynamics.

When formal basing agreements are too difficult to open or maintain for domestic political reasons, but the basing nation and the host government are still interested in granting foreign military access to local bases, I expect alternative arrangements like quasi-bases to take place. These informal options provide secrecy and make politicization more difficult both in the basing nations and in the host country.

Figure 3.4: Model D: Formal bases and weak opposition

These arrangements are less costly, both financially and politically, than coercive imposition for the basing nation. Instead of threatening with its military force, when a great power desires to open military bases in foreign territories, but fails to obtain formal recognition of its authority to use local bases, informal access through a quasi-base arrangement is still a better option than not having a base at all, or spending large resources on imposing a base through coercion. Besides, even if formal agreements provide more stability and legitimacy for operations, quasi-bases offer other advantages such as secrecy and more flexible terms. If, and only if, the basing nation trusts that quasi-bases will be durable despite the lack of formal commitment from the host government, these alternative arrangements provide benefits that often off-set the disadvantages of not having formal basing agreements.

The objectives of the basing nations, and those of host government governments can still be attained with agreements that allow foreign operations in local military facilities, which although not considered formally foreign military bases they still provide the same operational capacity for the the basing nation. This way, governments seek alternative

forms to allow foreign troops to operate and use local military bases, without the backing of a formal treaty, usually by framing the new obligations of the country as a continuation of previous cooperation agreements that do not require congressional approval. These alternative arrangements, or quasi-bases, are much more difficult for the civil society to oversight, and for opposition parties to block.

Despite their many particularities, I expect all quasi-bases to arise in two common scenarios. First, quasi-bases are a second-best option for interested governments where domestic politics makes it too difficult to open formal bases. But in other cases, formal bases might not be the preferred option, when foreign military operations are planned to be conducted in secrecy and require minimum public oversight. In this second option, formal bases are not the most useful option, since their existence would imply Congressional oversight in both countries, and their budget and operations would be limited by local and international laws regarding foreign military deployments. These bases can be used for specific operations, within envisioned time frames and objectives, although once in operation they can extend over time and serve for multiple purposes and new security goals.

Quasi-bases often arise in the context of, and as a result of, challenges from domestic politics in the basing nation or in the host country, often in situations where formal bases have failed or are too difficult to maintain. In these cases, quasi-bases present informal options for the success of security and operations abroad. However, quasi-bases also face unique challenges of their own. While the secrecy and lack of specification of the agreements supporting quasi-bases could give them more stability, regime changes and electoral victories by the opposition are likely to destabilize quasi-bases, even more than these would destabilize formal bases.

A formal base lease becomes a contract between the parts, in which a sovereign transfer occurs from the host country to the basing nation. Contracts in international

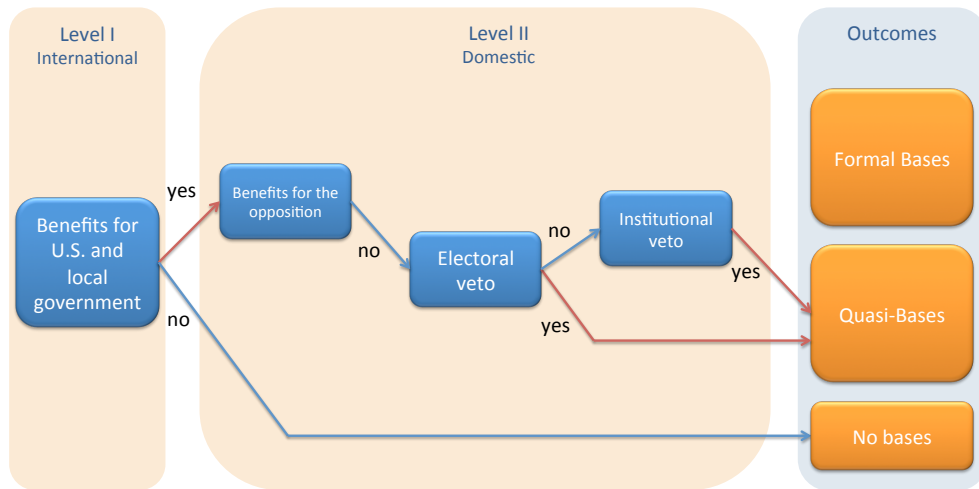
relations are not enforceable in the same ways in which they are within a state, but the existence of the contract provides legitimacy to the transfer of authority over the territory of a base, and the operations permitted in the contract (Cooley and Spruyt, 2009). When bases are ruled by contracts, specific limitations are set for the types of operations that foreign troops can perform, the types of immunities they enjoy, and the types of weapons and up to where troops can carry them. They also specify a time limit for the duration of the contract, thus providing a time reference in which the authority of a foreign actor must be renegotiated or will no longer be recognized.

Since the semi-formal agreements that support quasi-bases do not explicitly lease a base or a portion of a base to the basing nation, its access to these facilities depends on informal and tacit agreements. Formal basing agreements define the terms of the leased base, including which assets within the base are to be used exclusively by the basing nation. In the case of quasi-bases, vague references to the presence of foreign troops are not sufficient to determine if the assets are to be controlled by the local authorities or by US officials.

When the terms of a lease are not specified, the basing nation's government is forced to rely on trust that the local government will not change the informal rules governing US access to the base. In fact, the basin nation has to trust that the space used and the investments made to upgrade the facilities will be respected *as if* a lease had been signed. But informal agreements are sensitive to changes in the configuration of domestic politics, and are particularly sensitive to changes in government that bring the opposition into office. In the case of formal bases, the definition of the terms of the lease serve as semi-legal guarantees, at least for the duration of the lease agreed by the parts. But in the case of quasi-bases, the lack of such a contract increases their instability.

Figure 8.1 shows ideal-typical paths that lead to the establishment of quasi-bases as consequences of failed formal basing negotiations.

Figure 3.5: Model E: Failed formal negotiations and quasi-bases



CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Ideal-type theory

Ideal-type theorizing does not seek to produce “falsifiable point-predictions” about foreign policy or the behavior of states (Jackson 2010: 111 of 268, e-book). Instead, the type of explanation sought in ideal-type theory, and in this dissertation, is closer to an ensemble of parts that highlights the importance of some factors and specifies the relations among them. This type of theorizing is close to Kenneth Waltz’s balance-of-power theory, even if, as Patrick Jackson notes, most of his readers have mistakenly assumed Waltz’s formulations are intended to support a series of falsifiable claims (Jackson 2010: 111 of 268, e-book). This type of theoretical formulations are not supposed to be evaluated as claims about relations of causality among variables, but as connections among things that help make sense of social processes.

The model built in chapter 3 is, thus, not a falsifiable claim about the “real” relation among variables, but instead it serves (or seeks to serve) as an idealization that “can be used to order the complex chaos of empirical reality into more comprehensible and manageable forms” (Jackson 2010: 113 of 268, e-book). Instead of looking for general law-type claims about variables, this investigation seeks to understand specific configurations of factors that have resulted in specific outcomes in each of the cases studied. This is a type of explanation that Max Weber coined “singular causal analysis.” As in the work of Weber,

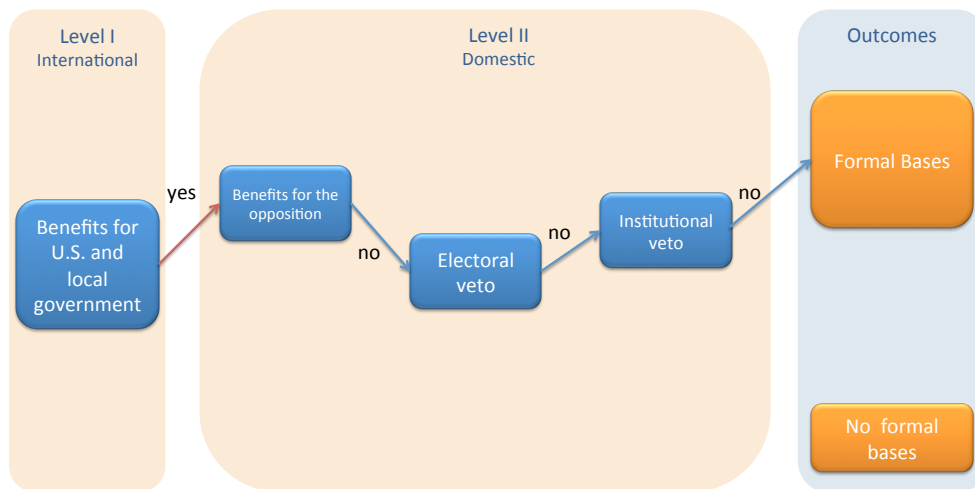
explanations in this type of analysis make use of the counter-factual to compare historical events with the (non-historical) alternatives that different configurations of factor could have produced. The ideal-type tells a simplified story of how factors would interact in ideal (thus not identifiable in actual cases) circumstances, and helps make sense of actual historical events as it defines the factors that matter and how they interact.

This dissertation makes no predictive claims. As major works in the discipline commonly do (for example Gilpin 1981), I isolate and analyze regularities and patterns of the object of this study, not to discover general laws, but instead to explain them in general terms through an analytical, descriptive construct. I seek to understand the failure of formal basing negotiations in the Americas, and to this end I provide an ideal-typical abstraction that captures the relevant mechanisms that allow us to understand how some negotiations succeed and others fail. The explanatory usefulness of this construct lies on its capacity to capture the possible variations that help describe how certain outcomes arise, and its capacity to organize empirical data in order to help understand actual historical events.

In this dissertation an ideal-type is built highlighting (and simplifying) factors that together help make sense of why international agreements for the establishment of US military bases worked or not in particular situations. Recall figure 3.4 (replicated here). It identifies the factors that ideally permit or block basing agreements. The implied claim of this model is that when these factors interact in different ways, different outcomes (or different causal paths towards an outcome) will be produced. The model is used in the cases of El Salvador, Ecuador, and Colombia, in order to compare the actual configuration of these factors during each basing negotiation. In each of those cases, the dissertation discusses the actual configuration of these factors, and claims (counter factually) that different configurations of these would have produced different outcomes. Other factors have been excluded from the ideal-typical model, which ultimately implies the claim that

their particular configuration is not as relevant to help make sense of the outcomes of basing negotiations.

Figure 4.1: Model D: Formal bases and weak opposition



In section 5.1 I presented the account of the opening and renewal of the Colamapa base in El Salvador, which fits closely with one of the ideal-typical pathway described in model A. Chapter 6 explores the opening of the Manta Air Base and the later expulsion of the US military, and traces how a series of governments friendly to the United States failed to maintain political dominance and lost the 2006 election to an anti-base candidate, sealing the fate of the base. Chapter 7 studies the two cases where the United States sought to move operations from the Manta base in Ecuador after the expulsion was imminent: Colombia and Peru. While Peru sought to open a US military base but backed off due to domestic political pressure, Colombia negotiated and signed an agreement to open seven formal US bases. The chapter analyses how the domestic opposition was able to utilize the existing independent institutional strength of the constitutional court to attack the agreement and eventually declare it unlawful.

Beyond the application of the model, Chapter 8 completes the empirical support for the argument proposed in the beginning of this dissertation. While the failure of basing negotiations explains why formal bases are increasingly more difficult to open and maintain in Latin America, the existence of quasi-bases explains why alternative arrangements are allowing the US to fulfill its security policy in the region. Chapter 8 offers an account of how Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru moved on to open quasi-bases, as an alternative to the desired but unattained formal bases. It also presents, as additional evidence, the cases of Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica, where formal bases were not preferred by the local governments or the United States, and instead moved directly to open quasi-bases. Unlike Colombia and Peru, the stability of formal contracts for the lease of bases was not sought in these Central American cases, but trusting good relations with the local governments and seeking limited oversight, the US military chose to operate on informal grounds. This dissertation cannot, however, make any analytical claims about the origins of these other quasi-bases.

4.2 Selection of cases

The cases are not necessarily a comprehensive account of US bases and quasi-bases in contemporary Latin America, although the dissertation includes to some extent every documented case—that I have been able to assemble with reliable information—of US military bases in the region in the last twenty years. Thus, the selection of cases does not correspond to a sample selection, but to the study of every available case that was possible to include. Being able to study every case available in a determined period of time is an advantage that seldom presents itself in scholarship, but it also means that each case is treated with uneven depth, depending on the availability of the information and the time period where basing negotiations and other dynamics took place. As a result, the study of the cases of Ecuador and Colombia are rather lengthy, while quasi-bases in Peru and Central America

are shorter. The secrecy surrounding quasi-bases only adds to the uneven availability of information. However, despite the short accounts of some cases, every episode was documented to the point of making sure the information presented was credible, either by comparing several sources or by obtaining confirmation from officials through interviews.

4.3 Sources and data

In this dissertation I track the issues of basing negotiations, opposition and resistance through electoral or institutional means, and the establishment of bases and quasi-bases in seven countries in Latin America. Three cases are drawn from South America (Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru), and four cases are drawn from Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica). Of these, two countries formally host or hosted US military bases (El Salvador and Ecuador), two negotiated agreements to open new formal US bases but these never materialized (Colombia and Peru), and three others did not negotiate formal bases, but accepted to host quasi-bases at different times. While Ecuador expelled the US from its base in Manta in 2009, and Colombia and Peru did not finalize their basing negotiations, these three countries also accepted later some form of quasi-bases arrangement.

The data for this project was collected from different types of sources. Although limited, a few historical accounts from local scholars were available in the cases of Ecuador, Colombia, and Honduras. In the other cases—El Salvador, Peru, Costa Rica, and Guatemala—there were fewer academic works available. Most of the information for all cases was gathered from archival sources. I collected several hundreds of news articles from both local archives and internet sources. A systematic review of the Latin American Weekly Report offered material to reconstruct the political tensions of each country at the time when basing negotiations were at stake.

I also collected more than two hundred cables from US embassies in Latin America,

from where day to day accounts of negotiations, excerpts of interviews with US and Latin American officials, and perceptions of US diplomats were extracted. These pieces were made public by several releases of leaked cables that cover the time period from 2004 to 2010. These cables were useful to draw evidence about US diplomatic postures in the countries where bases were being negotiated, but they were also, and primarily, useful to gather information about negotiations that was not available from other sources given the secrecy of the matter. Most significantly, they contain direct quotes from private interviews with the top policy makers in each country. Whereas in interviews and media reports officials would often deny the existence of negotiations, these leaked confidential cables offer honest testimonies from high ranking negotiators who talked candidly with US officials in secret. Cables were used primarily when a direct quote from an interview with a local high ranking official provided relevant testimonies that helped build the narratives about each case, and where other public sources were not available. Due to the secrecy of matters related to national security, and the lack of availability of current and recent top officials for academic interviews, it would have been impossible to construct the empirical narratives for this dissertation without the use of these cables. The main focus of their use was to extract pieces of evidence from testimonies otherwise not available.

In other cases, the cables were used when they were needed to describe the position of the US embassy and US officials regarding several issues, especially when they served as descriptions of US strategies and positions in basing negotiations. Very often, that position was not made public, or it contradicted the public position taken by them. In a limited number of cases, the cables are used to help construct the chronological narrative of events, but I have tried to use archives, media, interviews, and scholarly sources where available to limit the use of potentially biased communications from US embassies to construct these narratives.

The archival information was confirmed and complemented through personal inter-

views with high ranking officials, including the former ministers of foreign relations and energy, and a former vice-minister of defense in Colombia, the former vice-minister of foreign relations and the former president of the National Assembly of Ecuador, high ranking officials of Central American embassies in Washington, a former member of the US Congress foreign relations committee, and two dozen other Latin American officials and academics in Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, and the United States.

CHAPTER 5

SUCCESSFUL BASING AGREEMENTS

This chapter analyzes the successful basing negotiations that the United States conducted in Latin American countries in the recent past, which resulted in the installation of the Manta Base in Ecuador and the installation and later renewal of the Colamapa Base in El Salvador. The chapter is the shortest of the empirical part of the dissertation, since it looks quickly at the few cases where formal basing negotiations actually worked, as opposed to the failed negotiations that I seek to explain. The chapter briefly surveys the current academic literature to describe the party system and the strength of the domestic opposition in both countries, and explores how domestic politics affected the ability of host governments to accept foreign military bases. The chapter then analyses the opening of the Colamapa Base in El Salvador, with a focus on the domestic political dynamics and the role of the opposition party, the FMLN, and the later renewal of the base lease. With a similar focus, the chapter continues with a discussion about the domestic political dynamics that allowed the installation of the US air base in Manta, Ecuador.

5.1 The Colamapa Base in El Salvador

The United States expressed its interest in a third Forward Operating Location in El Salvador after it started negotiations for other bases in Ecuador and the Dutch Antilles. President Calderon Sol, of the ARENA party, and the United States publicized the base as the “third eye” of an anti-drug system in the Americas. This new base represented a shift

in the strategic area of focus of the Southern Command's "war against drugs." While drug smuggling had concentrated in the Caribbean corridor between Colombia and the Gulf of Mexico in the 80's, by the end of the 1990's most illegal traffic concentrated in sea routes in the Pacific from South America to Central America and Mexico (Loveman, 2006). The Colamapa base was an important addition to the monitoring capabilities of the United States in the new route, due to its location in the Salvadoran Pacific (Roncken, 2004).

The United States already enjoyed a good relation with the government of El Salvador, as well as with the governing party, from which the next president was very likely to emerge (Almeida, 2010). This continuity in the special relation with the United States made El Salvador a promising location for the stability of the new base. Unlike its neighbors, El Salvador provided a stable political landscape with functioning democratic institutions. But the main concern for both the United States and the ruling party was the opposition, headed by the former guerrilla movement FMLN, which had a strong representation in Congress and was able to mobilize its base among the country's poor (González, 2011). As a former guerrilla organization born in the Cold War, the FMLN contested the United States as part of its political platform. It especially differed with Washington (and with the ARENA party) in key economic issues, but above all it sustained a radical discourse around the idea of national sovereignty.

The basing negotiations succeeded nonetheless. This event, I argue, followed the logic exposed in chapter 3. Recall proposition #1 from chapter 3:

When the local opposition perceives benefits from opening foreign military bases it will not block negotiations carried out by the government and a foreign nation, and formal bases are possible.

The case of El Salvador, both in the negotiation to open the formal US Forward Operating Location and the renewal of the base followed the logic of proposition 1. The local opposition, headed by the FMLN in congress, perceived benefits allowing the base to

be negotiated and accepted by the government. First, the FMLN protected its reputation from accusations of being a threat to the good relations between El Salvador and the United States, something many Salvadorans believe is critical for a country with a third of its population living in the US. Second, the FMLN sought to gain political advantages from accepting the base, but requiring modifications of the final agreement, including reducing the scope of immunities for US personnel and limiting the war equipment that US personnel could use. These modifications served the FMLN to portray itself as a pro-sovereignty party, although moderate and not threatening to US interests. As the FMLN did not attempt to block the base, but rather sought to extract political benefits from it, the agreement was approved in the national legislature and a formal US base still exists near the capital, San Salvador.

5.1.1 The opposition in El Salvador

The main opposition party in El Salvador, the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN), has gained great political power since the termination of the Salvadoran civil war in 1992. The FMLN formed uniting five political organizations in 1980, including the Communist Party, the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and three left-wing armed groups. Most of its leaders came from dissidents from the pro-Soviet Communist Party and the Christian Democrats (McClintock, 1998, 52). During its armed struggle, the FMLN trained its special forces in Matanzas, Cuba, and developed a number of very effective strategic mobile forces and urban commandos (Spencer, 1996, ix) that scored important tactical victories for the revolutionary group and threatened to destabilize the government of El Salvador.

The United States, fearing a repetition of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, responded with clear support for the government of El Salvador and intensified its covert operations in Central America (LeoGrande 1986, Holden 1999). According to William

LeoGrande, “Washington intelligence capabilities in Central America were expanded exponentially, military exercises were accelerated, and the covert operation against Nicaragua got under way” (LeoGrande, 1998, 149). President Reagan justified emergency military aid to El Salvador based on the successful military operations of the FMLN, including a “dramatic” attack on the Ilopango air base (LeoGrande, 1998, 150), located in the east of the capital, San Salvador, and continued to guarantee military support to the Salvadoran government despite evident human rights abuses.

The FMLN sought support from Cuba and Nicaragua, which were central to the internationalization strategy of the FMLN, and allowed them to magnify their political and military strength (Borda 2009, 188). Under its armed battle against the US-sponsored Salvadoran government, the FMLN rejected US intervention in Latin America and its involvement in Central American civil conflicts. But while the FMLN’s contempt for the Reagan administration was enormous, the following Bush and Clinton administrations were perceived as more moderate, even more so as the Cold War came to an end (Borda 2009, 232), and the US population and congress became more aware of US excesses in Central America (LeoGrande, 1998, 152).

While the FMLN engaged in an open armed struggle against the Salvadoran government, it also explored political participation between 1984 and 1989. But after its calls for electoral reforms were rejected, the FMLN sabotaged the 1989 elections and prepared for a final armed offensive on San Salvador. The offensive was repelled, but it made clear that even if a military victory was impossible for the FMLN, its armed power was enough to make victory impossible for the army too (Manning 2008, 117-8). Ultimately, the two sides negotiated a peace accord with the participation of UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, which successfully concluded in the palace of Chapultepec in Mexico City in 1992 (Corr, 1995).

At the time of the negotiations, the United States tried to be seen as a facilitator,

using economic aid to pressure both parties to come to an agreement. The Salvadoran government received important blow-offs from Washington that served as friendly gestures towards the FMLN, including accusations of human rights abuses and limitations on the economic aid that could flow into the government hands if investigations did not bring perpetrators to justice (Borda 2009, 234).

The FMLN emerged as a regular political party after the negotiations, with relative success in municipal elections (Manning 2008, 119), reaching a representation in congress that averages close to 50%, and achieving the presidency until 2009, when Mauricio Funes became the first FMLN president of El Salvador (Almeida, 2010). With these electoral victories, the FMLN has become “one of the most successful armed opposition groups turned political party in the world” (Allison and Alvarez, 2012, 89).

Although nationalist and leftist, the FMLN began to collaborate with the United States at the municipal level since the first local races where won in 1994, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the reconstruction of municipalities. But despite the FMLN’s at times moderate stance towards the United States, the ruling ARENA party constantly tried to create a sense of imminent threat if the *Frente* achieved the presidency. President Francisco Flores, for example, declared in 2003 as he left office that a FMLN victory would eliminate jobs in El Salvador, as the relation with the United States would complicate and investors would pull out their money (Manning 2008, 124). But instead of following an consistently radical political platform, the FMLN has been split between the reformist, pragmatic branch, which has put the goal of winning elections ahead of strict political dogmas, and the orthodox branch, which maintains its radical opposition to blurring the leftist ideals of its past (Allison and Alvarez, 2012). By the time of the 1999 base negotiation with the United States, the moderate branch had gained more power over the party under the leadership of Facundo Guardado (Manning 2008, 126).

5.1.2 Opening the base

Under its moderate leadership, many members of a divided FMLN (González, 2006) were eager to take part in the discussion about a Forward Operating Location (FOL), as the government of El Salvador decided to put the base agreement for ratification in Congress in 1999. Congress was required to ratify new treaties, which gave the opposition the opportunity to contest the base and gain political strength mobilizing the nationalist sentiment of the masses. The agreement included a broad understanding about the new base's objectives, and also specific terms for the location of US assets and troops, as well as the regulations about US personnel, immunities, permission to carry weapons, etc. One of the issues that the FMLN questioned the most was the presence of US armed personnel, and it managed to restrict the agreement to prevent US armed troops to mobilize outside the base. The opposition also managed to exclude the possibility of war-type aircraft in the base, and instead authorized the presence of airplanes carrying equipment for communications and monitoring.¹ The idea behind was to prevent US troops from engaging in combat operations, and instead facilitate the gathering of information that would then be transferred to Salvadoran troops.

Members of the FMLN supported the agreement after these changes were introduced, and Congress approved the base. Instead of radically standing against the base, moderate members of the FMLN sought to shape the agreement in ways that would allow them to show their commitment to Salvadoran sovereignty, while at the same time maintaining an image of a political organization not too radically opposed to the United States. This was important for the former guerrillas, because the population of country favored good relations with the United States and every political party had to assure the Salvadorans that the relation with Washington would be stable. The large Salvadoran community

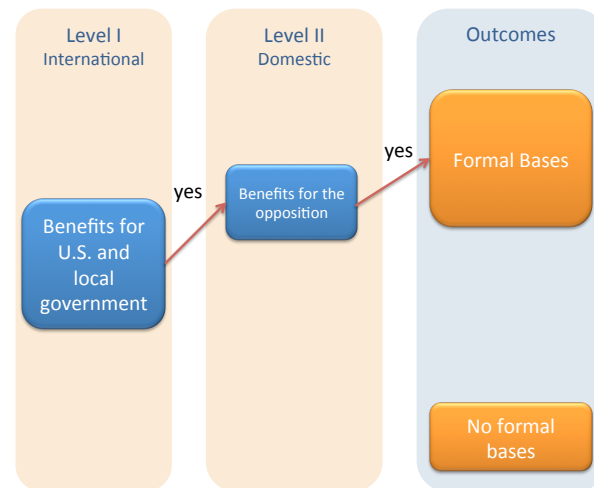
¹Interview with Hector Silva, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington, DC., Washington DC, October 2012.

living in the United States, as well as the country's strong dependency on remittances made a strong anti-US discourse less appealing to the population (Cordova, 2005). At the time, the ruling ARENA party campaigned against the FMLN arguing that these group represented an alliance with Hugo Chavez, which seriously threatened the FMLN's chances of winning the presidency (González, 2011, 158). As a result, the group maintained a balanced approach towards the United States and denied any links with Venezuela.

The ideal-typical model developed in this dissertation allows us to pay attention to the domestic dynamics that surrounded the installment of the base, as opposed to just assuming that the final agreement of the base reflected the preferences of the Salvadoran government or those of the United States. Instead, a close look to the opposition from the FMLN, as well as the political gains that this group perceived from supporting a limited agreement, reveals why the base accord was modified, but ultimately approved in the legislature.

The United States accepted the changes, as the priority of monitoring the new routes in the Pacific was incorporated into the final text. The main interest of the US negotiators was the possibility of collecting information in the Pacific to send to the US Coast Guard for the interception of vessels in international waters, instead of engaging in combat against smugglers in Salvadoran waters or land (Lindsay-Poland, 2009).

The Salvadoran government also accepted the changes. It provided more security for El Salvador as it transferred the responsibility of interdiction to the United States and seriously damaged the capacity of organized drug traffickers to establish new routes in or near the country. The Salvadoran government also gained more leverage to negotiate with Washington, as the continuity of the base represented a new special interest of the United States (Lindsay-Poland, 2009). According to one Salvadoran official, the Salvadoran government successfully played this card when it requested more military assistance to the Obama administration, which extended the Merida Initiative beyond Mexico under the

Figure 5.1: Base Negotiations in El Salvador

Central America Regional Security Initiative.²

As the negotiation process shows, the basing agreement represented political gains for both the government and the opposition in El Salvador. Interestingly, the FMLN gained more from supporting an agreement where it could show its commitment to national sovereignty than it could have gained if it had opposed the base altogether. Thus, this base negotiation resulted in the establishment of a US base in a Latin American country through a democratic process that included congressional ratification. Figure 5.1 illustrates this process.

5.1.3 Renewing the Colamapa base: politicization avoided

In 2009 came the time for a renewal of the base agreement. The new negotiation started at a time of expected political transition in El Salvador, when Mauricio Funes won a presidential election for the FMLN for the first time in history (González, 2011). The

²Interview with Hector Silva, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington, DC., Washington DC, October 2012.

renewal of the base was executed by President Antonio Saca shortly after the election, only two months before the transition. President Saca, of the pro-US ARENA party, had sought to extend the agreement to include more bases for US operations, including the ports in Acajutla and La Union, but the FMLN victory left no time to expand the agreement before the transition. In April 2009 Saca instructed his Foreign Minister to finalize the renewal as soon as possible, and a five year extension was granted days before President Funes's inauguration.³

At the time, the base became one of the main campaign issues, but interestingly, both parties tried to demonstrate their commitment to renewing the agreement. The model developed in this dissertation makes us look at the benefits perceived by the opposition from supporting the base, and in this case these benefits were critical to gain the support of the FMLN and secure a safe path for the basing agreement through the Salvadoran congress. The benefits to the FMLN from supporting the base outweighed the opportunity costs, and this paved the way for a successful renewal of the base. The FMLN used its support for the base to counter accusations of radicalism, contempt for the military⁴ and links to Venezuela.⁵ At the same time, the former guerrillas argued that the relation with the United States would be protected, and the base would be a symbol of the continuation of the special relationship between San Salvador and Washington. To this date, the relation of the new FMLN government with the United States remains positive, as Funes has maintained a clear pro-US administration (González, 2011), and the base seems to continue to be accepted as a positive sign of the state of bilateral relations. Without looking at the

³Embassy CHARGE D'AFFAIRES ROBERT I. BLAU, "GOES DISCUSSES TRANSITION AND PATHWAYS WITH A/S SHANNON." US Embassy in San Salvador, Cable 09SANSALVADOR321, 2009-04-07

⁴Latin American Weekly Report, "Saca claims FMLN plans to disband military" September 18th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

⁵Latin American Weekly Report, "Funes underpins image as moderate leftist" January 8th 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

political gains perceived by the opposition in El Salvador from renewing the base, it would be difficult to understand why politicization was avoided and the base was swiftly renewed.

The historical divisions within the FMLN became even more apparent during Funes's administration (Allison and Alvarez, 2012, 54). An independent political leader invited to join the FMLN by its moderates, Funes has greatly disappointed the orthodox branch of the *Frente*, and has instead governed with the support of politicians from the traditional elite, including the followers of former president Saca.⁶ Funes's relation with the United States has been much more fluid than it was expected from a FMLN president, which has made several party members accuse Funes of serving the interests of the US and the traditional elite in the same way that traditional politicians had in the past.⁷

5.2 The Manta base in Ecuador

At the peak of FARC violent activity in Colombia in 1999, the US Southern Command Special Operations Forces stationed US troops in the Amazon jungle region of Ecuador and Peru, near the border with Colombia, in two temporary bases financed by the US Department of State. With 21 operations against the FARC in the northern border of Ecuador in one year, the Department of State sought to formalize the US presence near Colombia through a formal lease of a section of the Eloy Alfaro Airport and military base in Manta. The US already had an Advanced Observation Post for regional anti-drug Operations in that airport, and wanted authorization for ten years to station 200 US nationals including Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents, and troops from the

⁶El Mundo (El Salvador). "FMLN dice que Saca quiere imitar movimiento de Funes" February 26th 2013. Available at <http://elmundo.com.sv/fmln-dice-que-saca-quiere-imitar-movimiento-de-funes>. Accessed May 3rd 2013

⁷Radio Laprimerisima (El Salvador). "Divergencias con FMLN marcan el ao de Funes." May 25th, 2010. Available at <http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/77238/divergencias-con-fmln-marcan-el-ano-de-funes> Accessed May 3rd, 2013

coast guard and the US army.⁸

The base was opened without much political debate since, despite their fierce condemnation of the base, opposition forces in Ecuador were not able to stop the agreement either through electoral challenges or through institutional mechanisms (Bonilla, 2006, 106). Recall proposition #4 from chapter 3

When the local opposition is too weak electorally and does not count with institutional mechanisms to constrain the actions of the government, bases are possible if the host government and a foreign nation agree on them.

The negotiation to open the US Forward Operating Location in Manta, Ecuador, in 1999 followed this logic. At the time, opposition political parties did not represent an electoral threat to the government, nor they represented a threat to block the agreement in the legislature. In fact, a small committee in congress gave its support to the agreement as a “non-treaty” that did not even require congressional approval. It was not until years later, when Rafael Correa’s movement rose to power, that electoral politics would favor the opposition in Ecuador. The opposition outside of political parties, with the strong participation of indigenous movements, unions, and civil society organizations, did not count with institutional mechanisms to block the agreement, even though they expressed their fierce opposition to it. As a result, the pro-US government of Ecuador was free to open a formal US military base.

5.2.1 Ecuador’s political system and domestic opposition

Before the electoral reforms of 1994 and 1997, Ecuadorean parties grew strong as electoral incentives benefited party unity. But these reforms allowed single candidates to run, creating parties to support their one-time presidential bids, and damaging the struc-

⁸Latin American Weekly Report, “US military are engaged in containment‘ of the conflict.” August 10th 1999. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-99-31.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

ture of the party system (Pachano 2001, 9). Since then and until Rafael Correa's election and later constitutional assembly, strong political parties had not formed at the center of oppositional dynamics in Ecuador. Instead, social movements, unions, and indigenous organizations have claimed the voice of opposition to the traditional parties in the country, a voice that was articulated around the Pachakutik political movement. But with less than 6% of the national assembly in 1998 (Freidenberg and Alcantara 2001, 251), Ecuador's social opposition was not felt in the electoral landscape of Ecuador until much later, when it was partially co-opted by the Alianza Pais, Rafael Correa's party. Pachakutik gained a short lived political centrality when it supported the candidacy of Lucio Gutierrez in 2002 and received five seats in Gutierrez's cabinet (Van Cott 2005, 99). The indigenous group hopes quickly vanished as they perceived Gutierrez's shift back to the political tactics of traditional party leaders and was later ousted by a coup. The Izquierda Democratica party (ID), which sought to represent the interests of workers in Ecuador, managed to win a presidential election in 1988, and controlled almost 20% of the Ecuadorean legislature until 1998, but this party's representation greatly diminished after many of its members transferred to other parties or became independent political leaders. In 2009, ID only had two seats in the national assembly.

The key political Ecuadorean institutions have traditionally been weak, and they all but collapsed in the last twenty years (Basabe-Serrano et al. 2009). Three different constitutions have been adopted since the return to democracy in 1978. The political party system, as a result of the reforms, is "immature and partisan, characterized by deep-seated factionalism and weak party ideology [and] highly personalistic, with parties often forming around an individual's bid for the presidency."⁹ Since 1996, less than 27 percent of the legislators have achieved immediate reelection, and only about 52 percent

⁹Ecuador: Constitution and institutions. The Economist. Feb. 5th, 2007. <http://www.economist.com/node/8652735>. Accessed Feb. 9th, 2012.

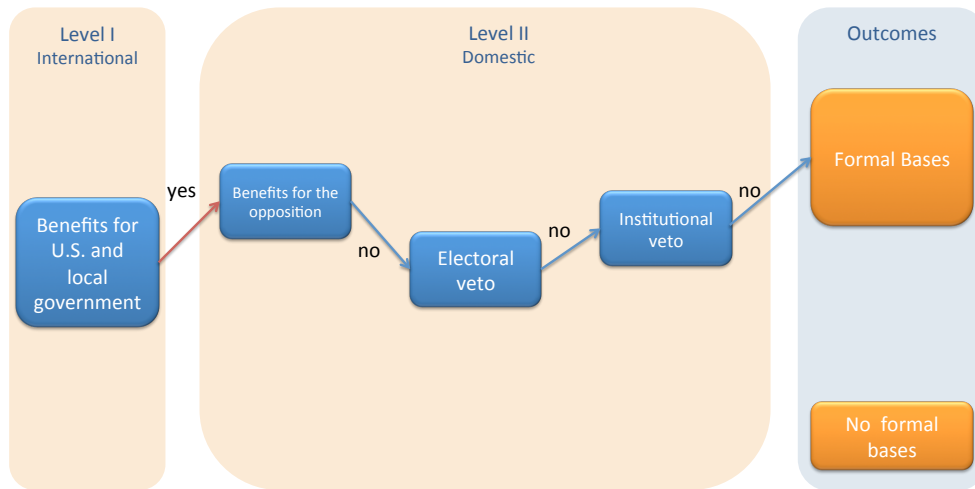
of the legislators have some prior legislative experience (Mejia Acosta et al. 2006). Before Correa, no Ecuadorean president had enjoyed a majority in Congress, and few have had their party win more than 25% of seats in Congress.

The Judiciary has traditionally been incapable of standing against the other branches of government, and it has been the victim of dismissals ordered at will by the president or Congress. Between 1999 and 2007, none of the judges of the Constitutional Court finished their constitutional terms (Basabe-Serrano 2012), while in 2008 a majority of judges from the high courts resigned to protest Constitutional Assembly's decisions regarding the judicial branch.¹⁰ The Central Bank's authority and independence were already minimal even before the dollarization of the Ecuadorean economy, as shown by how this measure was taken against the recommendations of the head of the bank. In fact, the country's economy had been informally dollarized ten years before. Only the military has kept a constant role in Ecuadorean politics, but even it fractioned in the different coups of the last twenty years.

5.2.2 The agreement of the base

The US Forward Operating Location (FOL) at Manta opened after Ecuador's President Jamil Mahuad reached an agreement with the US in November 1999 (Bustamante, 2004). The agreement formally allowed the US to operate from the Eloy Alfaro airstrip in Manta, close the border with Colombia, for ten years with the option to extend US presence afterwards. This agreement was surrounded by accusations of illegality and secrecy, but not major political challenges stood on its way. Most of the arguments from those against the decision were related to a likely loss of sovereignty caused by the US military presence. President Mahuad negotiated the agreement without consent from Congress, and instead requested permission from a small parliamentary commission to frame this agreement as

¹⁰Renuncias dejara acefala a la corte. Diario Hoy. August 26th, 2008. <http://www.explored.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/renuncias-dejaran-acefala-a-la-corte-302906-302906.html>

Figure 5.2: No domestic veto for Manta Base in 1999

a non-significant extension of previous agreements. The head of this commission formally notified Mahuad the extension of previous agreements did not need Congressional approval, but many believe this was a formal way of avoiding the constitutional obligation to put the agreement to a vote in Congress.¹¹

Figure 5.2 shows the process of base negotiations, as explained in chapter 3. Ecuador's negotiation process in 1999 did not involve major oppositional dynamics. President Mahuad dismissed claims that a base agreement with a foreign nation required congressional approval, and instead sought the legitimation of this small congressional committee where his political allies had a majority. Neither the indigenous movement nor other civil society organizations were capable of stopping the agreement, even if they expressed their opposition. Although the base did not involve any rents for Ecuador, the heavy investment on the airbase facilities represented a material benefit for the very outdated installations that

¹¹Interview with Jorge Oleas, Former Foreign Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador. Quito, August 22nd, 2011.

the Ecuadorean military used. At the same time, the base represented the continuation of Ecuador's favorable policies toward the United States, and increased Mahuad's leverage to ask for US assistance during the ongoing economic crisis. The result of the negotiations was the rapid approval of a Forward Operating Location for the United States in the Eloy Alfaro Airbase in Manta (Bonilla, 2006). The base also liberated Ecuador from patrolling its northern border with Colombia for illicit trade and the violent spillovers of the Colombian conflict (Jaskoski, 2012). According to one Ecuadorean scholar and former Foreign Vice-Minister, Ecuador became, for the short duration of the Mahuad presidency, a client state of the United States.¹²

Unlike the Howard base in Panama, the new Air Force Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) were not large US installations in foreign territories (Lindsay-Poland, 2009). These bases represented a shift of policy within the Department of Defense towards smaller operating locations, owned by the host country, that would allow flexible operations of US agents for specific operations, such as drug interdiction and surveillance. The US, however, invested heavily on these locations to upgrade their airstrips and facilities, and permanently stationed in troops and contractors.

During the 10 years of its presence in Ecuador, the base enjoyed support from the local population and political figures in Manta, including Mayor Jorge Zambrano, who saw positive economic effects in the region. The US built a highway connecting the airbase and the maritime port (also used by Ecuadoreans for civilian purposes), expanded the airport runway, and updated the fire-fighting capabilities, all of which upgraded the attached civilian airport to meet the requirements of an international airport. The next chapter analyses how the base became politicized during the years that followed and was eventually closed after a new president, Rafael Correa, managed to secure the stability of his presidency through a vociferous anti-US campaign.

¹²Interview with Jorge Oleas, Former Foreign Vice-Minister of Ecuador. Quito, August 22nd, 2011.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the three episodes where basing negotiations succeeded in opening or renewing formal bases in Latin America. In these episodes, two different mechanisms allowed the success of the basing negotiations. First, in El Salvador, the opposition gathered in the FMLN perceived political benefits from accepting a discussion about US formal bases in El Salvador, and managed to secure political gains when it was able to restrict the agreement and limit the capacity of US troops to operate from Salvadoran territory. At the time of the renewal, the FMLN's interest in securing a good relation with the United States made it easier for the late Saca presidency to renew the base without much politicization from the opposition.

In Ecuador, while the opposition did not perceive benefits from the agreement, it was not strong enough in electoral politics to represent a risk of politicization in congressional debates. The opposition from indigenous groups, unions, and civil society organizations did not grow strong enough until the early 2000s, as chapter 6 discusses, and therefore the government did not perceive a major threat from these groups at the time of negotiating the agreement. The absence of an independent judiciary blocked the possibility of seeking an institutional veto for the agreement, even though many accusations of illegality surrounded the measure.

Propositions 1 and 4 help understand how formal basing negotiations succeeded. In both cases, one could argue that the interest of the host government and the basing nation are enough to explain why the agreements succeeded, but one would be missing critical differences in both cases, which arise from domestic politics. In the case of El Salvador, the agreement was not blocked by the opposition, not because the opposition was irrelevant, but because the opposition perceived potential political gains from engaging in the discussion about the base. In Ecuador, in contrast, fierce opposition from the civil society did not

count with electoral or institutional mechanisms to block the agreement. Paying attention to domestic politics allows us to see important nuances and differences between these cases that rationalist approaches of government preferences do not.

The following two chapters explore the other side of the coin, where negotiations to open or renew formal military bases failed, and how the same mechanisms operated in different ways that restricted the possibility of more US formal bases in the region.

CHAPTER 6

FAILED BASING AGREEMENTS I: ECUADOR'S DOMESTIC TRANSFORMATION AND THE LOSS OF MANTA

A series of economic and political crises at the beginning of the twenty-first century produced a decade of extreme political instability in Ecuador. Between 1996 and 2006, no president was able to hold to power for a complete constitutional term. Popular resistance and anti-US sentiment grew in the country as the relation with Washington did not seem to benefit the Ecuadorean people during times of crisis. As the banking system and the national currency collapsed, civil society organizations, including labor unions and indigenous movements, blamed the Ecuadorean elite of siding with the United States and foreign capital instead of protecting the interests of the Ecuadorean people.

The end of the instability came with a profound change in Ecuadorean domestic politics. The head of this change, Rafael Correa, was the first politician to complete a constitutional term in Ecuador in this century, and he has repeatedly been reelected since his first victory in 2006. At the core of this change was a transformation of Ecuador's relation with the United States, characterized by the instrumental use of anti-US rhetoric

to gain the support of civil society organizations and popular vote. After US friendly governments fell like dominoes, the Correa administration mobilized the country's popular base through nationalistic speeches, displays of contestation against US interest in Ecuador and Latin America, and a series of social assistance programs through which political support was rewarded.¹

The story of the US military base in Manta, Ecuador, is at the same time a story about Ecuador's political transformation, as the base became one of the symbols of anti-US contestation in the country, and one of the targets of Rafael Correa's nationalistic campaign. The base was installed under the government of Jamil Mahuad, who was widely considered to be the symbol of an elite at the service of a corrupt banking system and foreign interests. Campaigning against the elite in Ecuador became synonym with campaigning against the US base in Manta, as well as against US control of oil production and against the negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement with Washington. As the political transformation of domestic politics consolidated, US interests in Ecuador where largely damaged. US capital in Ecuador was expropriated, the free trade negotiations collapsed, and the US military was expelled from the Manta Base at the end of the initial terms of its lease.

The base, opened in 1999 (see chapter 5), was due to be renewed or terminated in 2009. When Rafael Correa won the election in 2006, it was already clear that the existence of the base was a major issue of political debate. At the center of that debate was the Ecuadorean electorate's rejection of US dominance in the country, and the Manta base was one of the most visible signs of such dominance. Supporting the base became automatically a source of electoral losses. Rafael Correa understood this, and, despite private assurances to the United States about his commitment to the fight against drugs and his later approval of a quasi-base arrangement, he publicly denounced the existence of the base and called for its termination as soon as the lease terms expired. The termination of the base followed

¹Interview with Adrian Bonilla, Director of FLACSO Ecuador, June 14th, 2012

the logic presented in chapter 3. Recall proposition 2:

When the opposition does not perceive benefits from foreign military bases, and it is strong enough to veto foreign agreements through the threat of electorally defeating the government, the government will deny formal bases to foreign nations, even if it was in its interest to open them.

This proposition helps understand why the government of Ecuador decided not to renew the US base in Manta, even if it was willing to offer a quasi-base arrangement and allow US troops to operate—albeit informally—in the country. Correa’s anti-US positions are often used to explain the failure of the basing agreement, but they do not explain why the issue of military bases is so important for political stability in Ecuador, nor they explain why Correa would still offer military access to the US under a quasi-base arrangement. In order to overcome these limitations, I argue that one must understand the ten year period of political instability in Ecuador and how anti-US positions became sources of consolidation for the new political order advanced by Correa. This in spite of Correa’s seemingly incongruent commitment to cooperating fully with the United States in its anti-drug efforts in Ecuador.

As opposition forces in the civil society became stronger, and the traditional political parties weakened, instability reigned in the country. It took a major transformation of domestic politics, headed by the government of Rafael Correa, to restore stability after ten years of coups, massive demonstrations, and institutional collapses. The rise of Rafael Correa presented the Ecuadorean opposition with the opportunity to play a major role in electoral politics, as Correa sought to amass the support of the traditionally excluded for his presidential campaign. One of his campaign promises, which was critical to unite different fractions from Ecuador’s opposition, was its rejection of US troops in the country, under the general theme of reclaiming Ecuador’s sovereignty. As one of the most visible signs of US presence in the country, the Manta base became trapped in the domestic political

struggle of Correa and the opposition to gain power. Once in office, Correa understood that fulfilling his promise to close the Manta base was necessary to hold his political coalition together, even if in private he attempted to convince US diplomats of his commitment to cooperate with the US war on drugs. Correa finally compromised by offering access to US planes to Ecuadorean airbases and civilian airports, under an informal gas and go scheme (see chapter 8).

The case of Ecuador is significant for this dissertation as it is the only case in Latin America where the US was welcomed to install a military base, but was then expelled after a radical change in domestic politics. At the time of opening the base, the domestic opposition did not represent any form of electoral challenge to the government, as traditional parties dominated the legislative and the new political movements of the left did not appear until several years passed. Unlike the case of Colombia in 2010, the opposition in Ecuador did not count with independent and strong institutional mechanisms to block the installment of the base (see chapter 7), and thus the government was able to negotiate the basing agreement without the risk of opening a national debate that could potentially damage the government (see chapter 5).

This chapter describes the crisis of the old political elite in Ecuador, and the period of political instability that prevented new US-allied politicians to govern peacefully for ten years. The chapter focuses on how anti-US rhetoric and policies that harmed US interests in the country slowly became instruments of political stability, as a highly mobilized population demanded protection of Ecuador's sovereignty. The rise of Rafael Correa within Palacio's government, and then his own presidency represent the culmination of the process of domestic political transformation. When the traditional political parties could not maintain order in the country, a new political structure arose under the leadership of Rafael Correa.

It was a domestic political transformation, and not the result of changing US inter-

ests or its level of engagement, that opened the opportunity for Correa's pro-sovereignty campaign to succeed. A description of the series of coups and overthrows in the period from 1996 and 2006, presented later in this chapter, serves to illustrate how different governments failed to maintain power as popular resistance and opposition grew stronger. The failure of the renewal of the Manta base is explained thus in the context of Ecuador's domestic political transformation. The chapter finalizes with a discussion about how the base was finally transferred back to Ecuador, in an act used by the government to symbolize the recovery of national sovereignty. The alternative offered by Correa after the termination of the base is discussed in chapter 8.

6.1 Background

Ecuador has been the most politically unstable country in the Americas in the recent past. Nine presidents attempted to hold to power from 1996 to 2007, and among them, only Rafael Correa managed to complete a constitutional term. Not only he completed a term, but he also won reelection twice. But to achieve three solid terms in the presidency, Correa has had to restructure Ecuador's domestic politics (Pachano 2010) and its foreign relations. Since his inauguration, many relevant political actors in the country have been either co-opted into supporting the government, or neutralized through institutional changes, many of them brought by a new Constitutional Assembly, or through direct intervention.

Internal political control in Ecuador has been historically unstable. Since the start of the 20th century, the country has had 57 presidents, acting presidents, or military Juntas, less than 2 years on average for each. Almost all of the presidents in the last 20 years ended up in prison, in exile, or both. With this record of instability, it is no surprise that the main concern for Ecuadorean presidents has been their own security and the consolidation of domestic power.

Ecuador has suffered several major economic crises in the last twenty years that

have brought the country's economy to disaster. The 1980's crisis seriously deteriorated Ecuador's banking system, and the 1998-2000 crisis made it collapse completely. Unemployment, inflation, devaluation have affected Ecuador in the last economic crises, far more than its neighbors. Dollarization brought an end to high inflation, but economists believe the absence of monetary policy in Ecuador will bring further instability in the near future, and the lack of monetary autonomy will have severe consequences for Ecuador's economy.²

Ecuador's dependence on oil revenue makes governments extremely vulnerable to external price fluctuations and domestic labor strikes. Between 2005 and 2008, 49% of government revenue came from oil exports, making public spending in social programs and government investment in infrastructure depend heavily on the price of oil (Basabe-Serrano 2009). Oil sector strikes affect the country's economy heavily, increasing the leverage of the sector workers. In Ecuador's dollarized economy oil plays an even larger role, for the availability of US dollars for ordinary transactions in Ecuador depends mainly on the amount of US currency earned with oil exports (Perez 2012).

Ecuador's instability is in part the result of a highly mobilized popular resistance. Indigenous groups such as the *Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE), which is the largest indigenous organization of Ecuador, have played key roles in the protests that brought down presidents Bucaram (in 1997), Mahuad (in 2000), and Gutierrez (in 2005).³ This organization of indigenous groups had already a history of successful mobilization, including in 1990 and 1994 when major victories were achieved for the rights of native Ecuadoreans and their access land (Lee Van Cott, 2006). Other social groups also mobilize periodically in the country, and unions constantly support each other when one strikes.

²Interview with Alberto Acosta, Ecuadorean former President of the Legislative Assembly. Quito, Agosto 29th, 2011.

³Mena Erazo, Paula. 2012. Ecuador se alista para pulso entre indigenas y el gobierno. BBC Mundo, March 8th. http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/03/120307_ecuador_marcha_conaie_1f.shtml

Ecuadorean foreign relations traditionally have included two common themes at the top of the agenda: a special relation with the United States, and the containment of the spillover of the Colombian conflict into Ecuador. In terms of the Colombian conflict, Ecuador has needed to be constantly concerned about the security situation in its northern border, which lies next to some of the critical areas in Colombia where the FARC, narco-traffickers, and the armed forces battle for territorial control. At the same time, Ecuador is affected by Plan Colombia policies regarding drug eradication, such as aerial spraying of coca fields close to the border, since the use of chemicals has raised concerns in the Ecuadorean government about environmental safety and public health (Ardila, 2012). The geographical location of the Manta base in Ecuador responds to the security concerns of patrolling Ecuador's northern border and the waters between Colombia and Ecuador, and was commonly portrayed by Ecuadorean politicians as Ecuador's form of collaboration with the war on drugs over Colombian territory, and as a commitment to prevent the spillover of the Colombian conflict.

6.2 Ecuador and the United States

Ecuador has not been of critical interest for the United States, until the Manta base provided important benefits to its anti-drug campaigns in South America. But for Ecuador, the United States has been the most important partner, and protector. Ecuadorean presidents sought to establish a close relation with the US, and developed a heavy dependent association (Bonilla, 2006, 110). The heavy reliance of Ecuador on the United States made Jeanne Hey call this country "the ideally dependent state" (Hey, 1995, 27).

Like most Latin American nations, Ecuador fell deeply into debt in the 70s and 80s (Pineo, 2010, 189). Ecuador's debt at the end of the twentieth century shows the extreme dependence of the country on US capital. While a third of all export revenues was needed to repay foreign debt, 60.58% of it consisted of obligations to US private banks, with interests

rates much higher than international financial institutions (Hey, 1995, 40). When the 1982 financial crisis hit Latin America, Ecuador sought to adopt deep economic reforms, based on spending cuts that affected heavily the country's poor, instead of a debt default that would have led the country into economic collapse (Pineo, 2010, 190). Spending cuts meant less money available to attend the needs of the Ecuadorean people, accompanied by a larger portion of the state budget destined to repay international creditors (Martz, 1984, 321). The International Monetary Fund demanded deep structural adjustments to most countries in financial trouble, before any commercial bank would grant them another loan. As a result, the attention of the government's resources shifted away from domestic necessities to the priorities of international institutions.

International trade for Ecuador concentrated during this time in primary products (89% of all exports) which also depended heavily on the United States for consumption and were susceptible to significant fluctuations on the world market (Hey, 1995, 33). Oil, bananas, flowers, and shrimp made a large part of Ecuador's exports and all relied on the US importing up to two thirds of all the country's production (Pineo, 2010, 190). Funding of development projects and at times economic survival also depended on US foreign aid and assistance from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. More than a third of Ecuador's state budget derived from foreign assistance from the US government and these international agencies funded primarily by the United States (Hey, 1995, 38).

The next section presents a chronological narrative of how this situation of dependency transformed in the following ten years, and how in the process US interests in the country were severely damaged, including its military presence in Manta.

6.3 From friend to foe in ten years

In the past, Ecuadorean presidents congratulated themselves as Washington closest allies in the Americas (Hey 1995). Up to the administration of Rafael Gutierrez, every

president in Ecuador attempted to establish a relation of dependent association with the United States, characterized by generally fulfilling Washington's expectations (Kofas 2001; Leiva 2005; Pineo 2010, 199-210), even when this magnified domestic political turmoil. But since the start of this century, some of the most difficult episodes of political instability in Ecuador have followed from a decision to adhere to US expectations or those of the International Monetary Fund, without benefits flowing in from Washington.

After the impeachment of Abdala Bucaram in 1997, an even greater political crisis resulted from the financial catastrophe of 1998 and 1999, when the banking system in the country collapsed. As a condition to help Ecuador during the crisis, the International Monetary Fund demanded that Ecuador raised its revenue and cut its spending as to be able to repay its international debt. In a desperate attempt to raise funds, pro-US president Mahuad announced a 13% increase in oil prices in July 1999, which produced a nation-wide strike from transport workers and taxi drivers.⁴ The rise was part of a commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilize the Sucre and receive an aid package to deal with the economic crisis. As a result of the strike, President Mahuad declared a state of emergency, which enabled him to break the strike and force all workers to resume operations. Protests only increased after the state of emergency was declared, with teachers, health workers, and farmers joining the strike. After a week of paralyzed economic activities in the country and eight people wounded, Mahuad finally compromised and froze oil prices for the rest of the year.

The strike continued, and indigenous groups gathered in Quito to support it. Mahuad deployed troops and armored vehicles outside the presidential palace to prevent violence from the protesters, who demanded that the government suspended its foreign debt payments to deal with the domestic economic crisis. The strike ended two days after, when

⁴Latin American Weekly Report, "Mahuad at risk as Ecuadorean unrest escalates from strike to uprising." July 13th 1999. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-99-27.pdf>

transport workers accepted the oil price freeze for the rest of the year, Mahuad lifted the state of emergency, and offered financial aid to the poorest indigenous communities.

But this left Mahuad without a source of revenue to comply with IMF expectations. Mahuad had tried to impose strict economic measures to raise capital and cut spending. Though welcomed by international lenders, the measures faced a domestic opposition that made them impossible to implement. The strike and the threat of new protests in different cities halted the measures, and deepened the economic crisis. The result: Ecuador defaulted on its international debt on August 26th.

Ecuador was the first country to default on Brady Bonds,⁵ restructured commercial loans backed by the US government, which had been granted to extricate Latin American countries from the 1980s debt crisis. Ecuador quickly moved to restructure its international debt with the help of the US and a four-hundred-million-dollar loan from the IMF,⁶ and managed to convince international lenders it would pay its debts in 30 days. A month later, after the impossibility to approve the measures in Congress,⁷ Ecuador defaulted definitively on half of its debt repayments, but continued to implement economic measures dictated by the IMF as requisite for a new three-hundred-million loan.

The protests did not stop, and trade unions, opposition parties, and peasant and indigenous organizations demonstrated massively in the first days of 2000. The Sucre had dropped from 7,000 to 23,000 per dollar and nothing seemed to work to stop its fall. Mahuad declared the state of emergency again and deployed the military, with little effectiveness to control the protests. Two days later, Mahuad announced he would tie the

⁵Latin American Weekly Report, “Brady gamble ends in default.” October 5th 1999. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-99-39.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

⁶The New York Times. “Ecuador to Get I.M.F. Loan; Finance Minister to Step Down.” August 28th 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/28/business/ecuador-to-get-imf-loan-finance-minister-to-step-down.html>

⁷Latin American Weekly Report, “Now comes the hard part for Mahuad.” September 7th 1999. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-99-35.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

Sucre to the dollar, at an even lower rate, and dismissed his whole cabinet. The next day Mahuad announced the end of the Sucre, and the complete dollarization of the Ecuadorean economy.⁸ Rumors of a threat of a military coup surrounded the measure. To demonstrate their opposition to the measure, the director and top officials of the Ecuadorean central bank resigned and avoided being forced to support it. Ecuadoreans found they were required to sell their Sucres at a 25,000 per dollar rate, and start using only the US currency for all their transactions.

After the dollarization measure, indigenous groups took to the streets demanding Mahuad, the full congress, and the high courts to resign.⁹ President Mahuad ordered the military to break the protests, but the military, led by Colonel Lucio Gutierrez, sided with the indigenous demonstrators, fed them, and allowed them to occupy the Congress' facilities. The indigenous protesters declared they no longer recognized Mahuad's authority, nor the Congress's or the Supreme Court's. Instead, they declared Colonel Gutierrez as President, and marched to the vacated presidential palace, while Mahuad denounced the military operation and refused to resign. Although Brazil and the United States condemned the coup, the head of the military Carlos Mendoza confirmed Mahuad's oust, and formed a three-man council to take over, composed by him, an indigenous leader and a former Supreme Court judge. The military had been unhappy for some time after budget cuts followed the end of the conflict with Peru in 1998.¹⁰

The Junta dissolved after Mendoza received strong pressure from the United States, quited the Junta, and offered the presidency to the vice-president Gustavo Noboa with the

⁸Latin American Weekly Report, "Beleaguered Mahuad goes for broke and dollarises Ecuador's economy." January 11th 2000. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-00-02.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

⁹Latin American Weekly Report, "Beleaguered Mahuad goes for broke and dollarises Ecuador's economy." January 11th 2000. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-00-02.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

¹⁰Mahuad: Military plotted my overthrow. BBC world News. Jan. 25th, 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/609536.stm>. Accessed Feb. 8th, 2012.

support of the military. Noboa took office promising to tackle the economic debacle. He became Ecuador's sixth president in four years.

At the beginning of his mandate, Jamil Mahuad had tried to form an alliance with the Partido Social Cristiano (PSC). During his administration the coalition between his party and the PSC showed that "the power-sharing agreement was reflected by the joint appointment of the attorney general; the people's attorney, or ombudsman; the banking superintendent; and the director of the Electoral Tribunal." (Mejia Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2011 101) But the Mahuad-PSC alliance did not last for long. The PSC, unhappy with Mahuad's fiscal reforms, promoted a congressional affirmation of the coup against Mahuad, when it gathered its congressional representation in Guayaquil to accept a (non-existent) letter of resignation from Mahuad (Mejia Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2011 102). Thus the Ecuadorean Congress backed the replacement of Mahuad until the 2003 elections.¹¹

The episode should have been enough to teach Ecuadorean leaders of the perils of ignoring domestic opposition and protests while following the dictates of the United States. But for many years Mahuad's successors continued with this strategy of dependent association, and up to the presidency of Lucio Gutierrez Washington enjoyed favorable relations with Ecuador.

It soon became clear that Noboa would continue with the economic reform policies that started the unrest. His appointment became a reality after pressure from the United States and right-wing parties convinced General Mendoza to dissolve the Junta; the US had threatened to halt all aid and investment to Ecuador if power was not restored to the elected government. The indigenous movement rejected Noboa's appointment, expressed they felt betrayed by the Junta's decision, and promised to protest against the new president

¹¹El Tiempo. 2000. Respaldo del Parlamento. January 23rd. (Accessed: June 27th, 2012). <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-1275089>

if economic distress was not solved quickly. One of the main leaders of the indigenous movement, the ex-Junta member Alvaro Vargas, declared a civil war was imminent if the new president did not deliver results in three to six months.

Noboa's foreign relations started well. The US led the creation of a multi-billion dollar aid package for Ecuador through the IMF, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Andean Development Corporation. The funds were required to support the replacement of the Sucre with US dollars and to strengthen the moribund banking system. But domestic opposition continued. In March 2000 Gutierrez had to let go his Finance Minister and slow down the pace of reforms. The US fully supported the reform agenda, but the indigenous opposition grew stronger. Indigenous groups, unions and civic associations demanded a steep increase in government spending, against IMF recommendations, that included rising the minimum salary from US\$60 to US\$200.¹² Accessed April 25th, 2013 In 2001 Noboa had to stop a new plan for fuel price increases after two weeks of intense protests. He also had to revert a 2% increase on sales tax ruled as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Tribunal.¹³ After setbacks on his revenue-increase plan, the IMF was reluctant to grant a \$240 million loan, and Noboa moved to sell a large number of state-owned assets to comply with IMF criteria. The move was not enough for the IMF, which demanded deep structural reforms, and Noboa suspended negotiations three months before a new presidential election in November 2002. Despite breaking talks with the IMF, the population did not see in Noboa a president committed to Ecuador's sovereignty, and Noboa lost the election to Lucio Gutierrez. Noboa would later flee the country to avoid charges of corruption over managing the country's debt, and ended up in prison when he returned from his asylum in the Dominican Republic.

¹²Latin American Weekly Report, "Anti-dollarisation protests get under way." March 21st 2000. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-00-12.pdf>

¹³Latin American Weekly Report, "Yturalde departs, Trole II is shredded." December 19th 2000. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-00-50.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

Once again an Ecuadorean president lost power after following US expectations and ignoring the electoral threat of anti-US civil movements and indigenous groups. Apart from reductions in spending and rising taxes to comply with international lenders, Noboa passed a privatizations law following US recommendations, that infuriated the opposition.¹⁴ It would take two more short-lived presidents to side with the United States before Rafael Correa radically departed from US expectations and gathered political support from the opposition.

Lucio Gutierrez, the former coup leader, was elected president under a populist platform coupled with appeals for his Christian convictions and respect for private property. Gutierrez became a renowned figure in 2000 as head of the military, when President Mahuad ordered his troops to break up protests against the disastrous economic environment in the country. Gutierrez refused, and instead ordered the troops to feed the protesters and allow them to take over the Congressional Palace.

During his campaign, Gutierrez ranted against neo-liberal policies and became identified closely with Hugo Chavez's populism. As a presidential candidate he guaranteed that he would not privatize public companies and that taxes would decrease during his administration.¹⁵ He also strengthened the indigenous movement and forged close links to them. But all his leftist rhetoric came to an end after he took office, faced with a difficult economic scenario that made him adhere to the recommendations of the IMF. This fatal move made him lose the support from the indigenous movement and leftist parties, who attempted to overthrow him. Only Abdala Bucaram's party remained loyal to Gutierrez, avoiding a close impeachment in November 2005 against him.

¹⁴Latin American Weekly Report, "Noboa pre-empts ruling on congress." August 22nd 2000. Available at <http://latinnews.com/media/k2/pdf/historical/wr-00-33.pdf>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

¹⁵Biffi, Pablo. 2000. La dolarizacion se mantiene y la vamos a fortalecer. Clarin, November 24th. <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2002/11/24/i-03015.htm>

6.3.1 The fall of Gutierrez

Indigenous organizations, headed by Indigenous leader Luis Macas, declared on April 6th, 2005, that the main indigenous organization (CONAIE) would mobilize to support anti-government protests, demanding that President Gutierrez leave office, vacate the Supreme Court, annul the Manta base agreement, and reject pending economic reforms and a Free Trade Agreement with the US. After briefly participating in his administration, the indigenous organization split its support to it, an experience that “exacerbated intense personal, philosophical, and regional divisions within the movement” (Lee Van Cott, 2006).

At the same time, bilateral relations between Ecuador and the United States suffered a setback when Gutierrez refused to grant US personnel immunity from persecution in the International Criminal Court under Article 98 of the Rome Statute. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld argued publicly that Ecuador urgently needed US military assistance, and that resources from the US would have been far greater, had Ecuador signed Article 98.¹⁶

Lucio Gutierrez’s support in Congress vanished when his alliance with the Pachakutik Party and the MPD ended. The president turned to the PSC for support in his new market-oriented policies, while The PSC promoted the free-trade agreement with the United States and a re-shuffle of Supreme Court judges (Mejia Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2011). However, the alliance did not last for long and, in October 2004, the PSC showed its dissatisfaction with Gutierrez’s government by collecting signatures in Congress in order to

¹⁶Ecuador, as almost all countries in South America, with the exception of Colombia, rejected an Article 98 agreement with the United States. Article 98 of the Rome Statute allows members of the International Criminal Court to deny surrender citizens of countries with which they have previously agreed an exception. This agreement was sought by the United States to prevent other countries to capture US citizens in their territory for an ICC trial. During 2003, the US signed such agreements with more than 100 countries, and passed a law forbidding military assistance to any country that refused to sign them.

In a private meeting with US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, Gutierrez supported the idea of signing Article 98, but argued that it was hard to sell it to the left-leaning legislature, and unfruitfully asked for serious quid pro quo. According to the US embassy, Gutierrez was to be praised for its foreign policy, including patrolling the Colombian border and sending Ecuadorean engineers to Haiti, but had failed the US on article 98. Washington pressured Gutierrez claiming that US personnel deserved protection in Ecuador, as Ecuadorean engineers deserved legal protection in Haiti.

ask a trial against the president for embezzlement.¹⁷ The socialist deputy, Segundo Serrano, declared that the PSC initiative “sounds like blackmail because it’s obvious that this party has interests in oil, electric and communication contracts.”¹⁸ In response to this, Gutierrez sought to form new alliances and removed most of the Supreme Court’s judges.

Gutierrez ousted 27 of 31 judges of the Supreme Court in December 2004,¹⁹ including the court chief,²⁰ and started a major political crisis. The crisis reached its climax in April 2005, when the new Court dropped corruption charges against former president Abdala Bucaram, who immediately returned from his eight-year asylum in Panama. Protesters took to the streets demanding the incarceration of Bucaram and the resignation of Gutierrez. Gutierrez opted for the dismissal of the new court and declared the state of emergency in the capital after three days of continuous demonstrations. Protests did not wane, but turned more viral accusing Gutierrez of acting like a dictator; Gutierrez decided then to lift the state of emergency and ask Congress to ratify his dismissal of the Court, which Congress duly did in less than 24 hours, with the support of Bucaram’s party.

On April 20th, after two more days of protests, the military withdrew its support for Gutierrez and Congress, led by the PSC, decided to replace him with his Vice-president, Alfredo Palacio. Deputies voted unanimously in favor of Palacio, after Gutierrez’s allies refused to join the congressional session in an alternative building.²¹ Gutierrez was forced to leave the Presidential Palace on a helicopter with unknown destination, as protesters

¹⁷El Universo. 2004. PSC recoge firmas para enjuiciar al mandatario. El Universo, October 26th. (Accessed: June 29th, 2012). <http://www.eluniverso.com/2004/10/26/0001/8/BFFFD79E27CF4BC8BB769585D9D2C35E.html>

¹⁸El Universo. 2004. PSC recoge firmas para enjuiciar al mandatario. El Universo, October 26th. (Accessed: June 29th, 2012). <http://www.eluniverso.com/2004/10/26/0001/8/BFFFD79E27CF4BC8BB769585D9D2C35E.html>

¹⁹El Universal. 2004. Preocupacion en Ecuador por concentracion de poderes. El Universal, December 14th. http://www.eluniversal.com/2004/12/14/int_art_14150F.shtml

²⁰Latin American Weekly Report, “ECUADOR: New supreme court chief elbowed out,” January 18th 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

²¹Ecuador Congress sacks president. BBC World News. April 20th, 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4466697.stm>. Accessed Feb. 7th, 2012.

demanded his incarceration and the military had taken over major airports to prevent him from exiting the country.

Radio La Luna, a local radio station, broadcasted messages to the public encouraging protests in Quito and other major cities. Radio La Luna's message was critical to the mobilizations against Gutierrez, as Palacio recognized when he addressed the public for the first time as president and thanked the station for its support.

Ousted President Gutierrez sought refuge in the Brazilian embassy, where he awaited for guarantees from the new government to provide him a safe way out of the country. According to a high official in the new Palacio administration, Gutierrez could not be granted an exit, as granting him a safe conduct would further enrage the crowds, who might "burn down the [Presidential] palace."²² After several days, the government finally granted Gutierrez a safe way out of the country in complete secrecy, and he left for Brazil where he was granted political asylum.

Gutierrez later renounced to his asylum in Brazil and traveled to the US where he started to appear in the media criticizing Palacio. He eventually returned to Ecuador, where he was promptly incarcerated for these comments, and then he attempted to run in the 2006 presidential elections from prison despite the fact that his political rights had been previously taken away by the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE).²³

6.3.2 Palacio and the US

The Forajidos, as the protesters against Gutierrez came to be known in Ecuador, brought Palacio to power demanding *Que se vayan todos!* (All must go!). Such demand for change brought the necessity for Palacio to distance himself from the previous government,

²²Ecuadorean Administrative Secretary General Luis Alberto Herrera, Interview with Amb. Kristie A. Kenney. 2005-04-22. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO894

²³El Universo. 2006. Lucio Gutierrez si puede participar en las elecciones como ex presidente, argumenta su hermano. El Universo, July 17th. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2006/07/17/0001/8/2D4005D387214D16854F2115F6D3AD80.html>

lest his presidency would end in a coup, the same way it commenced. Many in the unions and indigenous organizations did not see in Palacio a real change from the previous pro-US government.²⁴

While the US considered the administration of Lucio Gutierrez as pro-American, his successor, Alfredo Palacio, was most definitely not.²⁵ During the first days of his presidency, Palacio voiced support for a good relation with the US, but his top cabinet picks instead scored much needed political points with the nationalist crowds, delivering to them an anti-Plan Colombia and anti-free trade message. Palacio tried to persuade the US embassy of his good will towards the United States, but failed. He even asked for a meeting with President George W. Bush, which the embassy denied demanding that the Ecuadorean government guaranteed better conditions for US economic and security interests. The US ambassador communicated privately that she “would be surprised if the president [Palacio] survived” until new elections, scheduled in October 2006.²⁶

Within the new government, two appointed ministers were particularly worrisome for US interests. Mauricio Gandara, Minister of Government, had a strong nationalist rhetoric and voiced specific recommendations against the US presence in the Manta base, adding the new government would not sign Article 98 either. The main concern for the United States was, however, the young Economy Minister Rafael Correa, Ph.D. in Economics and educated in the US. Correa indicated he was considering a debt moratorium (which he later denied), and intended to divert some oil income from buying back government debt towards social spending.

Gandara had a history of criticism against the US, including serious accusations that

²⁴Latin American Weekly Report, “Ecuador: Forajidos to protest against new regime” May 10th 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

²⁵Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. “EMBASSY 90-DAY GOALS, CHALLENGES UNDER PALACIO GOVT.” 2005-05-04. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO1018

²⁶Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. “WELCOME TO ECUADOR, GENERAL CRADDOCK.” 2005-06-16. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO1404

operations from the Manta base were responsible for sinking boats loaded with Ecuadorean migrants.²⁷ Along with them came Energy Minister, Fausto Cordovez, who advanced a process of expropriation of the Occidental Petroleum's \$2 billion worth assets. The US embassy reacted to this last issue by ordering its economic division to engage "early and forcefully in attempts to head off this potential disaster."

While Palacio tried to consolidate his grip to power, the indigenous movement continued to build as a major political force, and voiced more political claims. CONAIE, Ecuador's largest indigenous organization, declared its support for Palacio, but demanded holding a referendum and popular assemblies, halting talks on the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, closing the Manta airbase, and prohibiting any Ecuadorean participation in Plan Colombia.²⁸

A few days after taking office, Palacio announced that the government of Ecuador would respect the Manta base agreement, which was set to expire in 2009, but it would enforce it "to the letter" and not further, indicating that he supported the termination of the agreement.²⁹ Meanwhile, the declarations of high-ranking officials of the new government were filled with calls for national sovereignty. Palacio, Gandara, and Foreign Minister Parra wanted to reduce the presence of Ecuadorean troops in the border with Colombia, underplaying Ecuador commitment to address the spillovers of the Colombian conflict and of coca production, and even demanding that Colombia ended aerial coca eradication in Colombian territory near the border.³⁰ Of all remarks, Minister Correa's

²⁷Minister of Government Mauricio Gandara Gallegos, quoted by US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO886

²⁸Luis Macas, President of CONAIE. Interview with OAS Mission to Ecuador. Apr 29 2005. Quoted by US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO989

²⁹El Universo. 2005. Palacio confirmo que Ecuador no revisara el acuerdo de la base de Manta. El Universo, April 25th. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2005/04/25/0001/8/B7A667C0A5DE4E898F38D1703C088C3C.html>

³⁰Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "WELCOME TO ECUADOR, GENERAL CRADDOCK." 2005-06-16. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO1404

were the most problematic for the US. According to an embassy official, Correa “offered 1970s-era economic policies, replete with pay down the social debt, damn the foreign debt sloganeering.”³¹ Furthermore, Correa went ahead with his plan of restructuring oil revenues from debt reduction (which was favored by the United States and international lenders) to government expending in social programs, and lashed against the IMF.

The relation between Palacio and the military leadership was problematic. In an attempted seizure of CIESPAL, a Quito think-tank where Palacio took the oath of office, protesters endangered the life of the new President, and the armed forces were slow in rescuing Palacio, apparently due to divisions in the military over allegiance to the new or the ousted presidents. Palacio moved to replace the joint forces commander and service chiefs, but remained uncomfortable with the high command.

In July 2005, the Ecuadorean newspaper *Hoy* claimed the Venezuelan government had gained a new ally in Ecuador. The Ecuadorean government, through Minister Correa, had asked Chavez for financing \$484 million for the government’s budget, as well as covering \$700 million in Treasury Certificates soon to expire. This option, the paper claimed, was the result of failed negotiations with the Andean Foment Corporation (the development agency of the Andean Pact, known as CAF), the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank.³²

Adding to the US embassy’s worries, Palacio proposed a national constitutional assembly over congressional opposition in October 2005 in an attempt to gain more support from civil society groups, even in the face of serious opposition from political parties. Soon afterward, Palacio named Alfredo Castillo as Minister of Government, the direct link between the President and Congress and political parties. Castillo, who had a history of

³¹Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. “WELCOME TO ECUADOR, GENERAL CRADDOCK.” 2005-06-16. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO1404

³²Newspaper *HOY*, *El Hambre y la Necesidad*, July 15th, 2005. Available at <http://www.explored.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/el-hambre-y-la-necesidad-209553-209553.html> . Accessed December 29th, 2011.

radical leftist views, worried even more the US embassy. To try to calm down the already concerned US mission in Quito, Palacio sent his wife to assure the ambassador he had instructed the minister to stay out of issues that affected the US, including the Free Trade Agreement, the Oxy dispute, and the Manta base; the President himself would deal with relations with the United States.³³

Soon after taking office, Palacio faced a general strike that halted oil production in the whole country. Ecuador's economy depended heavily on oil exports, and with oil revenue being a third of the government's budget, the strike brought the Palacio administration near collapse. A deal was reached with the protesters in August 2005, involving foreign oil private companies that had to commit to invest more in the region surrounding the oil fields.³⁴

The troubles for the US in Ecuador only magnified at the start of the election year 2006. Since early February, nationalistic rhetoric formed the basis of declarations from preliminary candidates and government officials alike. Foreign Minister Carrion stated that if he were minister in 2009, when the Manta agreement was set to terminate, he would not renegotiate it. As a result, the commander of the US Southern Command, General Craddock, reminded the Ecuadorean President that the Manta base was in the interests of Ecuador as it entailed US investment of well over \$70 million and was a valuable asset in the fight against drug-traffickers. He added that "gratuitous comments by this government could damage Ecuador's future options."³⁵

Despite the concerns from the US, Ecuador did maintain a good record on its anti-narcotics fight. The Navy in particular accomplished major tasks of drug interdiction

³³Erik Hall, Interview between the Ambassador and Ecuador's first Lady. "FIRST LADY: CABINET SHAKEUP COMING SOON." 2005-12-09. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO2814

³⁴Deal ends Ecuadorean oil crisis. BBC World News. August 26th, 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4186320.stm>. Accessed Feb. 8th, 2012.

³⁵General Craddock, Interview with Minister of Defense Jarrin. 2006-02-10. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO374

and migrant rescue (stopping vessels loaded with illegal immigrants out at sea). In other positive actions, the newly appointed Minister of Defense, Marcelo Delgado, committed to advancing the security reforms initiated by his predecessor, and the Ecuadorean police collaborated with the DEA to uncover and dismantle several cocaine processing labs in the south of Ecuador.³⁶ These operations, however, highlighted the transformation of Ecuador from a transit route for drugs to a platform for production.

6.3.3 Friends no more: the Occidental expropriation and the end of the FTA

The protests against Palacio were sought to force him to strike a deal with foreign oil companies to reinvest a larger portion of their gains in their areas of operation. Palacio found himself against the ropes, when the protesters gained national recognition and he had to either side with the United States and oil corporations, or give in to the local protesters and regulate oil investments further. With the ability of protesters to destabilize three governments before, Palacio took the challenges very seriously.³⁷

Palacio timidly supported legal process to terminate a major Occidental Petroleum's contract, for alleged violations of a hydrocarbons law. If found guilty, the Oxy would be forced to terminate its operations in Ecuador and transfer its assets (estimated then in \$2 billion) to the state-owned PetroEcuador. Ecuador initiated the process shortly after Oxy won a \$75 million international arbitration against Ecuador, which made the US embassy believe Ecuador was retaliating.³⁸ The US expressed its unequivocal condemnation of this move to President Gutierrez and his key ministers, and insisted there could be serious trade implications for Ecuador, including in the negotiations of a free trade agreement and the

³⁶Ambassador Linda Jewell. "LAB BUSTS MARK ECUADOR'S MOVE FROM TRANSIT TO PRODUCTION." Nov 15 2006. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2809

³⁷Latin American Weekly Report, "Protests end in shaky deas; Palacio rating plunges" August 30th 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

³⁸Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "THE PROCURADOR STRIKES BACK AT OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM." 24 Aug 2004. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 04QUITO2327

extension of ATPDEA preferences, a series of tariff reductions for imports to the US from Andean countries in exchange for their support in the war against drugs.³⁹ According to the embassy's description in August 2004,

[Ecuador] seeks to nullify the Oxy's contract with the GOE on the basis that Oxy failed to comply with Ecuadorean law by transferring 40% of its assets to the Canadian oil company EnCana without Ministry of Energy authorization and 33 other alleged violations of the law. Under Ecuador's hydrocarbon law, if Oxy transferred its contractual rights to EnCana without Ministry of Energy authorization or is a repeat violator of the law, the contract can be terminated (*caducidad*) and the area under contract would be immediately returned to the state, with all equipment, facilities, etc. transferred to state-owned PetroEcuador, without cost. Upon the Minister of Energy's declaration of *caducidad*, the oil company will have between 30 and 60 days to resolve any alleged violations.⁴⁰

The issue became complicated with the coup and the change of government. The transition represented a major challenge for Oxy and the US embassy. Palacios's appointees would be essential in the litigation process.⁴¹ The embassy contacted many newly appointed members of the cabinet and reiterated the warning against expropriation of US firms, and its consequences for the FTA and APTDEA. The ambassador emphasized this point in a private meeting with Palacio's new Administrative Secretary General, who tried to reassure Ecuador's good intentions, but voiced concerns about the rash public statements of new Finance Minister, Rafael Correa.⁴² The President himself later committed to respecting all national and international laws regarding the Oxy expropriation,⁴³ but sent mixed signals when he told indigenous groups, who held widespread protests demanding a

³⁹ Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "THE PROCURADOR STRIKES BACK AT OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM." 24 Aug 2004. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 04QUITO2327

⁴⁰ Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "THE PROCURADOR STRIKES BACK AT OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM." 24 Aug 2004. US Embassy in Quito. Cable 04QUITO2327

⁴¹ Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "ECUADOR: FATE OF USG INTERESTS." 2005-04-21. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO882

⁴² Amb. Kristie A. Kenney. "ECUADOR: INITIAL CONTACTS WITH NEW GOVERNMENT" 2005-04-22. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO894

⁴³ Foreign Minister Antonio Parra. Interview with ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. 2005-04-26. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO934

greater share of oil revenues, that he would comply totally with the interests of his country. In June 2005, the President appointed Carlos Pareja as head of PetroEcuador, who in the post pushed hard for a ruling against the Oxy, and was later appointed back in the same post when Correa won the 2006 election.⁴⁴

While the Oxy issue complicated, Palacio's cabinet expressed opposite opinions on whether to continue with the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement. While Correa was a strong opponent, Foreign Minister Parra recognized Ecuador had no choice but to negotiate the agreement, with APTDEA preferences set to expire in 2006 and Ecuador's strong dependence on the US market. For Parra, negotiations with the European Union were not a viable option.⁴⁵ President Palacio sided with Parra, and continued to voice support for FTA negotiations until the end of his term.⁴⁶

Even if Palacio genuinely wanted a FTA, social pressure was mounting heavily against it. Palacio knew he could not ignore the peril of a coup to force him out of office, just as he had forced Gutierrez out months before. More than 2,500 workers marched in May in the city of Ambato against Palacio, asking him to review the FTA. Meanwhile, the indigenous organization Conaie mobilized and brought the north of the country to a standstill, forcing Palacio to send more than 2000 troops to contain the strike.⁴⁷ Palacio tried really hard to balance his need for popular support and the need for a good relation with the US; but when social groups from the left started to demand a new constitution, Palacio had no choice but to endorse their demands, to which the US reacted with concern. After queries from the embassy, Palacio attempted to reassure the US that the proposed constitutional

⁴⁴President Alfredo Palacio. Private meeting with indigenous communities on November 21st, 2005. Quoted by US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2455

⁴⁵Foreign Minister Antonio Parra. Interview with US ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. 2005-04-26. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO932

⁴⁶Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. "ECUADOR: TENSIONS LOWER, GOE REGROUPS." 2005-04-26. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO934

⁴⁷Latin American Weekly Report, "Ecuadorean Indians paralyse 11 provinces in protest against free-trade agreement" March 21st 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

assembly would not be empowered to rule on previous agreements with the US, specifically Manta, and that the FTA would be signed and ratified by Congress before the Assembly gathered.⁴⁸

By mid-2005, the balance had clearly shifted against US interests, as Palacio increasingly lost control over internal politics. In July 2005, responding to the pressures from regional groups and the indigenous movement, Palacio approved a new hydrocarbon law, forcing oil companies to transfer 50% of their profits to the Ecuadorean government (Pineo, 2010, 218). The New York Times called the law a unilateral breach of production contracts,⁴⁹ a position shared by the US embassy in Quito.⁵⁰ The embassy communicated to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francisco Rivadeneira, that the new law and the Oxy dispute continued to affect negatively the climate for FTA negotiations. The Vice Minister tried to convince the embassy that the government would negotiate directly with the oil companies, including Oxy, for an exit for the dispute other than expropriation, in an effort to keep the FTA alive.⁵¹ But at this point Palacio was already seeking internal support from the protesters, and he found a new ally in the Izquierda Democratica (ID) after he committed to renegotiate all oil contracts in the lines of nationalist Bolivia.⁵²

In November 2005, more than 1,000 indigenous protesters mobilized once again in a two-day march against the FTA and Oxy.⁵³ The indigenous organization CONAIE orga-

⁴⁸President Alfredo Palacio. Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. 2005-10-28. US embassy in Quito. Cable 05QUITO2463

⁴⁹Once Marginal, but Now Kings of the Oil World. The New York Times. April 26th 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/weekinreview/23mouwad.html>. Accessed Jan. 25th 2012.

⁵⁰Ambassador Linda Jewell. "VFM friendly but firm on Ecuadorean concerns." 2006-04-20. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO977

⁵¹Ambassador Linda Jewell. "VFM friendly but firm on Ecuadorean concerns." 2006-04-20. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO977

⁵²Latin American Weekly Report, "Palacio tackles oil firms Bolivian-style" September 20th 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

⁵³El Universo. 2005. Protesta indgena anti TLC frustra sesin legislativa. El Universo, november 18th. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2005/11/18/0001/8/47AB60D1384B4567BF7FA7C0F9384C1D.html>

nized the protests, and demanded a constitutional assembly to gather as soon as possible. President Palacio received the protesters on November 17th to assure them he supported the popular assembly, claimed he was taking action against Oxy, and assured he would not sign an FTA that would harm Ecuador's interests. Other groups, such as the umbrella organization Ecuador Decide, stated they would mobilize massively if the FTA passed without putting it to a referendum. The embassy understood then they would face major social convulsion if the FTA was signed.

Peru and Colombia successfully ended FTA negotiations with the US in February 2006, while the US and Palacio pushed to conclude the moribund deal with Ecuador. Palacio even sought to meet with President Bush to speed up the last round of negotiations before social pressure was unbearable.⁵⁴ The ruling against Oxy came in May 2006, however, and sent the FTA forever to the grave. The Minister of Energy announced that Occidental Petroleum had been found guilty of an illegal sale of its stock, for which it would have to transfer all its assets to the Ecuadorean government. Oxy had recently offered US\$ 20 million and an increased share of its profits to Ecuador to settle outside court, but the Palacio government moved on with the expropriation of all its oil fields and production machinery.⁵⁵ The expropriation of the Oxy assets relieved Palacio from domestic pressure, but meant the first strong action against US interests in the country, and thus damaged the bilateral relation in ways that mere anti-US rhetoric had not done before.⁵⁶

The US expressed major disappointment at Ecuador and immediately terminated trade negotiations. In a private communication, the embassy summarized the bitter taste left among US officials:

⁵⁴Ambassador Linda Jewell. "SCENESETTER FOR FM CARRION VISIT." 2006-03-10. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO598

⁵⁵Ecuador cancels oil contract with Occidental Petroleum. Forbes.com. May 15th 2006. <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2006/05/15/afx2748253.html>. Accessed Jan. 25th 2012.

⁵⁶Latin American Weekly Report, "Oxy contract voided, FTA talks suspended" May 23rd 2006. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

The [Ecuadorean government's] decision to implement a hydrocarbons reform law we believe violates our bilateral investment treaty, and then in a separate action expropriate Occidental Petroleum holdings in Ecuador, compelled [the US trade representative] to suspend FTA talks with Ecuador.⁵⁷

A month later, the ambassador met with Rafael Correa, who had quit as Finance Minister after the President rejected his attempts to deepen Ecuador's relations with Venezuela, and was now a presidential candidate. The meeting was cordial, but heated up as Correa claimed the Occidental expropriation had been a result of the Oxy's violation of the Ecuadorean law. The ambassador had suggested the FTA and the extension of the ATPDEA trade preferences would be severely affected by this dispute. In a sign of private support for the Manta base, Correa claimed ATPDEA should not be affected, since those benefits were Washington's quid pro quo for Ecuador's support for Plan Colombia and its commitment to the fight against narco-trafficking as symbolized by the base.⁵⁸

The new hydrocarbons law and the Oxy expropriation compelled the US trade representative to suspend FTA talks with Ecuador, just as Peru and Colombia were successfully concluding theirs. The benefits from the Andean Trade Preference Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) were to expire in December 2006, and the US did not plan to renew them for Ecuador. These benefits, the US argued, were temporary until the conclusion of free trade negotiations.⁵⁹

As seen in this section, although the United States attempted to help Ecuador through large loan packages, the US was not capable of providing Ecuador the help it needed without forcing it to undertake mayor economic reforms that curtailed government spending and affected most severely the poor and the indigenous groups. Starred

⁵⁷US Embassy CDA Jefferson Brown, "WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK." 2006-08-02. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1910

⁵⁸Rafael Correa. Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-06-07. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1394

⁵⁹US Embassy CDA Jefferson Brown, "WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK." 2006-08-02. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1910

by these groups, protests in Ecuador between 1996 and 2006 grew stronger every time the Ecuadorean government had to adjust its budget to comply with US or IMF expectations, and in two occasions these protests ended removing the president from office.

The common response from every Ecuadorean president was to make mild concessions to the protesters. But Palacio's concessions to the protesters were for the first time serious setbacks for the United States in Ecuador and signposts of Ecuador's transition to a country that contests US interests in the region. These included the expropriation of the Occidental Petroleum assets, the rejection to sign Article 98, and the close relation between Minister Correa and Hugo Chavez. At the same time, the negotiation for a free trade agreement failed, and anti-Manta rhetoric started to appear as a political commonplace.

As a consequence of Ecuador's political instability, every president has first attempted to consolidate his grip to power and his personal security. Every strike, economic crisis, or bold political move could have potentially escalated to a coup and forced the president to exile or incarceration. Rafael Correa seems to be the first politician to understand this, while every president before him had to learn the lesson the hard way, once they were in office. During the campaign, Correa was unequivocal about his support for the indigenous movement, his promise to nationalize Ecuador's oil revenues, his nationalistic rhetoric, and his closeness to Hugo Chavez.

6.3.4 The rise of Correa

Rafael Correa resigned as Finance Minister amidst a confrontation with President Palacio over Correa's decision to deepen Ecuador's relations with Venezuela. In a recent trip to Caracas, Correa had sought to offer \$300 million in bonds to Venezuela, with the intention of reducing Ecuador's dependency on multilateral debt.⁶⁰ Palacio strongly

⁶⁰Rafael Correa renuncio al ministerio de Economia. El Universo. Aug. 5, 2005. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2005/08/05/0001/9/A99FF2FCCCAE4D70BE0A1E92B2AC69D1.html>. Accessed Jan. 25th, 2012.

rejected the plan and claimed publicly he was unaware of Correa's dealings with Hugo Chavez. The former minister argued that he was forced to leave office because of foreign orders that were against any kind of proximity and joint operations between Ecuador and Venezuela.⁶¹ Correa's resignation was not welcomed by the CONAIE which exhorted to new mobilizations and protests against Palacio's government.

In a private conversation with US officials, ousted President Gutierrez anticipated that the strongly anti-American Economy Minister Rafael Correa intended to run for president in 2006 on a populist platform that would "target American interests." Gutierrez said that anti-American sentiment had increased in Ecuador in recent years and argued that the US should "massively" increase public affairs efforts.⁶²

The US embassy in Quito was concerned about the nationalist sentiment surrounding the coming elections. At that time, the embassy considered that the tension with Colombia, the FTA negotiation, the Oxy commercial dispute, and US presence in Manta "are all fodder for nationalist and populist flag-waving, and unlikely to produce reasoned debate."⁶³

In a clear anti-US campaign, Correa presented a nationalist message and visited Venezuela and Cuba in early 2006. The US ambassador looked at the coming elections with pessimism: "Correa raises the greatest concern as a stalking-horse for Chavez, but none of the others would have much chance of lasting their mandate,"⁶⁴ she commented in early 2006; she later argued "only Correa represents a serious worry to [US government] interests, given his ideological commitment to a Chavez-like agenda."⁶⁵ In another communication

⁶¹Clarín. 2005. Protestas en Ecuador por la caída del Ministro de Economía. Clarín, August 6th. <http://old.clarin.com/diario/2005/08/06/elmundo/i-04701.htm>

⁶²Quoted by Ambassador William B. Wood. "FORMER PRESIDENT GUTIERREZ TO RETURN TO ECUADOR, PREPARED TO FACE JAIL, WANTS TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT." 2005-10-07. US embassy in Bogotá. Cable 05BOGOTA9595

⁶³Ambassador Linda Jewell. "WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK." 2006-02-10. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO374

⁶⁴Ambassador Linda Jewell. "ECUADOR ELECTIONS, NINE MONTHS OUT." Feb 14 2006. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO407

⁶⁵Ambassador Linda Jewell. "WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK." 2006-02-10. US em-

with Washington, she called Correa “a dark horse presidential contender who, if elected, could dramatically affect [US government] interests”⁶⁶

Correa resigned as Economy and Finance Minister in August 2005, and launched his Presidency campaign in the first weeks of 2006. The name of his party, Alianza PAIS, is an acronym for Proud and Sovereign Fatherland. The flagship of the party’s campaign was its defense of a broad concept of sovereignty, used to mobilize the general sentiment of shame held by a majority of Ecuadoreans who believed national sovereignty had been lost to the US. The visible open wounds of that loss were, for many, the Manta base and the dollarized economy.⁶⁷ The appeal for a sovereign Ecuador was the cornerstone of Correa’s plan to unify the divergent leftist political groups, from the social democrats to the Communist Party. Correa started the campaign as fourth in election polls, with just over 7% of the voters supporting him.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, his support swiftly grew, especially among the anti-system, anti-US, leftist voters. Correa won the support of the Socialist Party in June 2006, and also courted the main indigenous organizations.⁶⁹

Despite attempts to form an alliance with Correa, the indigenous presidential candidate Luis Macas ran alone in the first round, and won a little more than 2% of the total votes. Macas endorsed Correa for the second round. CONAIE and Pachakutik, the leading indigenous organizations, made clear their electoral preferences around rejection of an FTA with the United States and nationalization of Occidental Petroleum holdings in Ecuador.

Correa attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade the US that his campaign was not set

bassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO374

⁶⁶Rafael Correa. Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-06-07. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1394

⁶⁷Interview with Jorge Oleas, Former Foreign Vice-Minister of Ecuador. Quito, August 22nd, 2011.

⁶⁸El Universo. 2006. Intencin de voto la lideran Roldos, Noboa, Viteri y Correa. El Universo, May 29 th. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2006/05/29/0001/8/25FC41D7227D47D893EA5633CC51F325.html>

⁶⁹Rafael Correa. Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-06-07. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1394

against US interests. He blamed the media for such reputation, and in many occasions referred positively to his education in the US, where he earned a Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Illinois. With these and other displays of appreciation for the US, Correa told the ambassador he wished to maintain an open and cordial dialog with the US, while he tried to downplay his search for financial support from Chavez as one of his last actions as Finance Minister.⁷⁰

The US did not believe Correa's good intentions. For the embassy, it was clear that Correa would not renegotiate the Manta agreement, due to expire in 2009, and he would not sign a Free Trade Agreement. Correa hoped to join the South American trend toward the political left and associate himself with some of its exponents. In particular, Correa called for energy integration with Venezuela and the region, land reform, and redistribution of petroleum profits and strengthening the state owned PetroEcuador, and refused international arbitration.⁷¹

All of these campaign proposals affected US interests in Ecuador. He specifically refused to pay back international debts if their service was larger than what the budget disbursed for social programs or national defense.⁷² On Ecuador-Colombia relations, Correa affirmed that the FARC were not terrorists, but guerrilla fighters,⁷³ which spurred critical reactions from Colombia and the US. He later tried to divert the attention to his remarks in a private meeting with the US ambassador; he confessed to her "I'm just a middle class guy. If I call the FARC terrorists and lose the election, who is going to protect

⁷⁰Rafael Correa. Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-06-07. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1394

⁷¹US embassy in Quito. "ELECTIONS UPDATE: CANDIDATE POSITION PROFILE." Jul 31 2006. Cable 06QUITO1867

⁷²US embassy in Quito. "ELECTIONS UPDATE: CANDIDATE POSITION PROFILE." Jul 31 2006. Cable 06QUITO1867

⁷³Ecuador: encuesta da 40% a Correa. La Republica (Peru). 06 October 2006. <http://www.larepublica.pe/node/61654/comentario/comentario>. Accessed 01/22/2012

me and my family?”⁷⁴

Correa constantly referred to sovereignty and national autonomy in his political discourse. He said he would not tolerate any foreign soldiers on Ecuadorean soil, although he would allow the Manta agreement to run its course until 2009.⁷⁵ About Manta, Correa said: “they would have to cut off my hand before I would renew this contract...enough already with this carrot and stick policy...Not one more foreign soldier in our country.”⁷⁶ He later joked he would gladly re-new the agreement if the US allowed Ecuador to open a military base in Miami.⁷⁷ About the FTA, he promised to send it “to the trashcan of history, where it belongs.”⁷⁸ Other candidates felt the need to copy Correa in its sovereign discourse, even if they wanted to stay close to the US. Candidate Roldos, for example, claimed he would only re-new the base agreement if the US did not end the trade preferences of ATPDEA, which he presented ad US quid pro quo for Ecuador’s fight against narcotics.⁷⁹

Correa only appeared as a realistic option in August 2006, when the election campaign officially started. He disputed the second place in most polls, with Leon Roldos as the front-runner.⁸⁰ Political disenchantment with the traditional political class had recently favored outsider and unlikely candidates, and Correa gained this perception as

⁷⁴Rafael Correa, Interview with Ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-10-27. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2617

⁷⁵US embassy in Quito. “ELECTIONS UPDATE: CANDIDATE POSITION PROFILE.” Jul 31 2006. Cable 06QUITO1867

⁷⁶US Embassy CDA Jefferson Brown, “WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK.” 2006-08-02. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1910

⁷⁷Reuters. “Ecuador wants military base in Miami.” Oct 22, 2007. Available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2007/10/22/ecuador-base-idUKADD25267520071022>

⁷⁸Ambassador Linda Jewell. “ECUADOR ELECTION: WHAT’S AT STAKE.” 2006-08-28. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2150

⁷⁹US Embassy CDA Jefferson Brown, “WELCOME BACK, GENERAL CRADDOCK.” 2006-08-02. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO1910

⁸⁰El Universo. 2006. Correa desplaza a Viteri en el Segundo lugar de las encuestas. El universo, september 14th. <http://www.eluniverso.com/2006/09/14/0001/8/E808ADF017564AD7BE4B0E8677FCCE82.html>

a “change” candidate in the 2006 election and rose in the polls from less than 10% to a possible first-round win a week before the election on October 15.⁸¹ By September, Correa had gained both popular support and much needed funds. The news director of a top TV station told the US embassy that Correa had booked a week of prime time for a new 15-minute biographic spot.⁸² By the end of September Correa had risen to the lead in all polls with 26% support, 6% more than Roldos, results kept private as election laws prohibited their release this close to the election day. Correa even claimed he would win in the first round and started naming some prospective cabinet members. To win in the first round, a candidate had to obtain more than 50% of the valid votes, or 40% with a 10% difference with the runner-up.

He did not. Correa lost the first round to Alvaro Noboa, then third in the polls, and both advanced to the second round. The campaign for the second round was more moderate. Correa met publicly with the US ambassador days after the first round, and in her presence even joked to the press: “look at the communist/terrorist, meeting with the American Ambassador.”⁸³ Correa told the ambassador he wanted to create a “huge” middle class in Ecuador, and declared himself pro-trade, but claimed Ecuador was not ready for free trade with the US. He also strongly signaled his commitment to collaborate with the fight against drug trafficking.⁸⁴

Correa lagged behind Noboa in the new polls by 15-20%, before President Chavez signaled his open support for Correa on November 7th, and accused Noboa of exploiting child labor in his plantations and of fraud in the first election round, and said Latin America

⁸¹Ambassador Linda Jewell. “ECUADOR ELECTION: WHAT’S AT STAKE.” 2006-08-28. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2150

⁸²Ambassador Linda Jewell. “ELECTION UPDATE: CORREA MOVES INTO SECOND PLACE.” 2006-09-15. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2309

⁸³Rafael Correa, Interview with Ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-10-27. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2617

⁸⁴Rafael Correa, Interview with Ambassador Linda Jewell. 2006-10-27. US embassy in Quito. Cable 06QUITO2617

would soon be rid of right wing extremists like him.⁸⁵ Correa rose in all the polls to a tie with Noboa at 39% following a strategy of blurring the differences between both campaigns, tuning down the aggressive anti-US rhetoric, and concentrating on populist promises to the poor. Correa won the election 57-43%.⁸⁶ Presidents from all corners of the Hemisphere recognized the results and congratulated Correa, including George W. Bush and Alvaro Uribe.

6.3.5 Correa the President

As president-elect, Correa toured South America seeking oil-refining and infrastructure projects, support for an ATPDEA extension, trade, and debt support. In Venezuela, Correa sought assistance for refining Ecuadorean crude. In Brazil, Correa and president Lula discussed the creation of a corridor between the port of Manta in Ecuador to the city of Manaus in Brazil, and suggested the Brazilian Development Bank would fund the massive project. In Bolivia, Correa joined the South American Summit in Cochabamba, where he proposed to jointly lobby the US seeking a permanent extension of the trade preferences of ATPDEA. In Peru, as in Brazil and Venezuela, he sought an agreement to refine Ecuadorean oil. In Argentina, Correa sought the advice of President Nestor Kirchner on how to handle external debt, suggesting Ecuador should receive a discount of up to 75%, similar to Argentina's discount after default. In Chile he proposed a Free Trade Agreement.⁸⁷ In Colombia he asked for a permanent suspension of aerial fumigation of coca crops along the border, a situation that had led to the withdrawal of the Ecuadorean ambassador in Bogota. President Uribe, however, had already decided to resume fumiga-

⁸⁵Hugo Chavez acusa a Noboa de agredirlo primero. Ecuador Inmediato, Nov. 8th 2006. http://www.ecuadorinmediato.com/Noticias/news_user_view/ecuadorinmediato_noticias--43650 Accessed Jan. 24th 2012

⁸⁶BBC News. Correa wins Ecuadors election. BBC News, November 28. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6193496.stm>

⁸⁷Ambassador Linda Jewell, "ENERGY INTEGRATION, AERIAL SPRAYING AND DEBT ON CORREA'S SOUTH AMERICA AGENDA." 2006-12-19. US embassy in Bogota. Cable 06QUITO3062

tions, as he expressed concern about the surge in new coca plantations in the border after a temporary suspension of fumigations in the last months of 2006.⁸⁸

Correa's inauguration kicked off with an indigenous ritual, accompanied by Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales. The three Presidents praised socialism and argued it would spread throughout Latin America. Correa declared Ecuador was joining the XXI century socialism, a term coined by Hugo Chavez, and immediately was invited to join the Venezuela-led ALBA.⁸⁹

As Correa and his friends celebrated, the US embassy prepared for the worst. Already in a crisis mode, the embassy issued a list of markers of President Correa's actions to be taken with especial attention, and redlines which would not be tolerated by the US. Redlines included premature termination of the Manta agreement, defaults on bilateral, multilateral, or commercial debt, forcing the Citibank out of Ecuador, military actions against Colombian troops, dissolution of the Supreme Court, or appointment of unacceptable Attorney General, Comptroller General, or Solicitor General.⁹⁰

6.4 The termination of the Manta Base

When speaking in public, Correa was unequivocal about his intention to not renegotiate the Manta Base agreement after its expiration in 2009. The only chance the US had to pressure Correa came from the expiration of APTDEA trade benefits, which Correa linked to counter narcotics cooperation in Ecuador. During the 2006 campaign, US presence in Manta became a highly politicized issue; while most Ecuadoreans were unaware of the specific operations carried there or the material benefits for the local community, the

⁸⁸President Alvaro Uribe, Interview with Ambassador William B. Wood. Dec 01 2006. US embassy in Bogota. Cable 06BOGOTA10960

⁸⁹Correa asume la presidencia de Ecuador con promesas de cambio. *adnmundo.com*. Jan. 15th, 2007. <http://www.analitica.com/va/sintesis/internacionales/9862500.asp>. Accessed Jan. 25 2012.

⁹⁰US embassy in Quito. "WAY FORWARD WITH THE CORREA GOVERNMENT." 11 Dec 2006. Cable 06QUITO2991

rejection of US troops in Ecuadorean soil was a common source of nationalistic rhetoric.⁹¹

With support from the Ecuadorean government, the International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases (INAFMB) held a conference in Quito in March 2007. At this point the closure of the Manta Base had become a battleship of Correa's administration, and it served well the purpose of appeasing the indigenous movement and left-wing politicians. The conference included a march to the Manta base with large media coverage. The United States deployed a crisis plan to counter the effects of the conference on the public perception about US military presence in Manta, aiming to convince Ecuadoreans it was a cooperative security location (CSL) owned by Ecuador, and that it benefited Ecuador in its fight against drugs as well as the local community in Manta.⁹² Bases this style were named CSLs in a US public relations effort to emphasize the local government's ownership and the cooperative nature of military operations.

Despite the efforts to continue military cooperation through other means, especially in anti-drug cooperation,⁹³ the US-Ecuador relation suffered a major setback in March 2008, when the Colombian Air Force entered Ecuadorean territory without authorization, in an attack to a FARC camp near the border, where the second-in-command of the Colombian guerrillas was killed. Rumors immediately spread that US planes had aided the attack from the Manta base, with Venezuela's president and Correa allies in Ecuador publicly claiming US involvement. The US did not condemn the attack, but denied accusations of its participation from Manta. Despite the US claims, the Ecuadorean government created, one year later, the Commission of Transparency and Truth to specifically study this issue. The foreign relations minister, Fander Falconi, asserted the necessity to analyze and see

⁹¹US embassy in Quito. "WAY FORWARD WITH THE CORREA GOVERNMENT." 11 Dec 2006. Cable 06QUITO2991

⁹²Ambassador Linda Jewell. "International Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases to Be Held in Ecuador, March 5-9." Feb 23 2007. US embassy in Quito. Cable 07QUITO420

⁹³Latin American Weekly Report, "No to Manta but not to military cooperation" May 17th 2007. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

the degree of responsibility that the Manta base might have had during the attack.⁹⁴ Many in Ecuador still believe the US had to at least have given geographic information to the Colombian military, including the location of the FARC camp.⁹⁵ The US ambassador met with Correa and assured the US had no involvement in the operation and accepted Correa's denial of his presumed ties with the FARC. In the same meeting, despite his anger at the US, Correa expressed his will to continue to cooperate with the US in security issues.⁹⁶

In April 2008 the recently installed Constitutional Assembly put an end to the possibility of foreign troops in Ecuador, ruling out definitively the chances of renewal of the Manta agreement.⁹⁷ A few weeks later, while the US still had hopes for a change of mind and continued to run its communications campaign in favor of a renewal, Ecuador denied for the first time berthing facilities for a US warship in the port of Manta.⁹⁸ On July 29th 2008, the US embassy finally received an official note indicating Ecuador's final decision not to renew the Manta agreement, minutes after a press conference had announced publicly the end of the agreement in the pre-arranged date of November 2009. The base was handed over to the Ecuadorean authorities on September 18th 2009. While the US decided not to carry any public events, the Ecuadorean government made a big display of the base transfer. Three cabinet Ministers claimed in a ceremony widely covered by the media that Ecuador had recaptured its sovereignty from the US. Foreign Minister Falconi said the base had been part of a strategy of military control, which Latin America de-

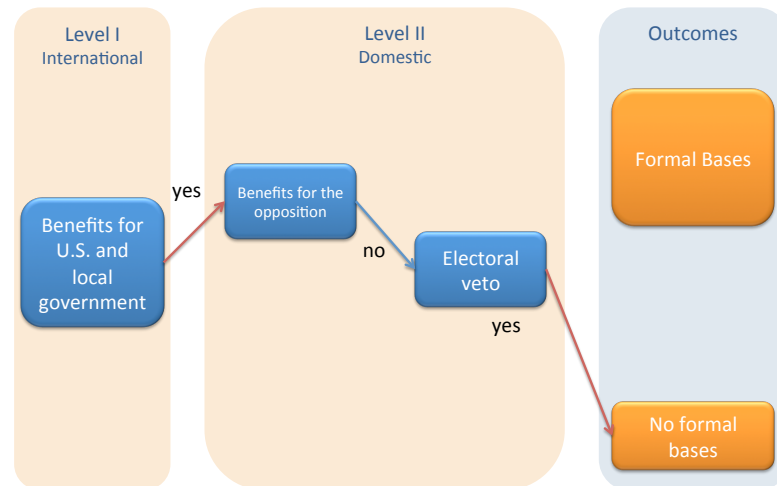
⁹⁴EFE. Ecuador pide analizar responsabilidad de Manta en bombardeo contra las FARC. *El Espectador*, December 11th. <http://www.elespectador.com/articulo176911-ecuador-pide-analizar-responsabilidad-de-manta-bombardeo-contra-farc>

⁹⁵Interview with Ecuadorean former cabinet member (name is undisclosed as petitioned). Quito, August 2011.

⁹⁶Rafael Correa, Interview with ambassador Linda Jewell. Mar 12 2008. US embassy in Quito. Cable 08QUITO247

⁹⁷Ecuador plans foreign bases ban. *BBC World News*. April 2nd, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7326797.stm>. Accessed Feb. 8th, 2012.

⁹⁸Latin American Weekly Report, "Washington hopes for reprieve on Manta base" June 8th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

Figure 6.1: Electoral politics and the cancellation of the Manta Base agreement

cided to stand against. He also accused the government of Jamil Mahuad for surrendering Ecuador's sovereignty and suggested the installment of the base had been illegal since it did not receive Congressional approval.⁹⁹ In a parallel setback to the United States, Ecuador chose to default on its international debt, this time without economic pressures or previous signals, ignoring the consequences for US private lenders.¹⁰⁰ Correa chose the last days of his 2009 campaign to reveal his plans for debt restructuring, with the clear intention of exploiting the "full vote-winning potential of his act of defiance."¹⁰¹

As figure 6.1 illustrates, the process for renewing the base after Correa's electoral victory was destined to fail, given the large organizational capabilities of the forces opposing

⁹⁹Ambassador Heather M. Hodges, "FOL Turnover Complete, but National Assembly Continues to Irritate." Sep 19 2009. US embassy in Quito. Cable 09QUITO829

¹⁰⁰Latin American Weekly Report, "Correa leads Ecuador into a political default on its debt" December 18th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

¹⁰¹Latin American Weekly Report, "Debt restructuring serves electoral purpose" April 2nd 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

the base. Correa's promise to close down the base buttressed his electoral campaign, and failing to fulfill it would have created a schism with the anti-US organizations that supported the president. Despite Correa's private assurances of seeking to fulfill the United States's expectations in Ecuador's anti-drug efforts, the electoral challenges of supporting the base were too great for him to change his mind. In fact, the rejection of the base was critical for his election platform. The result was the termination of the base agreement, where the United States lost the installations in Manta after a \$75 million investment, and lost surveillance capabilities in the Andean region.

The installations of the base were then assigned to an infrastructure project, connecting Manaus in Brazil with the port of Manta. To date, the project has not materialized, and the base is used for military needs, such as hosting Brazilian-made Super Tucano planes, but it is used far under the capacity the United States developed in it.¹⁰²

6.5 Conclusion

The analysis of domestic politics and institutions in Ecuador helps understand how the Manta base, a formal US Cooperative Security Location, was not renewed in 2009. Even when the United States sought to maintain the base, the consolidation of the domestic opposition and its anti-US platform, led to the impossibility of its renewal. Ecuador's transformation, in the context of major political instability, led to the victory of Rafael Correa and his political coalition from Ecuador's opposition parties and civil movements. As he led the opposition into gaining power, President Correa used the termination of the base as an electoral promise that was instrumental to unite different factions of Ecuador's opposition. But in private, Correa was very committed to cooperating closely with the US anti-drug interests in Ecuador, and was willing to offer alternatives to the United States after closing the base. Instead of radical contesting US interests in Ecuador, Correa had

¹⁰²Interview with Jorge Oleas, Former Foreign Vice-Minister of Ecuador. Quito, August 22nd, 2011.

to balance the need for demonstrating an anti-US actions to hold his political coalition together, and his more private commitment to cooperating with the United States in key areas. A quasi-base arrangement, discussed in section 8.3 was finally reached as a compromise.

The model developed in this dissertation allows us to understand how a domestic political transformation in Ecuador led to the closure of the US formal military base in Manta. A series of failed governments demonstrated that supporting economic reforms and seeking to maintain a close relationship with the United States was not a good political strategy for stability in Ecuador. Instead, domestic political stability was achieved through a transformation of domestic politics and a clear stance against the interests of the United States. Apart from a redistribution of economic gains in the country, by delivering real setbacks to US interests, Rafael Correa was able to consolidate support from factions in the left, indigenous groups, and social movements, that identified an idea of national sovereignty within their political platforms. And even when those groups took distance from the government, the Correa administration understood that a nationalist and anti-US rhetoric was critical to maintain the very foundation of the newly acquired political stability in Ecuador. Instead of relying on appreciations about Correa's preferences, the model of this dissertation makes us look at the domestic opposition and the failures of previous domestic political arrangements, and allows us to understand why expelling the United States from the base was so important for the consolidation of Ecuador's domestic political transformation.

Correa's electoral victory showed for the first time the possibility of a candidate to win and maintain its hold to power while showing distance to Washington. Since Correa's inauguration, important setbacks have characterized US-Ecuadorean relations. Correa expelled the US ambassador, terminated the Manta agreement, joined the Chavez's led ALBA, accused the OAS of colonialism under control of the United States, and rejected

the long-established US values in the inter-American system, even supporting a reform of the OAS human rights system that will weaken its capabilities to monitor attacks on the local press. With 20% of the country's oil output nationalized after the expulsion of the OXY, the new Correa administration received a major source of income to support social spending, and even if it damaged relations with the US, domestic political stability strengthened.¹⁰³ The support from nationalist and left-wing parties was critical for Correa to approve his new constitution,¹⁰⁴ which apart from prohibiting foreign bases in Ecuador granted great autonomy for the presidency over congress and weakened all traditional, and pro-US, political parties.¹⁰⁵ In the following months, Correa often escalated his anti-US rhetoric and used the US as an scapegoat when domestic political support decreased.¹⁰⁶

But even if Correa has adopted anti-US positions in many areas, his private commitment to cooperating with the United States in the fight against drugs is recognized and widely praised in Washington.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, some may suggest that the continuing participation of Ecuador in US anti-drug efforts is sufficient to explain why the US gave up on a formal base. Once the base became too problematic, the argument goes, the United States simply changed its preferences and let go of the base, knowing the Ecuador would still cooperate with its security interests.

This argument is insufficient for several reasons. First, it tells us that the United States changed its preferences once the base became too problematic, but it does not tell us

¹⁰³Latin American Weekly Report, "Gutierrez barred, anti-Oxy protests mount" May 16th 2005. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

¹⁰⁴Latin American Weekly Report, "Left forges bloc to strengthen Correa's hand" September 27th 2007. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

¹⁰⁵Latin American Weekly Report, "Correa succeeds in demolishing traditional parties" October 18th 2007. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

¹⁰⁶Latin American Weekly Report, "Correa uses US as scapegoat" February 19th 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

¹⁰⁷Interview with Fulton Armstrong, former Foreign Relations Committee's western hemisphere specialist and former adviser to President Clinton. Washington DC, October 26th, 2012.

why it became so. The model constructed in this dissertation helps us understand how the Manta base in Ecuador became trapped in a politicized environment at a time of a deep domestic political transformation in that country, and thus became too problematic. The model directs our attention away from pure international interactions and preferences, and instead points towards the specific mechanisms that led to the consolidation of the Correa government after a decade of domestic political instability. The Manta base became a major target of Correa's pro-sovereignty campaign, and his own stability in power came to depend on showing commitment to reducing US dominance in the country.

Arguments that rely only on state preferences do not capture the conditions that made it too costly for the United States to maintain the base. Even though one might find evidence of a change in preferences at the time of the base closure, this model helps us understand under which domestic conditions preferences were ultimately driven to change. Therefore, this dissertation provides a broader explanation of the loss of the Manta base that fills a gap in the literature about US-Latin American relations and the domestic sources of US decline in the region. While it is commonly understood that it is more difficult for the United States to maintain its dominance in Latin America, this dissertation provides evidence of how the domestic conditions in Ecuador made it in fact more costly for the United States to maintain its military presence in the country.

Furthermore, an argument that focuses only on US preferences forgets that the United States did not give up on the base until the Correa administration notified Washington of his intention to terminate the agreement. Up to this point, US officials in Ecuador developed a media and public relations campaign to try to persuade the administration to maintain the base. The losses from the Manta eviction included more than US\$70 million invested in facilities, improving the air base's runway, updating airport services to meet international standards. But apart from the installations built or improved by the United States, the biggest loss was the permanent, formal, forward operating location in Ecuador.

With this loss, the United States was no longer authorized to maintain a permanent force in the country, and operate its own communication equipment, radars, planes, and other important components of the US fight against drugs and its geopolitical dominance in the region.

With the alternative arrangement achieved after the loss of the formal base (see chapter 8), the United States was still allowed to land and refuel planes in Ecuador, but the operational capacity of a permanent leased base was lost for good. Furthermore, with the failure of the Colombian basing agreement (see chapter 7), these capabilities could never be fully replaced in the region.

In sum, the closure of the Manta base is one consequence of Ecuador's domestic political transition. The Manta base was opened when Ecuador favored a strategy of dependent association with the United States. But the events from 2000 to 2006 led to the electoral victory of a candidate who openly rejected this strategy, and who consolidated his domestic political power through, among other things, a clear rejection of US interests in Ecuador. The Manta base was one of the icons of Ecuador's dependent relation with the United States, and thus became a major target of Correa's anti-US rhetoric. He was able to capitalize the nationalistic sentiment, together with the widespread sensation of betrayal among the Ecuadorean public towards the traditional political parties. The possibility of reelection for Correa meant that campaign promises had to be kept, if he was to win a second time. Correa was unequivocal about his intention to terminate the base, and announced the official termination as a triumph of Ecuador's sovereignty, even before he formally notified the US embassy. In 2009 the base was transferred to Ecuador, and it remains today under control of the Ecuador military.

CHAPTER 7

FAILED BASING AGREEMENTS II: THE SEVEN FORMAL BASES IN COLOMBIA

Between 2006 and 2010 the United States and Colombia negotiated an agreement allowing the installment of seven Forward Operating Locations (FOL) in Colombian territory (Carvajal and Cardona, 2011). The governments of both countries shared an interest to move and expand US operations to Colombia from the air base in Manta, Ecuador, due to be closed in 2009 (see chapter 6).

Both governments trusted the agreement would be implemented without obstacles, given the popularity of the Colombian president, Alvaro Uribe, who enjoyed an unprecedentedly high support from political groups and the general public in Colombia. Colombian officials, however, decided not to send the agreement to be reviewed by the Colombian Congress, fearing a political backlash if the agreement became a source of national debate. Instead, the Colombian government sought to skip the constitutional requirement of congressional ratification by presenting this agreement as a continuation of previous treaties signed with the United States in the area of military cooperation. At the same time, the government relied on its large majority in congress to avoid a legislative motion ordering the agreement to be reviewed.

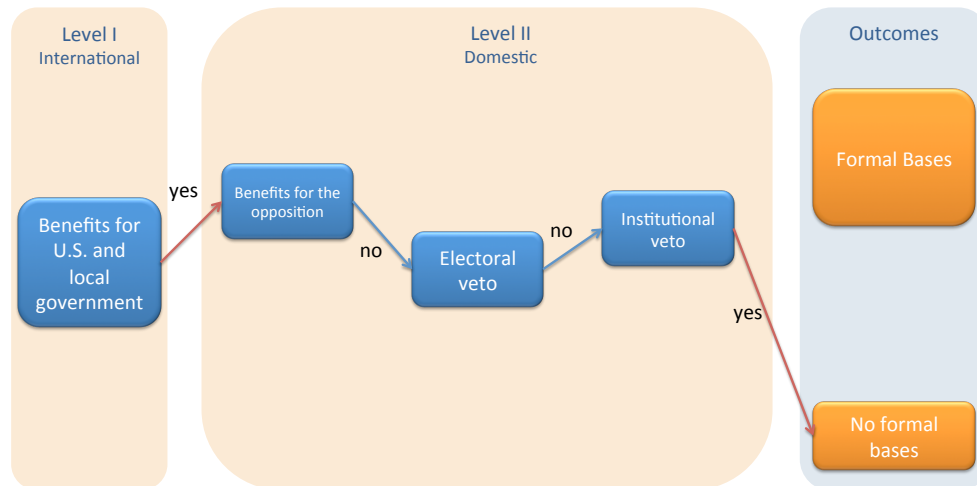
While this strategy had worked for Ecuador in 1999 (Bustamante, 2004) as described in chapter 5, the institutional strength of the Colombian constitutional court became an instrument for local opposition groups to challenge the agreement of the bases. The high courts were the only resource left for the opposition, as these groups did not represent any form of electoral challenge for the government coalition. The constitutional court ruled against the agreement in 2010, and its ruling was accepted without much contestation by the Colombian government or the United States.

Recall proposition 3 from chapter 3:

When the local opposition does not pose an electoral challenge to the government, but can successfully use institutional mechanisms to constrain the actions of the government, and opposes foreign military bases, the costs of offering bases to foreign nations will increase, making it more likely that alternative agreements would be preferred.

This proposition helps understand how the agreement of the seven bases in Colombia was unsuccessful, despite the preferences of both governments in Washington and Bogota. An approach that did not take into account domestic politics and institutions, but rather concentrated on government preferences, would not be able to explain why this agreement failed. I argue in this chapter that the strength of the Colombian constitutional court served as a vehicle to magnify demands from the local opposition against the base, and that in absence of such an institutional veto the agreement would not have failed.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the failure of the agreement for the seven formal military bases in Colombia. As I discuss in the following sections, institutional veto players blocked the the implementation of the base agreement, even when the governments of both the US and Colombia had signed it, and there was no immediate electoral challenge for the Colombian government. But this was not the end of the story. After the agreement failed, the United States was allowed to continue to operate from Colombian military bases, transformed into US quasi-bases, where the US owns property and assets and stations troops, but which are

Figure 7.1: Colombia: institutional veto players and bases

not recognized as US bases. This development is discussed in chapter 8.

This chapter analyses the failure of the basing agreement between Colombia and the United States. Based on current academic literature, the chapter starts with a contextual description of the bilateral relation between the two countries, characterized by a strong anti-drug agenda, in which the negotiation of the bases was inscribed. It also explores the Colombian party system and the absence of representation of the political opposition, and the institutional strength of the Colombian judiciary. The chapter then describes the negotiation of the agreement and its eventual failure, and offers an explanation of this event based on the conceptual model developed in chapter 3

7.1 US and Colombia: the narcotization of a bilateral relation

For over a century, the diplomatic relations between the United States and Colombia have typically been positive (Borda, 2012a). Although the United States collaborated with the independence of Panama, forcing Colombia to lose one of the most valuable parts

of its territory (Conniff, 2001), Colombian leaders understood the necessity to develop a special relation with the United States; they even gave this doctrine a name: *Respipe Polum* (Tickner, 2007). With minor setbacks at times, this positive relation endures today. Colombia was an important promoter of the Alliance for Progress, and became one of the largest recipients of US economic assistance under this program (Rojas, 2010). During the 80s and early 90s, Colombia undertook the economic reforms favored by the United States, including privatizations of state companies and opening trade and foreign investment to US capital (Goldberg and Pavcnik, 2005). US-Colombia relations complicated during the administration of Ernesto Samper between 1994 and 1998, amidst accusations of drug money flowing into his presidential campaign, but even in this period Colombia maintained a deferent attitude towards the US, with gestures such as the reestablishment of the figure of extradition of Colombian nationals to be sentenced in US courts (Tickner, Tickner). Even when Colombia has sought to strengthen relations with its neighbors or other countries (Ardila, 2002), the importance of a good relation with the United States has always been at the top of the agenda of policy-makers (Tickner 2007).

Colombia has been one of the principal allies of the United States in the “war against drugs,” to the point where the bilateral relation is often considered to be captured by *narcotization*, that is, in the words of Russell Crandall, “virtually all aspects of US involvement in Colombia were in some way linked to drugs” (Crandall 2008a, 2; see also Cepeda and Tickner 2011). Joint US-Colombia operations led to the killing of Pablo Escobar, the world most wanted drug lord in 1993. A process of annual certification kept Colombia’s anti-drug activities under US supervision, and failing to receive this certification in 1996 created one of the most destabilizing moments of the fragile presidency of Ernesto Samper. Since then another certification process, this time regarding human rights practices, has kept Colombia under US scrutiny in order to continue to receive US military and economic aid, as well as trade preferences (Gallón, 2002).

During the Pastrana administration 1998-2002 (Samper's strongest critic), relations between Colombia and the United States improved to the point that Pastrana was able to convince the United States to consider a \$1.3 billion anti-drug cooperation package, named Plan Colombia, as a joint venture to reduce coca production, improve the capacity of the Colombian military, and provide additional resources for social programs and strengthening of the judiciary (see Mejia 2011). Although it is a matter of debate whether Plan Colombia has served to solve the problem of drug production and the criminal activities related to it (see Gaviria and Mejía 2011), since 1999 Colombia has experienced a major transformation from a fragile state at the mercy of drug lords to a viable country that today seeks to present itself as a success story, entitled to "export" its security know-how to countries facing similar security issues. At the center of this transformation was a major change in the relation between the United States and Colombia after September 11 2001. With the changes on US security policy after the attacks (see section 2.1), the Pastrana administration was able to use drug cooperation resources to fight subversive groups in Colombia, including the FARC (Rojas, 2006).

But it was Alvaro Uribe's eight years presidency (2002-2010) that enjoyed the most of US resources flowing into the war against drugs and armed groups in Colombia. Alvaro Uribe's hard-line policies were widely supported by president George W. Bush. The bilateral relation was at its most productive moment in decades, with constant US support for Plan Colombia, which extended beyond its initial time frames and provided more than \$7 billion until 2010 (Cepeda and Tickner 2011, Borda 2012b), and \$10 billion until 2013.¹

The United States did not open any military bases in Colombia under Plan Colombia, nor did it sign any agreement on the permanent use of any Colombian military base. But despite not having a base in the country, US military presence and operations were one

¹Peter William McKinley, US ambassador to Colombia. Interview with Diego Alarcón. *El Espectador*, "Se ha desnarcotizado la relación con Colombia". May 25th 2013.

of the largest in the Americas. According to the US Department of Defense 2002 “Base Structure Report,” the United States military operated from four locations in Colombia since the beginning of Plan Colombia. Operations included the installment and operation of military and communications equipment in Colombian military bases, surveillance through ground equipment and aerial monitoring, and training of local forces. Operations did not include any actual combat or security exposure, with the exception of self-defense (Lindsay-Poland, 2009). Despite official claims denying the existence of US installations in the country, the *Base Structure Report* counts forty-four buildings and nine acres of land “owned” by the US Air Force in Colombian territory.

It is no surprise that president Uribe offered several locations for US bases in Colombia, as a formalization of the long-standing security cooperation between the two countries during his presidency and the shared understanding in both governments about the necessity to continue that cooperation. What is really puzzling is why the most popular president in recent years in Colombia, who enjoyed the best relation with the United States at least during the Bush administration, could not deliver his offer even after an agreement was negotiated and signed.

The following sections in this chapter seek to help solve this puzzle.

7.2 Opposition and domestic politics in Colombia

The Colombian political system in the late twentieth century was characterized by highly personalistic campaigns, where party membership did not communicate much to the electorate in terms of political platforms or commitments (Botero and Rodríguez Raga, 2008). As a consequence, party politics was not clearly defined in terms of ruling and opposition parties, but in terms of personal political loyalties and clientelistic ties. The electoral reform of 2003 sought to structure the party system better, adding incentives for party cohesion and punishing smaller or individual political movements (Rodríguez Raga

and Botero, 2006). The result of this shift brought the number of political parties down from hundreds to less than a dozen, where at least one could be identified as an opposition party to the ruling Uribe's, and later to the Santos's, administration: the Polo Democratico Alternativo (PDA).

The PDA is an umbrella political party that united former guerrilla members of the M-19 and other movements, members of the communist party, and traditional leaders of the left in Colombia. This party did not have any political representation of its own until the *Polo Democratico Independiente* and the *Alianza Democratica* joined forces to oppose the reelection of Alvaro Uribe in 2006. The PDA came second in the presidential race, but received only 22% of the vote, against 62% for Uribe. In the legislative elections, the PDA won only 10% of the vote, against a combined vote for Uribe's coalition of parties of more than 60%. But while the PDA did not fare well in national elections, it has managed to win the race for mayor of Bogota in two occasions (2003 and 2007), and one former member of this party also won this election in 2011. But on the national stage, the PDA has not played a major role in presidential or legislative debates, where the huge coalitions supporting the president have been able to govern effectively without more opposition than the occasional frictions among themselves (Leal 2010, Botero et al. 2011).

Colombia is one of the very few countries in Latin America that has not elected a member of the left or center-left to the presidency, and the traditional political leadership continues to hold almost all relevant offices in national politics (Wilson and Carroll, 2007). But beyond electoral politics, opposition groups in Colombia have played important roles in the last few decades. These groups are concentrated in civil society organizations, with politically active and dynamic participation of women organizations, labor unions, human rights NGOs, and indigenous groups (Laurent, 2010).

7.3 Institutional veto players

Colombian presidents, supported by undisputed majorities in congress, still seek to maintain the country's alignment with the United States, although domestic institutions and an organized domestic opposition from the civil society have been able to interfere with the executive's choices. As we will explore in the following sections, the agreement that formalized Colombia's extensive security cooperation with the United States failed not because decision-makers in foreign policy decided so, but because an independent constitutional court served to channel the demands of opposition forces in the country against the will of the executive.

Unlike Ecuador, Colombia has enjoyed a remarkably stable political regime since the return of democracy in 1958. Despite its internal armed conflict, Colombia is among the most stable political regimes in Latin America, with permanent civilian power for more than fifty years, and no interruptions of the terms of any of its elected presidents (Restrepo, 2006). At the same time, Colombia enjoys one of the most independent judiciary systems in the region, with strong and autonomous high courts that have kept the power of presidents and legislatures checked and balanced (Rodriguez, 2011). Colombia's central bank is also a well respected and independent institution in the country, and the military has not represented a challenge to civilian rule since the 1950s.

The 1991 constitution created the Constitutional Court, at the same level of the Supreme Court, with the mandate to rule on the constitutionality of domestic law. To this day, the constitutional court has ruled autonomously in controversial matters and its decisions have been accepted as final by the rest of the branches of government (Clavijo, 2001). The autonomy of the court was not even contested after the court's ruling against the possibility of a third presidential term for Alvaro Uribe, Colombia's most popular president, despite his reelection being backed by a majority in congress and a large portion

of the population.²

The constitutional court has also played a key role in protecting the rights of minorities and opposition groups in Colombia. The court has expanded protections to women, LGBT citizens, indigenous communities, and victims of Colombia's armed conflict, and has also created a channel for opposition groups from the civil society to challenge the constitutionality of the actions of the Colombian state (Uprimny et al. 2004, Sarmiento 2012). Some have been critical of the capacity of the Constitutional Court to rule on matters that impact government spending, especially by expanding health coverage (Echeverry et al. 2004, Espinosa et al. 2009, see also Rodriguez 2012), but few contest the authority of the court to rule on the legality of laws passed by congress or administrative acts from the presidency.

7.4 The Agreement of the Seven Bases

In 2005, President Uribe was seriously concerned about a potential threat from its neighbors, Venezuela and Ecuador . He secretly expressed to the United States serious concerns about Colombian security. He declared that Colombian neighbor Hugo Chavez, who was “a mix of someone with imperial sentiments, drunk with socialism.”³ According to Francisco Santos, then Vice-President of Colombia, if Chavez began political indoctrination through the Venezuelan education system, both Colombia and the US would be in trouble “for generations to come.”⁴ About Ecuador, Colombia's southern neighbor, the vice-president said president Rafael Correa was *crazier and a lot smarter*.⁵ Even President

²Latin American Weekly Report, “Heirs apparent fight for Colombia's top job as court bars Uribe's re-election” March 4th 2010. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

³President Alvaro Uribe, Interview with Nicholas Burns, Undersecretary for Political Affairs and Ambassador William B. Wood. 2005-08-04. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 05BOGOTA7402

⁴Vice-President Francisco Santos. Interview with US CJCS General Peter Pace. 2007-01-29. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 07BOGOTA606

⁵Vice-President Francisco Santos. Interview with US CJCS General Peter Pace. 2007-01-29. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 07BOGOTA606

Uribe himself warned President Bush of the path Correa could follow, and the limitations of Correa's willingness to cooperate with counter terrorism activities and other US interests in the region.⁶

Colombian defense capabilities were insufficient to repel the Venezuelan Air Force in an eventual military confrontation. The Colombian Air Force accounted for less than 8% of the defense budget, and its primary offensive aircraft was based in Antioquia, Cundinamarca, and Atlantico, far from the borders, and represented an insignificant international deterrence force. Maintenance problems derived in less than 70% of all aircraft being operational at any given time.⁷ President Uribe instructed his Congress allies to approve the purchase of military aircraft from the United States in March 2005, to improve the capabilities of the Air Force. In July 2006 the first Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) arrived from the United States, which provided real-time aerial video reconnaissance and surveillance to the Colombian military. But instead of regional threats, the top priority of UAVs in Colombia was to support US hostage rescue efforts and pursuit FARC leaders.⁸

With the visit of Nicholas Burns, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, to Bogota in July 2005, talks for an enhanced defense relationship between Colombia and the United States started. Colombian Defense Minister Camilo Ospina Bernal approached the United States with a proposal to start negotiations for a formal bilateral agreement to enhance security cooperation between the two countries. Burns stated that the United States was ready to negotiate such agreement with Colombia as soon as possible.⁹ President

⁶Uribe's recommendation to Bush was, nonetheless, that the United States engaged Correa, and even invite him to the White House, President Alvaro Uribe. Interview with Deputy Secretary Negroponte. 2007-05-10. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 07BOGOTA3276 in order to exert as much influence over him as possible.

⁷Milton K. Drucker, Charge official of the US Embassy in Bogota. Cable 05BOGOTA5802

⁸Ambassador William B. Wood. "UAVS – EYES IN THE SKY FOR COLMIL OPERATIONS." US Embassy in Bogota Cable 06BOGOTA11380

⁹Nicholas Burns, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Interview with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 05BOGOTA7402

Uribe feared at the time the friendly gestures that Chavez was sending to the FARC and believed that a security cooperation agreement with the United States would make Chavez tune down its rhetoric.¹⁰ Colombia's concerns only magnified after Chavez bypassed an US arms embargo and acquired Sukhoi-30 fighter aircraft from Russia in July 2006.¹¹

A secret formal dialogue between Colombian and US officials started in November 2005.¹² In early 2006, the newly appointed Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos declared to the US negotiators Colombia's intention to be the US strategic partner in the hemisphere, even though the specific terms of such partnership were not clear at the time. Santos offered access to US troops to a Colombian air base, should the Ecuadorean government not renew the base agreement in Manta, as it eventually did not. US officials replied positively, stating that the United States wanted a "symbiotic relationship," including joint exercises, training, and war college exchanges, as well as a possible shared air facility or "cooperative security location."¹³

The negotiations started with clear intentions from both sides to move forward, but, as Cooley's *Base Politics* predicts (2008), Colombian officials were very concerned about the potential politicization of the new strategic partnership, especially as it included the possibility of US bases in the country. Colombian negotiators asked to frame the agreement as a development of past agreements instead of a new treaty that would require Congress ratification, where it would be difficult to "sell" a foreign military base to the public.¹⁴

¹⁰Revista Semana, "Chavez se destapa" 2008

¹¹Latin American Weekly Report, "Chvez gets his Su-30s; a US arms embargo" August 1st 2006. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

¹²Milton K. Drucker, Charge official of the US Embassy in Bogota. "DIALOGUE ON A FRAMEWORK FOR A STRATEGIC DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH COLOMBIA." 2005-11-30. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 05BOGOTA11084

¹³Nicholas Burns, Undersecretary for Political Affairs. Interview with Colombian Minister of Defense, Juan Manuel Santos. 2006-11-01. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 06BOGOTA10113

¹⁴Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos, Foreign Minister Maria Consuelo Araujo, and Ambassador Carolina Barco. Interview with Nicholas Burns, Undersecretary for Political Affairs. 2006-11-01. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 06BOGOTA10113

The goal was to avoid a national debate about the bases that would have damaged the government and could even have produced a negative vote.

By 2007 it was expected that Correa would not renew the Manta Air Base agreement, and Uribe himself offered the air bases in Tres Esquinas,¹⁵ Barranquilla, and Palanquero.¹⁶ to host and enhance US operations in the region.

7.4.1 The Reyes incident and Venezuela's preparation for war

While the security agreement between Colombia and the United States was under negotiation, Colombia and Ecuador entered in a deep crisis in their diplomatic relations when the Colombian Air Force launched an attack against a FARC camp in the Ecuadorean side of the border (Mina and Bolaños, 2011). In March 1 of 2008, senior commander Raul Reyes and other 17 members of the FARC were killed after a bombing raid in Ecuadorean territory, also know as Operation Phoenix. This was the first time in 44 years that the Colombian military killed a member of the FARC secretariat.¹⁷

The Reyes incident became a crisis between Colombia, Ecuador, and Ecuador's ally Venezuela, where Colombia accused the other two of protecting the FARC in their territories, while Ecuador and Venezuela accused Colombia of treachery and of acts of war.¹⁸ This was the second incursion of the Colombian military into Ecuador, after another supposed "hot pursuit" in 2006 caused diplomatic tensions between the two countries.¹⁹

President Chavez became even more belligerent when the Colombian government

¹⁵Vice-President Francisco Santos. Interview with CJCS General Peter Pace. 2007-01-29. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 07BOGOTA606

¹⁶Colombian Vice Minister of Defense Juan Pinzon and Armed Forces Commander General Fredy Padilla. Interview with U.S. Southern Command Deputy Commander General Spears. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 07BOGOTA4722

¹⁷Latin American Weekly Report, "Reyes killing a blow for Farc and hostages" March 6th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

¹⁸Latin American Weekly Report, "Colombian strike against Farc on Ecuadorean soil sparks diplomatic crisis" March 6th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

¹⁹Latin American Weekly Report, "Colombian military incursion sours relations" February 14th 2006. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 25th, 2013

announced that Interpol was analyzing computers confiscated by the Colombian army at Raul Reyes's camp in Ecuador, which had evidence of the FARC's ties with government officials in Venezuela and Ecuador. The investigation found that the FARC commander's computer contained critical information about the FARC's international transactions:

General Oscar Naranjo, Colombia's police chief, accused Venezuela of channeling US\$300 million to the FARC, based on what he said was information obtained from Mr. Reyes's computer. General Naranjo also said computer documents showed financial support from the FARC for President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, going back to the time Mr. Chavez spent in prison after an unsuccessful coup attempt in Caracas in 1992.²⁰

Despite official denials, it was already clear to the Colombian government that the FARC maintained camps in Venezuela. FARC guerrillas captured by the Colombian Army reported being transported in Venezuelan military aircraft for refuge and recuperation in Venezuelan territory.²¹ Links between Colombian guerrillas and the Venezuelan Army were particularly worrisome as both used compatible ammunition.²², and Chavez openly campaigned internationally in favor of political recognition to the FARC.²³ After this episode, Chavez accused President Uribe of lying to provoke a US intervention in Venezuela, and called any information obtained from those computers "imbecile."²⁴

Relations between Colombia and Venezuela grew even more tense after the US ambassador to Colombia, William Brownfield, gave the news of a possible US base in Colombia to the local press. The Colombian newspaper *El Espectador* reported the United States was

²⁰Romero, Simon. 2008. Crisis at Colombian border spills into diplomatic realm. *The New York Times*, March 4. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/04/world/americas/04venez.html?_r=1

²¹Ambassador William B. Wood. "COLOMBIA COPEs WITH CHAVEZ." 4/22/2005. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 05BOGOTA3863

²²Minister of Defense Camilo Ospina Bernal, interview with Nicholas Burns, US Undersecretary for Political Affairs. 2005-08-04. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 05BOGOTA7359

²³Latin American Weekly Report, "US responds to Alba challenge with soft diplomacy" January 31st 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

²⁴In the same heated pre-electoral speech, Chavez accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel of being the ideological descendant of Adolf Hitler. See Reuters, Chavez acusa a Uribe de querer provocar una guerra. May 12, 2008. Accessed June 23, 2012 from <http://lta.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idLTAN1156119720080511>

seeking a replacement for Manta, and it could propose a military base in the Colombian department of La Guajira,²⁵ which borders Venezuela and which is close to Venezuelan islands claimed by Colombia. Chavez responded with a threat to start military actions leading to the incorporation of the entire La Guajira to Venezuela.²⁶ Despite the advanced stage in the secret negotiations between Colombia and the United States, Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos denied there would be any US bases in Colombia, and dismissed Chavez's reaction as a storm in a glass of water.²⁷

7.4.2 The DCA Track II

Negotiations for the basing agreement in Colombia continued, and the tense situation with Venezuela made Colombian officials want to speed up its conclusion. In February 2009 the US embassy reported that Colombia "sees itself as an unwavering ally in an Andean region increasingly hostile to U.S. values and goals,"²⁸ but this friendship was not the only reason why Colombia wanted the agreement. The Colombian government favored the new base agreement with the United States "as a key in deterring potential regional threats,"²⁹ namely Venezuela, potentially backed by Ecuador, in an armed conflict, whether it was initiated by Caracas or Bogota. The US embassy in Bogota further acknowledged that the Colombian government "increasingly viewed Venezuela as a threat, especially given recent

²⁵El Espectador, Estados Unidos podra poner una base en La Guajira. May 11, 2008. Accessed June 25th, 2012 from <http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/tema-del-dia/articuloimpreso-eu-podria-proponer-una-base-guajira>

²⁶Caracol Radio, Chavez amenaza con reclamar la soberana de la Guajira. May 14th, 2008. Accessed June 25th, 2012 from <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/internacional/chavez-amenaza-con-reclamar-la-soberania-de-la-guajira/20080514/nota/596266.aspx>

²⁷El Tiempo, No habra base militar de EE. UU. en la Guajira: Santos, May 15th, 2008. Accessed June 15th, 2012 from <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-2936005>

²⁸Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. "SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION." 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

²⁹Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. "SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION." 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

Venezuelan arms purchases from Russia, and viewed a defense agreement with the United States as a deterrent to possible Venezuelan aggression.”³⁰ As a result of this perceived threat, the Colombian government insisted that as part of the agreement, the United States committed to provide an aerial defense system and security guarantees in case of a military conflict with Venezuela.³¹ The United States rejected adding such commitment to the agreement, but accepted to negotiate such security assurances in a separate accord,³² which came to be known in the negotiation as the track-II agreement. The Colombians agreed to have a separate negotiation, but emphasized that “progress on the DCA was ultimately linked to additional agreements on security assistance.”³³

By this time, the United States had already identified the Colombian base of Palanquero as the “best site in Colombia for a possible CLS [Cooperative Security Location].”³⁴ President Uribe told the US ambassador his government considered the establishment of a CSL a top priority and hoped to conclude an agreement on such facility as soon as possible.³⁵ Ecuador eventually confirmed its intention not to renew the Manta agreement,³⁶ and the United States delivered the first secret draft of a “Defense Cooperation Agreement” (DCA) to open several US bases in Colombia in August 2008. The proposal included leas-

³⁰Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. “SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION.” 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

³¹Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. “SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION.” 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

³²Political Counselor John Creamer. “STEADY PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN FIRST ROUND OF COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS” 2009-02-17. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA483

³³Ambassador William R. Brownfield. “COLOMBIA DCA TALKS MOVE AHEAD DESPITE OBSTACLES.” Apr 23 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA1334

³⁴US Acting Political Counselor David M. Zimov. “GOC DISMISSES CHAVEZ’ COMMENTS ON US MILITARY BASE IN COLOMBIA” 2008-05-15. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 08BOGOTA1797

³⁵President Alvaro Uribe. Interview with Assistant Secretary Shannon. 2008-07-15. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 08BOGOTA2568

³⁶DPA, AFP and Reuters. Ecuador notifica a EU que debe desalojar la base de Manta en 2009. La jornada, July 31 2008. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/07/31/index.php?section=mundo&article=032n2mun>

ing installations in the Colombian military bases of Palanquero, Ampiy, and Barranquilla for US operations, as well as privileges and immunities for US personnel.³⁷

The Colombian negotiators demanded track II issues be resolved and a formal commitment reached before the DCA could come into effect. The Colombian interest around these issues revolved around an air defense system, US assurances of access to US arms, systems, or technology in case of a regional conflict, and finally access to all intelligence data collected by US personnel and to the infrastructure of the Cooperative Security Location(s) built by the United States.³⁸ The air defense system was a major concern for Colombia, given Venezuela's recent purchase of Russian Sukhoi aircraft, against which the Colombians wanted an equally sophisticated defense system.³⁹

The Colombians sought to speed up negotiations of Track II issues, and pressed their counterpart claiming Colombia would not uphold its previous commitment to deploy Colombian troops in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom until Track-II issues were solved.⁴⁰ As the negotiations continued, the Track II negotiations resulted on three US communications on each of the key issues: "one from SouthCom Commander on operational arrangements related to the DCA; a second from 12th Air Force Commander on an air defense study; and a third from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense on stockpile discussions."⁴¹ These letters began a series of discussions where the United States advanced in the study of the matter, but did not make any formal or written commitments the

³⁷Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "GOC WANTS QUICK AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPAL ON DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT." 2008-08-18. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 08BOGOTA3028

³⁸Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS – EMBASSY IDEAS FOR TRACK II." Jul 27 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA2376

³⁹Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS – EMBASSY IDEAS FOR TRACK II." Jul 27 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA2376

⁴⁰Colombian Defense Minister Gabriel Silva and Vice Minister Sergio Jaramillo. Interview with US Ambassador William R. Brownfield. 2009-10-16. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA3223

⁴¹Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "MOD SILVA CALLS AMBASSADOR FOR PRE-UNASUR MEETING." 2009-09-09. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA2907

Colombians could call upon.

After the basing negotiations were discussed briefly in the media, the fear of politicization increased. US and Colombian officials agreed to keep the agreement secret while negotiations continued, and to eventually release the news as a “continuation of historical cooperation,” instead of a new treaty.⁴² This formula, which overpassed congressional ratification, had worked in Ecuador for the establishment of US operations in Manta in 1999 and the Colombians wanted a similar process. Through his Minister of Defense, President Uribe expressed his intention to conclude negotiations as soon as possible, possibly by November 2008, but without minimal involvement from other Colombian institutions.⁴³

The Colombian government decided not to share the content of the Track II negotiations to the Consejo de Estado (State Council, one of Colombia’s high courts), which reviewed the legality of the DCA. In this way, Uribe’s government kept the issue completely secret.⁴⁴ While the Colombian government desired to move ahead with the agreement as quick as possible, sensitivities remained about how to present it to the domestic public and to neighboring countries. Especially alarming for the Colombian government was the use of the term “base,” given the public widespread rejection of US military bases in Latin America. A second major concern related to the opposition of political leaders in Colombia’s legislative, some of whom had already rejected opening a location similar to the Manta Air Base in Ecuador. As a result of the fear of politicization of the agreement in Congress, the Colombian government ultimately framed it as a continuation of previous bilateral accords, thus not requiring a whole new process of ratification in the Colombian parliament.⁴⁵

⁴²Ambassador William R. Brownfield. “GOC WANTS QUICK AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPAL ON DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT.” 2008-08-18. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 08BOGOTA3028

⁴³Colombian acting Foreign Minister Camilo Reyes. Interview with US Ambassador William R. Brownfield. 2008-08-18. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 08BOGOTA3028

⁴⁴Ambassador William R. Brownfield. “AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MOD SILVA REGARDING UNASUR SUMMIT AND DCA.” 2009-09-18. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA3011

⁴⁵Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. “SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION.” 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in

Uribe did not fear an electoral defeat or a loss in Congress. Nonetheless, he did oppose a public debate where the media and opposition groups would accuse him of ceding Colombia's sovereignty. The wording of the agreement was the key to the negotiation. The Colombians rejected any text that could link moving US operations in Colombia with the closure of the Manta base in Ecuador,⁴⁶ despite this being the reason why negotiations started in the first place. The Colombian government also deleted the language used in the first US proposal, in which a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) stated the rights and privileges for US personnel in Colombia. Despite being a customary part of all agreements where US forces operate in foreign territories, the Colombians considered SOFA language too controversial and instead linked the judicial guarantees and immunities to a 1974 previous agreement between the two countries.⁴⁷

The basing agreement not only allowed permanent use of military bases in Colombia, to replace the lost operational capabilities in Manta, but also allowed the United States to conduct operations to meet the objectives of the US strategic vision in the region, including but not limited to counter drug operations. While this was clear for the Colombians, they repeatedly demanded that the agreement be worded in a much less controversial way, fearing public opposition and negative responses from Colombia's neighbors. As a result, it came to be socialized, by both the United States and Colombia, that instead of providing bases to the United States in South America, the "DCA simply updated existing bilateral agreements concerning cooperation against illicit trafficking, illegal armed groups, and terrorism."⁴⁸ Unfortunately for the Colombian government, the media referred to the

Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

⁴⁶Political Counselor John Creamer. "STEADY PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN FIRST ROUND OF COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS" 2009-02-17. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA483

⁴⁷Deputy Chief of Mission Brian A. Nichols. "SCENESETTER FOR FEBRUARY 9-13 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JACKSON MCDONALD AND DCA DELEGATION." 5 Feb 2009. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA383

⁴⁸Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "AMBASSADOR ENGAGES PROMINENT LABOR LEADER." 2010-02-26. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 10BOGOTA355

agreement as actual US military bases being installed in Colombia.

As the negotiations continued, instead of substantive changes to the operational component of the agreement, most of the changes to the text demanded by the Colombians sought to “curb any public perception that the [Colombian government] was ceding sovereignty to the United States”, while at the same time avoiding the use of terms that could force the agreement be ratified by Congress.⁴⁹ The Colombian negotiators already envisioned possible rejections by the Colombian Constitutional Court, if it encountered any stand-alone provisions that could not be linked to previous military agreements with the United States.⁵⁰ As I discuss later, their early preoccupations were not sufficient to avoid precisely this fate when the agreement reached the Court.

Once the signing of the agreement came close, the Colombian government suggested it was signed by lower level officials from both countries, instead of a ceremonial signing by the respective presidents. President Uribe wanted the Minister of Defense, or even the Vice-Minister to sign the agreement in a “non-ceremony” with the US ambassador signing on the part of the United States.⁵¹

The final agreement granted access to the United States to seven Colombian bases, including key installations in Palanquero, Apiay, and Tolemaida, plus an unspecified number of civilian air and sea ports. According to an *Air Mobility Command* (AMC) report that ended in the hands of the press, the United States viewed Palanquero as a strategic forward operational location, which would allow the US to cover all of South America with an appropriately fueled C-17 military airplane, and would also serve as an Air Force

⁴⁹Political Counselor John Creamer. “STEADY PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN FIRST ROUND OF COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS” 2009-02-17. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA483

⁵⁰Political Counselor John Creamer. “STEADY PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN FIRST ROUND OF COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS” 2009-02-17. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA483

⁵¹Colombian Defense Minister Gabriel Silva. Interview with Ambassador William R. Brownfield. 2009-09-09. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA2907

transit point in the route from the United States to Africa.⁵² The agreement would also transfer operations of the P-3 Orion spy planes, used for drug interdiction in the Pacific, from the Manta base to Palanquero. The Department of Defense requested US\$ 46 million to adequate this base for the new operations.⁵³

In late 2009, the Colombian journal *Cambio* revealed that the United States had started the process of moving the Manta base in Ecuador to Palanquero in Colombia even before the agreement had been signed. In order to do so, the US declared that the Palanquero base was no longer on Washington's red list of military installations linked to human rights abuses, which included Palanquero since two military planes took off from the base to attack a nearby village and killed 18 civilians.⁵⁴ The Palanquero base was a perfect fit to replace Manta. This base already had a 3500-meter runway, 600 meters longer than Manta, capacity to host 120 airplanes, radars, and installations for 2000 troops with medical facilities, restaurants, a supermarket, theaters, and even a casino.⁵⁵

7.4.3 Regional crisis

Colombia and the United States finally announced they had concluded negotiations for the DCA agreement in 2009. Foreseeing the potential negative impact of the announcement, President Obama declared the agreement had no intentions of installing US bases in Colombia, arguing that these were Cooperative Security Locations and not "bases".⁵⁶ But

⁵²El Tiempo, Base de Palanquero, cada vez ms interesante para Estados Unidos. May 30th, 2009. Available at <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5313148>. Accessed August 4, 2012

⁵³El Tiempo, Base de Palanquero, cada vez ms interesante para Estados Unidos. May 30th, 2009. Available at <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5313148>. Accessed August 4, 2012

⁵⁴Taking Palanquero off this list allowed US funds to be transferred to the base for upgrades and cleared the way for US operations. See Revista Cambio, De Manta a Palanquero? November 8nd, 2009. Available at http://www.cambio.com.co/portadacambio/779/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR_CAMBIO-4234729.html. Accessed August 5th, 2012.

⁵⁵Revista Cambio, De Manta a Palanquero? November 8nd, 2009. Available at http://www.cambio.com.co/portadacambio/779/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR_CAMBIO-4234729.html. Accessed August 5th, 2012.

⁵⁶RTVE.es, "Obama asegura que EE.UU. no tiene planes de establecer una base militar en Colombia" August 7th, 2009. Available at <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20090807/obama-asegura-que-eeuu-tiene->

Colombia's neighbors did not feel any less concerned. In particular, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Brazil, were worried about the implications of formal US bases in the region (Ardila, 2012). Venezuela cut all diplomatic links with Colombia and announced it will prepare for war.⁵⁷ Both the Brazilian and Chilean Presidents suggested to take the issue about the bases to the summit of the Union of South American Nations, UNASUR, that took place in mid-August, where no consensus was reached to condemn Colombia, but where Chavez took the opportunity to declare that winds of war had arrived to the region.⁵⁸ President Lula of Brazil was more moderate, still showing concerns about the agreement, but insisted in the fact that "sovereignty is untouchable and I don't like at all the idea of having an US military base in the region; but just as I don't like Uribe to put his nose in my government, I would rather not give my opinion about Uribe's decision".⁵⁹

The Colombian President insisted once again in the fact that there were not going to be new military bases and that the already existent bases would be under the Colombian authority. As the crisis continued, President Uribe visited Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil to explain the terms of the agreement to the region's presidents, and avoid a regional coordinated response against it.⁶⁰

But despite Uribe's efforts, the announcement of the agreement and the AMC report sparked a regional crisis of major proportions. Uribe's South American tour only showed itself effective with Paraguay, Peru, and Chile. These countries stated that they were not

planes-establecer-una-base-militar-colombia/288318.shtml. Accessed August 4, 2012

⁵⁷Latin American Weekly Report, "Chavez freezes links and prepares for war" July 30th 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

⁵⁸Latin American Weekly Report, "Unasur fails to reach consensus over Colombian-US military bases" August 13th 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

⁵⁹El Tiempo, 2009. Llevar Tema De Bases De E.U. En Colombia A Consejo Sudamericano De Defensa Proponen Lula Y Bachelet. El Tiempo, July 30. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5733487>

⁶⁰El Tiempo. 2009. Gira de Uribe por Suramérica para explicar acuerdo con E.U. El Tiempo, 3 agosto. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5768149>

against the agreement because it was a sovereign decision, and therefore respected it.⁶¹ Brazil's government shared this position, but it made clear that it wanted guarantees that the operations would not go beyond the Colombian borders.⁶² Still, most governments in the region expressed their concern about US military expansion in South America. In the August 2009 Summit of UNASUR in Argentina, President Chavez of Venezuela waved the AMC report in his hand as he accused the United States of installing bases in Colombia as part of "its strategy of global domination."⁶³ Chavez also used a belligerent language and demanded President Obama opened a dialog with Venezuela about the bases. Venezuela claimed the DCA was a threat to its security and to the region, and justified a US\$2.2 billion arms deal with Russia as a necessity against the threat of US military bases in Colombia.⁶⁴

The United States tried to respond to the regional crisis in South America with letters from the secretaries of State and Defense, Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates, to several presidents. The letters explained that the operations led by the US military would be only in Colombian soil and that Barack Obama's government guaranteed that there would not be any sort of operations in other countries.⁶⁵ The letters were handed personally by the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Arturo Valenzuela.

In addition to the Clinton/Gates letters, prior to the extraordinary UNASUR meeting in Bariloche, Argentina, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Christopher McMullen had

⁶¹El Tiempo. 2009. Chile y Paraguay respetan plan de cooperacin de Colombia y E.U. El Tiempo, August 5. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5786248>

⁶²Semana. 2009. Que las bases militares no se extralimiten: Lula. Revista Semana, August 6. <http://www.semana.com/america-latina/bases-militares-no-extralimiten-lula/127138-3.aspx>

⁶³Caracol Radio, Chavez: Bases militares son parte de la estrategia de dominacin de EE.UU. August 28th, 2009. Available at <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/internacional/chavez-bases-militares-son-parte-de-la-estrategia-de-dominacion-de-eeuu/20090828/nota/868956.aspx>. Accessed August 4, 2012

⁶⁴US Embassy in Caracas. "VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT USES DCA TO JUSTIFY ARMS PURCHASES." 2009-09-18. Cable 09CARACAS1226

⁶⁵El Espectador. 2009. EE.UU. ofrece garantas de no invasin por el uso de bases colombianas. El Espectador, December 14. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/articulo177361-eeuu-ofrece-garantias-de-no-invasion-el-uso-de-bases-colombianas>

to tour the region to explain the agreement to the concerned presidents. In his visit, McMullen found strong resistance from South American leaders to allow US operations and troops in their neighborhood. Moreover, several officials complained that Washington had not done enough to socialize this agreement, in the same way that it had not addressed the claims of Latin American leaders to explain the re-activation of the US Fourth Fleet in South American waters in 2008.⁶⁶ McMullen tried to convey assurances that the agreement was not a new treaty but a continuation of past cooperation, that the number of military personnel in Colombia was limited by US Congressional approval, and that these being Colombian bases, activities initiated by the US Command were subject to Colombia's final approval.⁶⁷

Brazil welcomed Obama's explicit commitment against cross-border operations, but further demanded previous notifications of flights near its border, and clarity regarding the number of US military personnel and contractors in Colombia. The United States and Colombia accepted Brazil's requests, although not in an official written way.⁶⁸ Uribe also stated that he was willing to give guarantees to all UNASUR's members regarding operations beyond Colombian territory.⁶⁹

During the following UNASUR meeting in Quito, Ecuador, the Colombians successfully prevented a formal declaration of the organization against the DCA. According to Colombia's Defense Minister Gabriel Silva, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, and Paraguay were generally supportive of Colombia during the meeting, and the Argentinean ambassador was

⁶⁶CDA Thomas P. Kelly. "Das McMullen Briefs Argentine Officials On Colombia-u.s. Dca." 28 Aug 2009. US Embassy in Buenos Aires Cable 09BUENOSAIRE984

⁶⁷CDA Thomas P. Kelly. "Das McMullen Briefs Argentine Officials On Colombia-u.s. Dca." 28 Aug 2009. US Embassy in Buenos Aires Cable 09BUENOSAIRE984

⁶⁸Colombian Defense Minister Gabriel Silva. Interview with Ambassador William R. Brownfield. 2009-09-09. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA2907

⁶⁹El Tiempo. 2009. Colombia se comprometio a ofrecer garantias sobre acuerdo militar con E.U.: Mindefensa brasileno. El Tiempo, August 26. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5943987>

moderate. Brazil presented a divided position, with Brazil's Foreign Minister acting rabidly against the DCA and the Defense Minister voicing support for Colombia. The Colombian delegation threatened with withdrawing altogether from UNASUR if the Brazilians did not adopt a more supportive approach, and ultimately convinced the Brazilian delegation of the beneficial role that Brazil could take to appease the conflictive environment in the region.⁷⁰

After the meeting, Brazil started to play a key role in calming the regional crisis. Brazil suggested that in order to reduce the opposition to the agreement in the rest of South America, Colombia should accept that all information gathered by operations under the DCA be shared with the region governments. Colombia rejected sharing information with all South American governments, particularly Venezuela and Bolivia, but agreed to study sharing information in a case-by-case basis. The Brazilian president, Luis Incio Lula da Silva, sought to mediate between the presidents of Colombia and Venezuela, but Chavez rejected a Brazilian proposal to meet Uribe, and instead, as tensions between Colombia and Venezuela escalated, Chavez urged Venezuelans to prepare for war against the supposed threat of a US invasion through the bases in Colombia. Chavez claimed that despite the hopes for change, the United States under Obama was "still an empire, more threatening than ever before".⁷¹

The regional crisis did not prevent the conclusion of the agreement, and on October 29, 2009 Colombia and the United States signed the agreement despite the remaining tensions in both the country and the region.⁷² Uribe's administration insisted once again

⁷⁰ Ambassador William R. Brownfield. "AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MOD SILVA REGARDING UNASUR SUMMIT AND DCA." 2009-09-18. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 09BOGOTA3011

⁷¹ El Espectador, Chavez pidi al pueblo venezolano prepararse para la guerra November 8th, 2009. Available at <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/articulo170995-chavez-pidio-al-pueblo-venezolano-prepararse-guerra>. Accessed August 5th, 2012.

⁷² El Tiempo. 2009. Contra la corriente, Colombia y E.U. firmaron el acuerdo de cooperacin militar. El Tiempo, 30 de octubre. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-6482648>

that the accord with Washington would only have positive effects in the war on drugs and that it represented “a guarantee of continuity of Plan Colombia, improved by all the acquired experience during these years.”⁷³

7.4.4 The Unexpected End of the DCA

With Uribe’s decision to continue with the agreement even after the regional crisis spurred, the United States trusted the base leases were safe. But in July 2009, *Cambio* revealed details about the DCA that indicated that the agreement was far wider in scope than the governments of the two countries wanted to admit. The agreement allowed permanent presence of foreign troops in the country, which had to be approved by Congress or the Consejo de Estado. Moreover, the agreement granted US personnel greater immunity in Colombian territory, even in cases of flagrant violation of Colombian law, when the Colombian justice system could do no more than put the offenders back in the hands of Washington.⁷⁴

On November 12, 2009, the Colombian NGOs Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos and the Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo challenged the constitutionality of the DCA at the Colombian Constitutional Court.⁷⁵ These two NGOs were part of an extensive network of civil society organizations that had opposed many of Uribe’s measures, ranging from security issues, to limitations of personal liberties, to Uribe’s own reelection. For the petitioners, the DCA created new obligations and exceeded the scope of previous bilateral agreements, and thus needed congressional ratification as a new treaty. The Constitutional Court had previously refused to accept petitions challenging

⁷³El Tiempo. 2009. Contra la corriente, Colombia y E.U. firmaron el acuerdo de cooperación militar. El Tiempo, 30 de octubre. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-6482648>

⁷⁴Revista Cambio, El ABC de las bases militares en las que habrá presencia de Estados Unidos July 9th, 2009. Available at http://www.cambio.com.co/paiscambio/836/5599691-pag-2_2.html. Accessed August 5th, 2012.

⁷⁵Revista Semana, Abece de la decisión de la Corte sobre las bases militares August 18th, 2010. Available at <http://www.semana.com/nacion/abece-decision-corte-constitucional-sobre-bases-militares/143211-3.aspx>. Accessed August 6th, 2012.

the constitutionality of “simplified agreements,” and the Colombian government hoped the Court would consider this agreement a simplified one.⁷⁶

On August 10, 2010, just three days after the end of Uribe’s term and when his Defense Minister became president of Colombia, the Constitutional Court ruled against the DCA and left it with no legal standing. The Court sided with the petitioners and considered that the new agreement incorporated new obligations for Colombia and modified previous treaties in such an extensive way that the DCA had to sort the process of a new treaty, including congressional ratification.⁷⁷ The court did not rule, however, against the constitutionality of an agreement granting US broad access to Colombian military bases, as the petitioners had hoped, and with this ruling the government could still save the agreement if it was presented to Congress for ratification. The new Santos government had a majority in congress, but getting the necessary votes in Congress to get the agreement ratified was not easy as the issue of US military bases could have provoked a massive negative reaction in the country. The new Santos administration decided not to submit the agreement to congress and allowed the DCA to perish.

7.5 Conclusion

In a system of checks and balances, high courts serve as a guarantee that popular governments and majorities in the legislative will not suppress the constitutional rights of citizens and legal procedures. While few analysts would consider Colombia a consolidated democracy, it is undeniable that the strength of its high courts is an example for the protection of the constitutional order in the country.

The consolidation of an independent constitutional court has brought critical ad-

⁷⁶US Embassy in Bogota Cable 10BOGOTA291

⁷⁷Revista Semana, Abec de la decisin de la Corte sobre las base militares August 18th, 2010. Available at <http://www.semana.com/nacion/abece-decision-corte-constitucional-sobre-bases-militares/143211-3.aspx>. Accessed August 6th, 2012.

vances in the protection of citizens nation-wide, who now enjoy benefits and rights that politicians have not been willing to guarantee in the law. At the same time, the high courts in Colombia functioned as an important mechanism to keep the power of the most popular president in recent history, Alvaro Uribe, under control. The constitutional court ruled against his perpetuation in power and also against many of his draconian security measures. And at the end of his tenure it also ruled against the agreement of the seven US military bases in the country, in an unprecedented decision that restricted the autonomy of the president to conduct foreign relations and reminded him of the constitutional obligation to have an open debate between political forces in congress before this type of agreements can be subscribed. The new Santos administration decided not to follow this path, and instead offered the continuation of tacit access to local bases to the US military

The model developed in this dissertation allows us to understand why the agreement was not successful. Instead of looking only at the preferences of governments, the model makes us look at the domestic oppositional and institutional dynamics that blocked the agreement. The weak opposition in Colombia could not stop the agreement through electoral politics, but it was able to utilize Colombian institutions to increase the costs and risks associated with opening formal foreign military bases in the country. This explains why, even if it was the preference of both the host government and the United States, new formal bases in Colombia never materialized.

The story of the failure of the basing agreement illustrates how the domestic institutional landscape can enter in conflict with the interests of national governments in international relations. Government preferences are not sufficient to explain why the agreement of the seven military bases in Colombia failed. After a successful negotiation, both governments in Washington and Bogota trusted the agreement would come into effect without any form of politicization or debate. They were wrong. The Colombian constitutional court, exceptionally strong compared with other judicial systems in Latin America, reviewed the

agreement and vetoed it as it had been negotiated. By doing so, the court channeled and magnified the demands of the local opposition, incapable of representing an electoral threat to the powerful Uribe government, but who have discovered in Colombian legal institutions an effective medium to restrain the power of governments. The approach developed in this dissertation tries to capture these domestic mechanisms in ways that other approaches centered on state preferences alone fail to comprehend.

The case could be made that the regional crisis that the agreement generated was the reason why the agreement was not successful. This explanation, however, is not accurate. The agreement was signed after the crisis spurred, and no amount of criticism from Colombia's neighbors prevented the successful termination of the negotiations. If the constitutional court of Colombia had not declared the agreement unlawful *it would have entered into force*, and the bases would have materialized. The regional crisis did not stand on the way of signing the agreement, and it is clear that Uribe and Washington wanted to move ahead regardless of the crisis.

The new Santos administration, however, decided not to send the agreement to congressional ratification, an option that could have saved the moribund agreement. One could also make the case that it was because Juan Manuel Santos sought to improve relations with Venezuela that he did not attempt to revive the agreement. But while this might have been taken into account at the time of the decision, this argument fails to recognize that Santos himself supported Uribe's strong position against sending the DCA agreement to Congress and shared the fear for domestic politicization. Since he was Minister of Defense, Santos made clear that allowing an open political debate among political factions increased the political cost of opening the bases and ruled out the possibility of a congressional debate.⁷⁸

Since before his inauguration, and while the DCA remained untouched by the con-

⁷⁸Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos, Foreign Minister Maria Consuelo Araujo, and Ambassador Carolina Barco. Interview with Nicholas Burns, Undersecretary for Political Affairs. 2006-11-01. US Embassy in Bogota Cable 06BOGOTA10113

stitutional court, the Santos team had made significant progress in the improvement of relations with Chavez, and the bases were not an unworkable obstacle for this (Ramírez, 2011). The unexpected decision from the constitutional court came once the two presidents had already worked their differences and were meeting in Santa Marta, Colombia, for an unprecedented cordial meeting and a much publicized presidential hug.⁷⁹ A bi-national agenda reestablishing trade and diplomatic relations followed the Santa Marta meeting, and the war-like rhetoric and the tensions of the Uribe administration were replaced with a marked improvement of Colombia-Venezuela relations.

But even if Santos and Chavez made a huge leap in Santa Marta, the end of the DCA was not the end of US military presence in Colombia, which was the main concern for Hugo Chavez. Instead, as the DCA perished, Colombia offered informal access to the United States to several Colombian bases—the DoD base structure report lists seven locations occupied by the United States in the country—under a quasi-base arrangement. Since both governments were interested in the bases, but domestic institutions blocked their formalization, it became a second-best option to operate in an informal basis outside of political debates and oversight. This development is discussed in chapter 8.

The Colombian case illustrates how two governments that are interested in military bases failed to materialize their preferences. It also shows that the United States has continued to push for formal military bases in Latin America, despite the many changes in US policy regarding its overseas basing strategy. Formal military bases are still a desired option for the Department of Defense, given the stability that formality offers over quasi-base arrangements.

I have not found any evidence that the United States or Colombia preferred quasi-bases over formal bases, and instead most accounts of the negotiations of the DCA show

⁷⁹El Tiempo. Maria Angela Holguin, canceller de Colombia, confirmo que el 20 de agosto viajara a Caracas. August 10th, 2010. Available at <http://m.eltiempo.com/politica/juan-manuel-santos-y-hugo-chavez-pasaron-la-pagina-y-lograron-acuerdos-concretos/7855522/1/home>. Accessed Jan. 13th, 2013

the strong interest of both governments in formality. The United States decided to adapt to the conditions that prevented formal bases in Colombia, just as it had decided to adapt to the eviction from the Manta base in Ecuador, and accepted the quasi-base arrangement. But while one might think that the United States simply changed its preferences and decided to use quasi-bases, these two chapters have sought to illustrate how US preferences were driven to change by the domestic political obstacles of domestic electoral challenges and institutional veto players. The risk of domestic politicization has increased in Latin America, as the base politics literature has documented in other regions, as governments are encountering more obstacles from their own constituencies and domestic institutions to conduct the foreign policy of their nations.

The following chapter analyses how quasi-bases became the alternative that followed the failure of formal bases in Latin America, and it offers an analytical perspective about the types of quasi-bases and their stability in Latin America.

CHAPTER 8

QUASI-BASES IN LATIN AMERICA

The cases of El Salvador, Ecuador, and Colombia illustrated in the previous chapters how formal basing negotiations succeed or fail. The ideal-typical model developed in chapter 3 was useful to turn the attention to the domestic political challenges that help explain the success or failure of formal basing agreements. But in order to explain why the United States has failed to open or maintain formal bases in Latin America, we need to understand the emergence of quasi-bases as an alternative to formal bases and their use to accomplish the objectives of US security policy in Latin America. Instead of retreating from the region as a result of failed negotiations, the US military has found ways to operate from an expanding network of quasi-bases in the region.

Recall proposition #5 from chapter 3:

When formal basing negotiations fail because of the conditions described in propositions 3. or 4., interested governments will seek alternative arrangements that escape domestic oppositional dynamics.

Domestic politics increasingly make it too difficult to open or maintain US military bases in Latin America, and since the start of the twenty-first century all negotiations to open new formal military bases have failed. But the governments of countries where negotiations have failed, and those where formal bases were not renewed, moved to allow US access to their military bases without a formal agreement or a formal lease. In these

cases, even though formal bases were the preferred option, quasi-bases presented a second-best alternative that allowed the US military to pursue its security goals in the region bypassing the obstacles of domestic politicization.

Quasi-bases, which are not approved by local legislatures and are not open for institutional oversight, provide facilities that support US operations in these countries. While the US does not count with formal leases and legal standing for its operational facilities in these countries, through quasi-bases it has been able to carry out secret operations such as the training of Contras in Honduras and the failed invasion on Cuba. And while after the Cold War the US reduced its military presence in Central America, it increased it again through quasi-bases in the late 2000's as part of a number of anti-drug operations resulting from shifting smuggling routes to the Pacific and Central America.

Instead of an exhaustive history of US military bases in Latin America, this chapter describes and classifies quasi-bases installed in the region, and extends the case narratives developed in the previous chapters in order to account for the alternative arrangements that followed the failure of formal basing negotiations. For the purposes of this classification, the cases used in this chapter include both quasi-bases as second-best options after formal negotiations failed—the main focus of this dissertation—, and also quasi-bases that were preferred options when the type of operations required informality and lack of oversight. The model developed in this dissertation, however, does not give much analytical insights into this second group of quasi-bases, as these are not the result of failed negotiations. Instead, this chapter presents them as contrasting examples of a similar phenomenon which share some characteristics (for example, they can be divided into the same groups of types of quasi-bases) and provide some information about how the United States is distributing the weights of the anti-drug efforts among Latin American countries.

8.1 Types of quasi-bases and US military presence in Latin America

For analytical purposes, quasi-bases can be arranged into three different categories, based on the level of US access to facilities and the temporal nature of their presence:

8.1.1 Gas and go

Gas and go agreements lie at the lower end of US access to military bases overseas. These agreements allow the United States to land and refuel planes in the host country military bases and/or civilian airports, and grant permission for their operators to rest overnight in nearby facilities, but prohibit the stationing of troops or equipment from the United States in the country. Despite its limitations, these minimal access agreements allow the US to deploy surveillance planes in the region, which are critical for gathering intelligence and spotting maritime and terrestrial vehicles for drug transportation and human trafficking. The cases of Ecuador and Peru illustrate how this type of arrangement emerges.

8.1.2 Temporary ground access

The United States has reached agreements with different countries where US troops and operations are allowed in local military bases, without a formal lease, but with an agreement that specifies the time lapse before the bases have to be vacated or their access renewed. These agreements lack the specifications of a formal base lease, such as a clear understanding about uses of the assets in the base, which are usually negotiated secretly and informally with the local government. These agreements usually specify the maximum number of US troops allowed, but often refer to a total number in the country without specifying the actual occupation of the base. While still controversial, temporal access to local military bases is often the product of a concrete security concern from the local government, which makes it easier to “sell” to the local population. The cases of Costa Rica and Guatemala, presented below, illustrate this sort of arrangement.

8.1.3 Long-term or indefinite ground access

Long-term or indefinite access to local military bases is the closest form of arrangement to a formal military base. However, long-term quasi-bases still lack the specifications of a formal lease, and instead depend on ambiguous agreements and appendixes to previous military cooperation treaties. The expectation of a long-term occupation of the base allows more US investments and developments, as well as longer operational capacity transferred to the base. At the same time that this gives continuity to the base, it also raises the risk of new governments seeking to benefit from the base and its assets, which lie in a legal void given the absence of a formal agreement. Colombia and Honduras are examples of this category of quasi-base arrangements.

8.2 The importance of formality

The key conceptual difference between a formal base and a quasi-base is the existence of a formal agreement supporting the existence of the base. In many regards, the formality of a base is not important, since operations can be carried out from formal or informal bases in a very similar fashion. The importance of formality lies on the legal recognition of the use of the facilities, and the prospects for the stability of these installations in foreign territories.

Formal base leases fall under what Alexander Cooley and Hendrik Spruyt called a “sovereign transfer” between two nations (Cooley and Spruyt, 2009). Through a form of contracting a base nation and a host nation declare their mutual intention to allow the base nation to establish a military base in its territory, or make use of an existing local base. In this way, the host nation cedes the right to use a certain facility for a time period (or indefinitely), and specifies how foreign personnel will be treated by the local authorities, what kinds of weaponry they would be allowed to carry and use, and the types of operations, including armed operations, that can be performed from the base (Cooley,

2008). Quasi-bases lack these contracts, and instead they are based on limited, often verbal, authorizations from local rulers, with none or very little specification of the rights of the base nation and the types of operations allowed from the bases.

Bases and quasi-bases are very similar in their operational dynamics, as both can host US military personnel, equipment, and operations. But they differ in some key aspects. First, formal bases are supported by base leases or agreements that define the terms of the use of the bases, including a time period before which the base cannot be closed without a mutual agreement. This is the case of the Colamapa base in El Salvador and it was the case of the Manta base in Ecuador. As most international contracts, these agreements provide semi-legal guarantees of the stability of the bases that in theory must be respected by the signing parties even if a change of government makes the agreement unwanted by one of them. Even though such legality is soft at best, given the lack of an international body capable of enforcing international contracts, breaking the terms of an existing contract is problematic. The case of Ecuador is illustrative. Even when president Correa won the election in 2006 on nationalistic and anti-US bases platform, he had to allow the Manta base to operate for most of his presidential term, until late 2009 when the initial terms of the base lease expired.

On the other hand, quasi-bases do not need to specify the temporary terms of the bases, or the type of operations and the number of personnel. While these aspects might be regulated through other formal or informal agreements (for example, the US Congress has set a maximum cap for US soldiers in Colombia), quasi-bases offer flexibility to increase or decrease the size of operations as needed. The stability of quasi-bases depends, however, on a continuous collaboration with the host government. In cases of changes of government, or radical changes of the foreign relations of the host country, the bases are automatically at risk. Since no agreement exists to provide legal standing for quasi-bases, expulsion of US personnel can come at any time after political changes in the host country.

While special political circumstances surrounded each episode, the parallel between Honduras and Ecuador is revealing. Ecuador opened a formal US base in 1999, while Honduras had granted access to the United States to the Soto Cano base on a quasi-base type agreement since 1983. Both countries welcomed US troops when their governments were friendly to the United States, but eventually the opposition replaced them through electoral victory. Although the new elected leader of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, did not voice a clear anti-US rhetoric during his campaign, he grew increasingly closer to Hugo Chavez to the point of joining the anti-US ALBA alliance. At this point, Zelaya decided to intervene in the Soto Cano military base to build a civilian airport using its airstrip. Even though the United States had controlled this facility since 1983, the lack of a formal lease contract allowed the new president to challenge the exclusive authority of the US over this key installation. In contrast, president Rafael Correa of Ecuador ran a campaign based on anti-US rhetoric which specifically used his opposition to the US base to court the support of nationalistic factions in the country. Once in office, Correa proceeded to inform the US embassy of his intention to not terminate the base agreement. However, because the base specified a 10 year lease before the base could be unilaterally terminated, president Correa had to wait for three years after his inauguration for the terms of the lease to expire, and finally fulfill his election promise of expelling US troops from Ecuador.

The infamous Guantanamo base in Cuba is another example of the importance of formal leases for the stability of basing agreements. The United States signed an agreement with the first government of Cuba in 1903, leasing the naval installation in the bay of Guantanamo to the United States perpetually, although the territory remains under the formal sovereignty of Cuba. After the revolution, the new government denounced the agreement, arguing that it was illegitimately signed under US occupation. The United States responded arguing that since the Castro government had cashed one of the checks that the United States sends to Cuba as rent for the base, it had endorsed the agreement

fully. The Castros still claim that the check was cashed by mistake, amidst the confusion of the first days of the revolution. Since then, the United States has never failed to send monthly checks to Havana, which the government keeps uncashed. The apparently silly argument about the only check cashed and the formal agreement leasing the base support US' contractual *authority* over Guantanamo.¹

As a result, neither bases nor quasi-bases are necessarily more stable, but their stability depends on different variables. While formal bases depend on the stability of the terms of their lease, and can endure changes of governments, the stability of quasi-bases is closely linked with the continuity of friendly governments in the host country.

Bases and quasi-bases also differ in the level of political debate around their establishment, and in the level of secrecy and possible oversight from local institutions and civil society organizations. Formal US bases (and a few quasi-bases that have been in operation for long enough) are at the center of the criticism of a transnational movement opposed to foreign military bases, and are also the target of criticism from officials and scholars around the globe who denounce the negative social consequences of hosting foreign military bases and the consequences for the sovereignty of these countries. Environmental concerns, rape and other types of crime, and vulnerability of the local population are some of the main criticisms.² Quasi-bases, on the other hand, escape political oversight and civil society criticism due to their secrecy and the lack of official recognition of the existence of bases. In this environment, it is only when the media and opposition leaders gather enough information that quasi-bases receive the fate of bases as targets of transnational mobilization.

Apart from their own stability challenges, quasi-bases can themselves be a source of regional destabilization. The presence of foreign troops is already a common tension in

¹See Cooley and Spruyt (2009), Lake (2009)

²See Yeo 2011, Lutz 2009, Höhn and Moon 2010

regional politics around the world, but unofficial base-like agreements are potentially even more destabilizing. As no formal agreement is available, the hosts of US base-like arrangements are likely to send ambiguous signals to their neighbor countries and regional powers and provoke anxiety and mistrust among them. When a significant US deployment arrives in a country without previous congressional debate or other form of public deliberation, uninformed neighbors of the country, especially those not aligned with the United States, are likely to suspect that their security could be compromised. Foreign troops are closer to their borders, and high tech equipment could be used to monitor their activities across the border; and since no formal agreement stands, these destabilizing activities could already be allowed in an informal agreement between the US and the host government. Even if the US and the host country make assurances to the region that the US force and equipment shall not be used against them, rational political leaders in neighboring countries could suspect that just the availability of those troops and equipment might break regional balances of power.

8.3 The failure of formal bases and the rise of quasi-bases

The following sections explore how particular countries moved from failed negotiations over formal bases into alternative arrangements. The preferences of the United States and the host government in these cases remained unchanged, even though domestic challenges made it impossible for them to install formal US bases. Quasi-bases were alternative options for them to act on their preferences once the formal base became impossible. The following sections move beyond the narratives developed in the previous chapters, and explore how the lack of success of formal basing discussions led to the establishment of alternative quasi-base arrangements.

Ecuador

Despite the hostile atmosphere, the US assessed the loss of the airbase in Manta (see chapter 6) pragmatically, and understood that Correa's opposition to US troops in Ecuador responded to "a sovereignty-based position linked to domestic politics, rather than an indicator of weakening commitment to broader counter narcotics efforts or bilateral military cooperation."³ At the same time, the United States had its mind on a new, much larger basing agreement with neighboring Colombia, which would have extended US formal military presence to seven bases in that country (see chapter 7. Correa stated in private he was thoroughly committed to cooperating with the US in counter drug operations, but that the massive opposition to foreign troops in Ecuador made the Manta renewal impossible.⁴ Correa's commitment to anti-drug cooperation was clear, however. The US and Ecuador signed a new agreement on security cooperation just after the base was closed,⁵ and, as an alternative to the formal base, Ecuador and the US agreed to allow US planes to refuel in Ecuador's military and civilian airports, without stationed US personnel, under a gas-and-go scheme. This alternative benefited Correa, because it did not include permanent US troops in Ecuador and allowed him to grant the US the access it wanted for surveillance flights. Such an agreement gave almost no publicity to the (now unconstitutional) continued presence of US military personnel in Ecuadorean airports and bases.

Colombia

After the formal agreement for the seven US military bases in Colombia was rejected by the Constitutional Court of Colombia (see chapter 7), according to a high ranking of-

³Ambassador Linda Jewell. "SCENESETTER FOR SECDEF MEETING WITH Ecuadorean MOD SANDOVAL." 2008-01-16. US embassy in Quito. Cable 08QUITO53

⁴Rafael Correa, interview with Ambassador Linda Jewell. 2008-02-20. US embassy in Quito. Cable 08QUITO158

⁵Latin American Weekly Report, "Anti-drug accord sealed with US" September 17th 2009. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

ficial of the Ministry of Defense,⁶ President Santos understood that security agreements with the United States did not have to be formal or public to have the effects both parts desired. Colombia continued to hold US operations in its territory, under previous military cooperation agreements, including military training, drug interdiction, communications, surveillance, etc. All this without the hassle of new bilateral agreements and the potential political backlash of formal US bases. At the same time, the United States understood that the agreement that the Colombian constitutional court stroke down is not likely to be revived anytime under the Santos administration. The United States, according to this official, decided to let the agreement perish, and instead sought to strengthen military cooperation through previous agreements, and eventually accepted their limitations. According to the US Department of Defense 2012 Base Structure Report, the US still operated in 2012 from seven military facilities in Colombia, where it owned 51 buildings and leased 24.

With the fall of the agreement, the US also got rid of its dangerous informal commitment to support Colombia in the case of a conflict with Venezuela. The so-called Track II negotiations did not materialize into an anti-aerial defense system and assurances of access to US arms, systems, or technology, as President Uribe had hoped. Despite the secrecy of national security issues, evidence suggests that a potential war with Venezuela was more likely to come from Uribe's personal aspirations and not from Chavez's initiative. In a recent statement, President Uribe declared he had already planned a military operation against the FARC in Venezuelan territory, which according to Chavez would have sparked a war between the two countries. Uribe revealed he had received information about military camps of the FARC in Venezuela, and he just did not have enough time before the change of administration to carry out the attack.⁷

⁶Interview with Camilo Reyes, Vice-Minister of Defense. Interview with the author in Bogota, August 15th, 2012.

⁷Revista Semana, Chavez dice que a Uribe le faltaron cojones para emprender una accion militar en Venezuela. August 15th, 2012. Available at <http://www.semana.com/politica/chavez-dice-uribe-faltaron-cojones-para-emprender-accion-militar-venezuela/182705-3.aspx>.

Track II assurances were critical for Uribe, as he already envisioned a full-scale war against Venezuela.⁸ This was not the case for Santos, even if he had been Uribe's right hand as Minister of Defense. Relations between Colombia and Venezuela entered a new era after Santos eased all military tensions with Chavez in the months heading to his inauguration. Santos appointed Maria Angela Holguin, who had been ambassador in Caracas, as Minister of Foreign Relations, and her team worked on rebuilding the relation with Venezuela as a top priority. Two factors contributed to the easing of tensions between the new administration and Hugo Chavez. First, Santos did not support a military conflict initiated by a Colombian attack, as he feared it could grow out of control for both the Colombian and the Venezuelan governments.⁹ Second, Santos had an unexpected bargaining power over Chavez. In 2010, the Colombian police captured the Venezuelan drug-lord Walid Makled, who claimed to have enough evidence of Chavez's links to drug trafficking, and accused several high ranking officials of the Venezuelan Armed Forces of working under his supervision in drug-related businesses.¹⁰

According to several cables of the intelligence company Stratford, those officials pressured Chavez to give concessions to Colombia, in order to prevent an extradition of Makled from Colombia to the United States, where he was willing to give all the evidence to the authorities. As a response, Chavez allegedly dismantled several FARC camps in Venezuela, and gave assurances to Santos that the bilateral relation would improve significantly.¹¹

Accessed August 15th, 2012.

⁸Undisclosed name High ranking official of the Colombian Ministry of Defense. Interview with the author in Bogota, August 15th, 2012.

⁹Undisclosed name High ranking official of the Colombian Ministry of Defense. Interview with the author in Bogota, August 15th, 2012.

¹⁰El Espectador, Chavez traicion a las FARC: Wikileaks. March 9th, 2012. Available at <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/articulo-331313-chavez-traiciono-farc-wikileaks>. Accessed August 15th, 2012.

¹¹The cable is available here: http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/1327642_makled-s-threat-to-the-venezuelan-regime-.html

Santos eventually decided to send Makled to Caracas instead of the United States, calming Chavez's officials, and both countries advanced to fully restored relations soon after Santos's inauguration. With Chavez dismantling FARC camps in his territory, Santos achieved the same objectives that Uribe sought through war, without engaging in a risky and expensive military conflict. Moreover, Santos achieved full restoration not only of diplomatic relations, but also of trade across the border, and the re-payment of US\$800 million from Venezuela to Colombian exporters. Soon after this, Santos referred to Chavez as his "new best friend."¹²

Despite the failure of the basing agreement and its track-II appendix, the Colombian Air Force continued to explore the purchase of an aerial defense system¹³ with the Brazilian Embraer and the European Thales Group.¹⁴

Peru

While Colombia tried to persuade the United States to move its Manta operations to a base in Colombia back in 2006 (see chapter ??, Peruvian officials also courted Washington. Peruvian President Alan Garcia sent his Defense Minister to Washington to start a conversation about increasing security cooperation between the two countries, and to offer a Peruvian location for US operations after Manta.¹⁵ President Garcia himself reiterated Peru's willingness to host US operations, argued that the base agreement in Peru

¹²El Tiempo, Mi nuevo mejor amigo: llamo Juan Manuel Santos a Hugo Chavez November 7th, 2010. Available at http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/ARTICULO-WEB-NEW_NOTA_INTERIOR-8302260.html. Accessed August 15th, 2012.

¹³Caracol Radio. 2010. Colombia todavia busca un sistema de defensa aereo. Hoy por Hoy - Caracol Radio, December 21. <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/colombia-todavia-busca-un-sistema-de-defensa-aereo-fac/20101221/nota/1401250.aspx>

¹⁴Balance Militar. 2012. La Fuerza Aerea de Colombia prepara el desarrollo del Proyecto Escudo. Balance militar, April 10. <http://balancemilitar.blogspot.com/2012/04/la-fuerza-aerea-de-colombia-prepara-el.html>

¹⁵Ambassador J. Curtis Struble, "SCENESETTER FOR PERU MOD WAGNER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON." 2007-03-23. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA994

would counter Chavez's influence on the region.¹⁶ After popular unrest followed a flurry of news articles suggesting the US was considering moving Manta operations to Peru, Garcia warned, as the Colombians had, against the use of the term "bases" and about the politicization of an agreement if it had to go through Congress ratification.¹⁷

While also negotiating with Bogota, in 2007 the US Department of Defense started exploring the possibility of moving operations from Manta in Ecuador to Piura in the north of Peru, close to the border with Ecuador and about 1000 kilometers north of Lima. Peru's Defense Minister, Allan Wagner, visited US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in Washington in March 2007 to discuss the new security agreement, while also pushing for the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Peru in the US Congress. As Wagner visited Washington, Peru authorized US troops to enter the country to give training to the Peruvian military and carry joint military exercises in the north of Peru.¹⁸ At the time, Ricardo Soberon, expert in security and drug issues in Peru, who later became anti-drug tsar in the Humala government, declared he had received information about the strong interest of the United States in a military base in Peru, which would host operations over Colombian territory, but warned against the risk of Peru's engagement in the Colombian conflict.¹⁹ According to Soberon, the US Southern Command commander, James Stavridis, initiated negotiations with the Peruvian government in February 2007 about a base in the Piura region.²⁰

After the Argentinian newspaper *Pagina12* revealed the intention of Wagner's visit

¹⁶President Alan Garcia, interview with US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson. 2007-04-04. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA1271

¹⁷Ambassador J. Curtis Struble. "SCENESETTER FOR PM DAS COULTER-LED JUNE 26-27 POL-MIL TALKS." 2007-06-21. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA2181

¹⁸Pagina12, Una Manta para Alan Garcia. March 31st, 2007. Accessed August 15, 2012.

¹⁹Pagina12, Una Manta para Alan Garcia. March 31st, 2007. Accessed August 15, 2012.

²⁰La Republica (Per), Sigue polmica por base militar de EEUU. April 30th, 2007. Accessed August 15th, 2012.

to Washington, the Minister of Defense denied any talks about opening US military bases in Peru.²¹ Peruvian officials understood the potential damage of the leaked information, and asked their US counterparts to frame this agreement, like Colombia eventually would, as a continuation of previous military cooperation agreements and not as a new base accord. The United States wanted to have an explicit SOFA language (as in the case of Colombia, SOFA granted US personnel extended immunity in Peruvian territory), but Peru feared this language would make it clear to the public that this was a new agreement with new obligations for Peru.²² The US embassy in Lima expressed concern about domestic opposition to the new base in Piura in the most illustrative way in a cable to Washington in June, 2007: “The Peruvian Government sees an opportunity in the post-Manta environment, but to avoid counterproductive blowback we need to be extremely careful in framing this issue, particularly in our public interventions.”²³

Peru’s president, Alan Garcia, had a strong interest in a US base in his country to reinforce Peru’s animosity toward Chavez. In a meeting with US Treasury Secretary, Henry Paulson, in March 20th 2007, Garcia argued that Chavez was a major problem in the region, and his “toehold” in Ecuador and Argentina was worrisome. Garcia wanted to show that the Chavista path was “uselessly confrontational” through a strong relation with the United States. Garcia declared that Peru would not hold back on its relation with Washington, and declared “If Ecuador doesn’t want the base in Manta, we will offer one here to fight drugs and to show that Chavez is wrong.”²⁴

Negotiations continued in July 2007, discussing the details of US operations in Peru.

²¹El Diario. EE.UU. trasladaria la base area de Manta a Piura en el Peru. April 5th, 2007. Accessed August 15th, 2012

²²Ambassador J. Curtis Struble, “SCENESETTER FOR PERU MOD WAGNER’S VISIT TO WASHINGTON.” 2007-03-23. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA994

²³US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA994

²⁴President Alan Garcia, interview with US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson. 2007-04-04. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA1271

By this time it was clear that the agreement was to be presented as US operations originating from a Peruvian base in Piura, without any form of base lease. Garcia feared the opposition (which was strong enough to win the presidency a few years later) would benefit from a public debate about military bases in Peru, and decided to turn instead to an informal gas-and-go agreement, allowing surveillance P-3 flights from Piura.²⁵

The surveillance agreement became a second best option for the US after Peruvian officials sought to eliminate any language and formal procedures for extended control over a Peruvian base, in the style of Manta, or any new agreements that would need congressional ratification of public debate. However, the Peruvian president told CNN in 2010 that he would gladly accept the presence of US military troops in his country in order to fight against drug-trafficking:

In all the topics that are human and universal, I don't make them as issues about sovereignty and patriotism. I mean, if the Americans would want to install training troops, just as they have here helicopters and satellite and communications trainers, they're welcome. Washington could collaborate technically and militarily as long as they are under Peru's command.²⁶

At the time, Peru received about US\$37 million per year in US aid plus 23 helicopters for the war on drugs.

According to the local press, in May 2012 the regional government of Piura handed two hectares to the US Southern Command to build a Center of Emergency Operations (COER in Spanish).²⁷ A few days later, the Congress Commission of Defense, Alternative Development and War on Drugs (Comision de Defensa, Orden Interno, Desarrollo Alternativo y Lucha Contra las Drogas del Congreso de la Republica) approved a bill that allows

²⁵Ambassador Curtis Struble. "GOP APPROVES CUSTOMS P-3 ORION FLIGHTS." 2007-04-04. US Embassy in Lima Cable 07LIMA1267

²⁶AFP. 2010. Alan Garca dispuesto a aceptar ms ayuda militar de EU. El Nuevo Diario, September 6. <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/82850>

²⁷Radio del Mar. 2012. Otra base militar estadounidense se instala en Peru. Radio del Mar, May 20. http://www.radiodelmar.cl/rdm_2012/index.php/internacional/88-latinoamerica/730-otra-base-militar-estadounidense-se-instala-en-peru.html

the entry of foreign military forces in national soil without mentioning foreign military bases.²⁸

8.4 Other quasi-bases in Latin America

A second scenario where quasi-bases arise involves the use of military bases for covert or semi-covert operations, where the US military seeks to escape the limitations and oversight of formal military bases. In these situations, quasi-bases provide access to local military installations including airstrips, communications facilities, training camps, and accommodation for US personnel, which function practically as bases but are not recognized as such by US officials. *Formal military bases* are not preferred in these cases, as they would imply the risk of politicization and involve extended oversight both in the host country and in the United States. A discussion about the US objectives and shifts in the forms of engagement in foreign military campaigns and the ongoing war on drugs is developed in chapter 2.

The model developed in this dissertation provides insights only about the quasi-bases discussed in the previous section, as those arising as preferred options over formal bases do not follow a similar path of domestic challenges. The inclusion of a discussion about these bases here is intended as expanding evidence of quasi-bases in Latin America that provides contrasting examples and additional information about quasi-base arrangements. This different source of quasi-bases calls for further research beyond this dissertation.

In contemporary Latin America, quasi-bases have arose from failed negotiations over formal military bases in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. In contrast, quasi-bases have served as the preferred option for US operations in Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica. With the exception of El Salvador, the United States seems to prefer quasi-bases in Central America, where a heavy portion of the current war against drugs is taking place, whereas

²⁸InfoRegin. 2012. Aprueban ingreso de tropas estadounidenses al Per. InfoRegin, May 31. <http://www.inforegion.pe/portada/135759/aprueban-ingreso-de-tropas-estadounidenses-al-peru/>

in the Andean countries of South America it preferred (and failed to obtain) formal bases. As expressed a former Foreign Relations Committee's western hemisphere specialist noted, the US does not benefit from formal contracting where the domestic political debate might jeopardize the existence of the base, or the local government might use the terms of the agreement to extract more benefits in the long run.²⁹

Guatemala

As part of the Operación Martillo, the US sent 171 Marines to the Guatemalan *Base Aerea del Sur* near the Pacific Ocean, in August 2012. The government denied it had allowed the US to operate a military base in the country, and instead argued the operation was a continuation of previous agreements on the "free transit of air craft" signed with the United States. Far from an aircraft transit operation, the US personnel in Guatemala was granted permission to engage in anti-drug military operations, operate heavy armed helicopters, occupy a part of the Base Aerea del Sur, and build military facilities in it through US contractors.³⁰ The agreement is set to expire after 120 days, but its renewal does not require more than the President's authorization that made it effective in the first place. In this way, US access to Guatemala escapes the constitutional requirement for congressional ratification of any agreement that allows foreign troops in the country's soil.

The US presence in the Base de Sur is supported by the nearby base of Colamapa in El Salvador and the Soto Cano base in Honduras. US troops are supposed to only find drug-laden planes and boats along Guatemalan coastlines. However, domestic forces will supposedly be doing the fighting, according to Obama administration spokesmen, who alleged that U.S. forces would only be allowed to defend themselves if fired upon.³¹ How-

²⁹Interview with Fulton Armstrong, former Foreign Relations Committee's western hemisphere specialist and former adviser to President Clinton. Washington DC, October 26th, 2012.

³⁰Siglo XXI, "Dan marcha a segunda fase de Operacin Martillo" August 20, 2012. Available at <http://www.s21.com.gt/node/265871>. Accessed Oct 19th, 2012.

³¹The New American, "Critics Slam Obama Deployment of U.S. Troops to Guatemala

ever, as shown by a recent Univision documentary, US troops engage in military operations against boats that carry drug shipments in the region.³²

The most intense armed operations against drug-traffic in Latin America is carried out by marines stationed in Guatemala, with support from the heavily armed fourth fleet. Out of the coast of Guatemala, several frigates, like the US Navy USS Nicholas, use war equipment to capture drug traffickers and seize shipments. About a thousand tons of cocaine are shipped from Latin America to the United States, 80% through sea routes near Guatemala and Honduras, and the rest through the territory of these same countries.³³

Costa Rica

Costa Rica, a country without an army of its own, invited the United States military to patrol its coasts in 2010. Framed as an agreement to fight drug-trafficking in the country's seas, the invitation was backed by both the government and the legislative. The agreement allowed the deployment of 7.000 US troops, 46 warships, 42 helicopters and five planes.³⁴ The terms allowed US operations in Costa Rica for six months, starting in January 2011, and is to be renewed every six months. The agreement does not lease any military base or port to the United States, and instead vaguely allows the United States to use ports and installations, including the naval base outside of Liberia in the north of the country, near the border with Nicaragua. The United States has upgraded the installations

for Drug War" Available at <http://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/foreign-policy/item/12749-critics-slam-obama-deployment-of-us-troops-to-guatemala-for-drug-war> Accessed Oct 19th, 2012

³²Univision, "Operacin Martillo (parte 1): la Marina de EEUU y su misi3n en la guerra contra las drogas" Available at <http://noticias.univision.com/noticiero-univision/videos/video/2012-07-10/busqueda-de-narcotraficantes-en-altamar> Accessed Oct 19th, 2012

³³Univision, "Operacin Martillo (parte 1): la Marina de EEUU y su misi3n en la guerra contra las drogas" Available at <http://noticias.univision.com/noticiero-univision/videos/video/2012-07-10/busqueda-de-narcotraficantes-en-altamar> Accessed Oct 19th, 2012

³⁴El Pais, "El aumento de ayuda militar estadounidense divide a Costa Rica." July 10, 2010. Accessed Jan 14, 2012. Available at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/07/10/actualidad/1278712801_850215.html

in the base and installed a radar to monitor aerial traffic in the region.³⁵ The US presence in the base in Liberia and other installations is surrounded by strict secrecy, due to the high sensitiveness of the Costa Rican public, who praise the lack of a standing military of their own, against foreign military bases in its territory.³⁶ Even so, the US Base Structure Report of 2012 lists one unnamed US installation in Costa Rica.

Honduras

Since the mid twentieth century, the United States had conducted occasional operations in Honduras, and after the Sandinista toppled the government in neighboring Nicaragua, the pro-US government of Honduras sought help from Washington to contain the spill over effects of the Nicaraguan revolution. The US welcomed the Honduran invitation, and extended their presence in Honduras as a platform to intervene in Nicaragua through a proxy war. The military installations used in Honduras for the Contras operation included the Soto Cano airfield, and other minor bases used in previous US operations, such as the Swan Islands, or Islas Santanilla, used to support the failed invasion of Cuba from the Bay of Pigs.

US presence in Honduran military bases was a top priority for both the Honduran and US governments. Declassified documents from the Reagan government show the commitment of his administration to preserving access to bases in Honduras during the Contras operation, and the concern of the Honduras government about a reduction in US military assistance after the US Congress started to question the secret operations carried from Honduras.³⁷

³⁵ Anep. "EE.UU reactivara radar y financiara base en Costa Rica" Available at <http://www.anep.or.cr/article/eeuu-reactivara-radar-y-financiara-base-en-costa-r/> Accessed Oct 22 2012

³⁶ Interview with Hector Silva, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington, DC., Washington DC, October 2012.

³⁷ A collection of these documents, related to bases in Central American and the Contras operations is available through the National Security Archive. Available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/index.htm>.

After the Contras and other anticommunist operations in Central America, the Soto Cano base has continued to support US military presence in the region, although today it serves a different purpose. The US' Southern Command installed one of its two task forces, U.S. Joint Task Force-Bravo, which combats drug traffic in Central America, in the Honduran military base of Soto Cano. It hosts approximately 550 US military personnel and more than 650 US and Honduran civilians. The US upgraded the base with a "unique" all-weather C-5 runway to support operations in Central America³⁸. The US has upgraded Soto Cano and other dozen of bases in Honduras with complete secrecy, as David Vine notes, "Many of these facilities have been built or upgraded without public notice, at times through exercise related construction, recalling the frequent use of secrecy and military exercises to evade congressional authority over base construction in in the 1980s." (Vine, Expected in 2013)

According to the Southern Command website, the personnel in the base serve in infrastructure and social programs, such as dental care for the poor and disaster relief. But beyond this humanitarian mission, the base is one of the main centers of operations of the "*Operación Martillo*", a heavily manned military operation against drug traffic through sea routes between South America and the United States. The Department of Defense spends around US\$90 million a year in contingency operations in the Soto Cano base.³⁹

But instead of a formal agreement leasing bases or parts of bases to the United States, the Honduran government opted for an informal permission to use its bases, without much specification of the limitations or terms of that use. The US presence in the Soto Cano base

³⁸United States General Accounting Office, "HONDURAS Continuing U.S. Military Presence at Soto Cano Base Is Not Critical," February 1995. Available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-NSIAD-95-39/pdf/GAOREPORTS-NSIAD-95-39.pdf> Accessed October 19th, 2012

³⁹OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget: Contingency Operations Base Budget. February 2012. Available at http://comptroller.defense.gov/defbudget/fy2013/FY2013_OCOTF.pdf. Accessed October 19th, 2012.

is supported by a 1982 appendix to the 1954 military assistance agreement, that unlike the original document, instead of getting congressional ratification became effective after the US Department of State and the Honduran Foreign Office simply exchanged diplomatic notes. In the new appendix.⁴⁰, the Honduran government granted the US the right to use the Honduran military bases of Palmerola (Soto Cano), Goloson and La Mesa, plus any other airstrip or installation agreed by the two governments. Another extension of the agreement also allowed the US to build or upgrade the installations in those bases. More recently, the US started training Honduran personnel and upgrading the facilities at the Naval BASE in Barra de Caratasca on the north coast.⁴¹

These extensions differ from the basing agreements in El Salvador and in Ecuador in that it does not specify a time lapse for the termination of the bases. As a result, the bases are theoretically leased indefinitely, which should guarantee more stability to them, but unlike Ecuador, in the case of a politicization of the basing agreement there would not be a pre-arranged termination date that would force the Honduran government to maintain the base until its completion. But the United States seems comfortable with this risk, given the importance of the base for Honduras. As drug related crime increases in the country, US anti-drug operations are critical for the government. On the other hand, formalizing the Soto Cano base agreement could politicize US-Honduras security cooperation at a time when domestic opposition is strong and the government weak. As expressed by Fulton Armstrong, “politically, do you have to have a public contract, do you need to have a public debate? In the case of Honduras the answer is no.”⁴²

⁴⁰The full text is available at <http://old.latribuna.hn/2009/09/13/anexo-al-convenio-militar-entre-honduras-y-los-estados-unidos-de-america/> Accessed October 19th, 2012.

⁴¹Ambassador Charles Ford. “ZELAYA ADMINISTRATION AT THE MIDPOINT: SECURITY ISSUES.” US Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Cable 08TEGUCIGALPA165 2008-02-26

⁴²Interview with Fulton Armstrong, former Foreign Relations Committee’s western hemisphere specialist and former adviser to President Clinton. Washington DC, October 26th, 2012.

Politicization of its most important base in Central America concerned the US in 2008. After the US refused to allow commercial use of the installations attached to the airstrip,⁴³ the center-left elected president Manuel Zelaya ordered the military to build a civilian air terminal in the Soto Cano base in 2008. The facility was to be paid with Venezuelan funds through the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA, the Venezuela led regional organization that opposes US influence in the region),⁴⁴ arguing that the airbase, equipped with the best airstrip in the country, belonged to the people of Honduras.

Zelaya had joined the ALBA and its oil cooperation body, Petrocaribe, and increased anti-US rhetoric signaling the US that its historical ally was moving away from Washington.⁴⁵ Even the US ambassador was put through a humiliating delay for a week before accepting diplomatic credentials, in solidarity with anti-US Bolivia's decision to expell the US ambassador in La Paz.⁴⁶ At the same time, following the steps of Hugo Chavez and Rafael Correa, Zelaya sought to initiate a new constitutional assembly, which in the case of Ecuador led to a constitutional ban on foreign troops in the country.

To Washington's relief, two weeks after the announcement of the construction plans, the military broke into Zelaya's presidential palace, escorted him at gunpoint to an airplane while he still wore his pajamas, flew him to the Soto Cano air base for re-fueling, and then out of the country into Costa Rica. The United States seemed to welcome the end

⁴³Despite claiming support for the commercialization of the airstrip, leaked cables show the US interest in blocking Zelaya's attempts to build a civilian airport in the base. See US Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Cables 07TEGUCIGALPA1678 2007-10-19, 08TEGUCIGALPA165 2008-02-26, 08TEGUCIGALPA527 2008-06-02, and 08TEGUCIGALPA541 2008-06-10

⁴⁴Kozloff, Nikolas. "Zelaya, Negroponte and Controversy at U.S. Air Base of Soto Cano (Palmerola)" Available at http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=405x19601 Accessed October 19th, 2012

⁴⁵Latin American Weekly Report, "Honduras to opt for Alba?" August 21st 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

⁴⁶Latin American Weekly Report, "New US ambassador kept waiting for a week" September 25th 2008. Available at <http://latinnews.com/>. Accessed April 26th, 2013

of Zelaya's administration, even if the process of his removal was not welcomed. The military coup was condemned internationally, and the US Department of State denies US involvement in the operation. President Zelaya, however, claims that Honduran soldiers were following orders from the United States.⁴⁷

8.5 Conclusion

Quasi-bases are a major security issue in Latin America. The core of the US Southern Command's *Operacion Martillo* is a network of quasi bases in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, and elsewhere, where the US operates war vessels, equipment, and aircraft. Unlike the formal base in El Salvador, which is regulated against armed operations, the unregulated quasi-bases in the rest of Latin America provide safe spaces for the US military to engage in interdiction and combat against drug traffickers and organized crime. With the support from the fourth fleet, these quasi-bases are critical components of the US contemporary version of the war on drugs.

US bases have existed in Central America at different times during the twentieth century, and they were critical for US covert operations during the Cold War. After a period of decreased military operations in the region, new bases resurfaced as critical components of US security policy in the region. But while in the late 90's the US succeeded in establishing formal Forward Operating Locations in El Salvador, the Caribbean and South America, the new bases of the 2000's are informal agreements granting tacit access to local military bases without legal leases. As a result, the democratic institutions responsible for discussing new security agreements are being overpassed and the political participation of the local populations is being neglected.

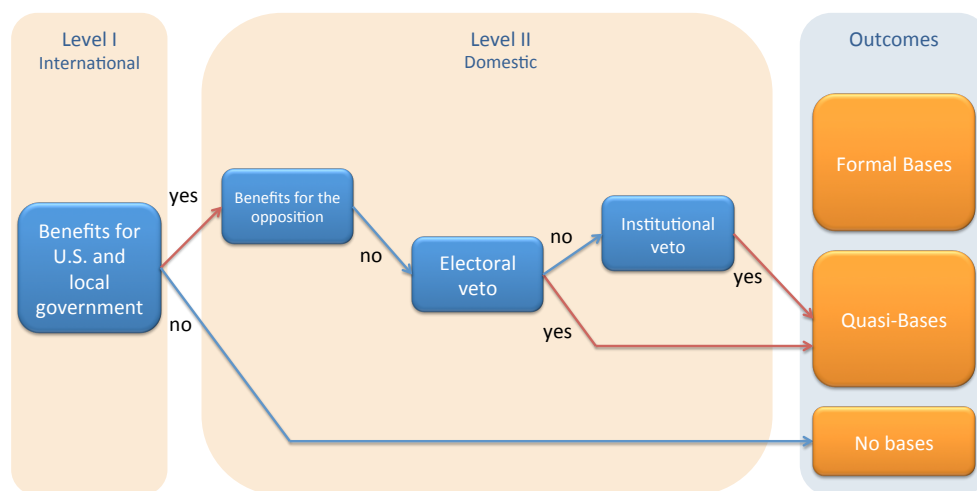
Both the United States and the governments of Latin America gain politically when

⁴⁷Democracy Now, "Exclusive Interview with Manuel Zelaya on the U.S. Role in Honduran Coup, WikiLeaks and Why He Was Ousted" May 31st, 2011. Available at http://www.democracynow.org/2011/5/31/exclusive_interview_with_manuel_zelaya_on Accessed October 19th, 2012.

they overlook the constitutional requirement of congressional ratification for the establishment of new bases. In this way bases are protected against politicization, as opposition forces are unable to generate open debates against the bases in the legislature. Military operations from these bases are subject to less scrutiny, and legal action against the bases is unlikely to succeed.

This chapter about quasi-bases in Latin America completes my argument about how negotiations to open or maintain formal US bases in Latin America fail or succeed. Quasi-bases have allowed the US military to operate in Latin America where the need for secrecy or the obstacles of domestic politics have ruled out formal bases. Figure 8.1 represents the path towards the installment of quasi-bases under the condition of failed formal basing negotiations. These alternative arrangements have allowed the US military to operate from the region when formal negotiations failed, thus eliminating the need for the US to take the extreme options of retreating from the region or forcing the installment of formal bases.

Figure 8.1: Model E: Failed formal negotiations and quasi-bases



The discussion advanced here about quasi-bases arising as preferred options over for-

mal bases used them to expand our characterization of quasi-bases and the evidence about stability and the political issues surrounding their existence in Latin America. However, further research will be needed beyond this dissertation to explore the motivations for seeking non-formal agreements in the first place and the different types of negotiations that led to their establishment. At this point, the capacity to provide insights about these issues is limited by the scope of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

Through this dissertation I have sought to provide an explanation of why formal basing agreements have not commonly been successful in Latin America since the start of the century. The dissertation considered negotiations where formal bases succeeded, and a series of cases where they did not. The explanation for the different outcomes seems to come not from diverging preferences from national governments, but from the domestic processes that allowed or blocked basing negotiations, despite government preferences.

The United States and Latin American governments failed to materialize most formal bases even in the cases where the host government was strongly interested in them or was willing to fully cooperate with US security interests in the region. Quasi-bases, alternative arrangements where bases are used by or shared with the United States without a formal lease, became second-best options for these cases, as illustrated in the previous chapters. But neither the United States or these countries planned to use quasi-bases as permanent solutions, and instead were driven to change their preferences once formal bases were blocked by domestic political mechanisms such as electoral challenges or domestic institutions.

The conceptual framework developed in chapter 3 provided a list of propositions that describe how domestic politics have interfered with formal US bases in the region. But instead of “domestic politics” as a broad abstract category, I have argued that when

host governments desire foreign bases, three particular conditions are key to determining whether basing negotiations would succeed: the benefits perceived by the opposition, the opposition's electoral strength, and the institutional mechanisms available in case of weaker opposition forces.

The first proposition argued that when analyzing basing agreements in democratic societies, one should first ask if the local opposition perceives a political advantage from supporting or opposing the basing agreement. In the case of El Salvador, the local opposition—at the time led by its moderate fraction—perceived political benefits from engaging in the discussion about opening a US base attached to San Salvador's local airport. Instead of opposing it radically, which would have caused troubles for the opposition in a country that depends largely on Salvadorans living in the US, the FMLN chose to gain political credit from supporting the agreement, but forced the government to restrict US presence and limit the operations permitted from the base. At the same time, the opposition was able to show its moderate posture towards the United States, and also spread the idea that it was expanding El Salvador's sovereignty by reducing the freedom of US forces to operate in its territory. As a result, the formal base at Colamapa was approved by the local congress, and it remains open today after its renewal in 2009.

The second proposition argued that if the local opposition perceives more political gains from opposing the base, and it is strong enough to pose an electoral threat to the government, formal bases will not succeed. Foreign military bases are a sensitive issue in Latin America, and despite their preferences, governments must take into account how opening US formal bases will affect the stability of their governments. The case of the renewal of the Manta base in El Salvador is an example of a fragile political coalition that could not risk an electoral defeat by ignoring promises of expelling the US military from the country. Ten years of intense political instability in Ecuador taught this lesson to the Ecuadorean government.

Even when the United States actively sought to maintain the base, the consolidation of the domestic opposition and its anti-US platform, led to the impossibility of its renewal. Ecuador's transformation, in the context of major political instability, led to the victory of Rafeal Correa and his political coalition from Ecuador's opposition parties and civil movements. As he led the opposition into gaining power, President Correa used the termination of the base as an electoral promise that was instrumental to unite different factions of Ecuador's opposition. But in private, Correa was very committed to cooperating closely with the US anti-drug interests in Ecuador, and was willing to offer alternatives to the United States after closing the base. Instead of radically contesting US interests in Ecuador, Correa had to balance the need for demonstrating his nationalism to hold his political coalition together, and his more private commitment to cooperating with the United States in key areas. A quasi-base arrangement, discussed in section 8.3 was finally reached as a compromise.

The third proposition argued that when the local opposition does not pose an electoral challenge to the government, but can successfully use institutional mechanisms to constrain the actions of the government, formal basing negotiations become more difficult and might not work at all. The case of Colombia illustrates this argument. Even when the Colombian government had a strong interest in offering formal bases to the United States, and even when a formal negotiation was advanced and concluded between the two governments, a strong and independent constitutional court vetoed it after the local opposition from the civil society filed a legal challenge against the signed agreement. This is the strongest case in which the preferences of governments fails to explain the outcomes of basing negotiations. Under a traditional framework of hegemonic systems or dependent association, one would only see the strong interest of the Colombian government for US military bases, but one could not explain why these failed without exploring the emergence of institutional veto players within Colombia's consolidating democracy.

The fourth proposition holds that if the opposition does not pose an electoral challenge to the government, and does not count with institutional mechanisms to veto foreign policy decisions, interested governments are likely to approve bases and ignore the local opposition. This was the case of Ecuador in 1999, when it offered the Manta base to the United States before the political transformation that brought Rafael Correa to the presidency. Even if many leaders of the opposition were vociferous against the base, and even when serious accusations of illegality surrounded the agreement, the local government was able to materialize the base without ratification from congress or analysis at a local high court. It was during the few years following the opening of the base that the opposition grew strong enough to pose electoral challenges to pro-US governments and change the story of the base in 2009.

The fifth and final proposition argued that the failure of formal basing negotiations is not the end of the story for US military presence in Latin America. When formal negotiations are blocked by the local opposition, but the local government and the United States are still interested in bases, quasi-bases have become the preferred alternative and have been installed despite local opposition. In every case where formal negotiations failed—Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador—some sort of quasi-base arrangement has been established, and US military presence has continued. Instead of retreating, the US has continued its efforts to operate from countries in Latin America where formal bases failed, through alternative arrangements that escape the veto mechanisms of the local opposition.

9.1 The utility of this approach

This dissertation developed a base politics approach, which considers the obstacles of domestic politics for the realization of the preferences of governments regarding foreign military bases. This framework has sought to shift our attention away from the traditional question “Are foreign bases the preference of host governments?” and replace it for “Even if

bases are the preference of host government, will domestic politics make them impossible?" Traditional approaches to inter-American relations, discussed in chapter 2, seek to explain outcomes based on understanding the rationality behind foreign policy decisions, and thus seek primarily to explain government preferences. In this way, different frameworks have offered rational explanations of why Latin American government would accept, or even invite, US interventionism or dominance. They assume that government preferences translate unproblematically into state behavior in international relations. The approach developed in this dissertation recognizes government preferences, but moves beyond them to identify the domestic conditions that can make governments fail to materialize their preferences. In sum, I have sought to highlight the limitations of previous approaches and point out that state behavior is not solely explained by government's rationality.

The type of approach developed here is in principle applicable to other foreign policy decisions. The logic of two level games has already advanced our understanding of the obstacles that domestic politics pose for international decision-making, but I argue that the study of basing negotiations in the Western Hemisphere can provide new insights into this area. For example, the focus of two level games on United States domestic politics has given much importance to the role of Congress to restrain the choices of executives in international relations. The study of Latin American domestic politics contributes to the study of two other sites of domestic opposition that work to restrain foreign policy choices: civil society groups and domestic institutions. In some of the cases studied in this dissertation it was not the local legislature who blocked basing agreements, but the pressure of opposition groups from civil society or domestic institutions such as high courts. Instead of solely looking at the ratification process of international agreements in the local parliament, two level game approaches should consider the actual veto players from the domestic opposition in different countries, and the institutional mechanisms at their disposal to block or limit government decision in international relations.

9.2 The importance of domestic politics

As base politics remind us, rulers in host countries have to evaluate the consequences of opening foreign bases in their territories in terms of their own political survival. Even when the host government is willing to open a military base, congressional support might be limited, and in the case of strong executives overpassing congressional ratification, the existence of domestic veto players, such as independent high courts, can limit the capacity of the government to grant bases to the United States.

Foreign military presence in Latin America is widely contested, especially that of the United States (Yeo, 2011). Latin American governments must take into consideration the risks of widespread political opposition when they negotiate new bases or base renewals with the United States. While in the past governments were able to get away with opening US military bases, stronger mechanisms of democratic participation have empowered opposition parties and civil society organizations to block basing agreements, either through electoral victory or through independent courts. This dissertation presented the case of Ecuador, where the election of an alternative government inspired by nationalistic rhetoric meant the termination of the Manta Air Base agreement. It also showed the case of Colombia, where a very powerful government with a wide majority of popular support could not materialize its intention to open several formal US military bases when a civil society organization brought the case to a strong and independent constitutional court that ruled the agreement unlawful. In Peru, the government did offer a formal base and started preliminary negotiations, but the fear of political debate made the negotiations stall.

The elected leaders in Colombia and Peru were not worried about losing sovereignty to the United States, nor they feared US military presence in their territories. They did fear, instead, an organized domestic reaction against their governments, costing them political support and eventually even the stability of their rule. And this they communicated to the

United States in each of their negotiation processes. The results were mixed, with Colombia going all the way through a negotiation process for new bases, of Cooperative Security Locations, while Peru opted for more discrete arrangements where no formal agreements were needed.

But even in the Colombian case, Presidents Uribe and Santos warned over and over that the agreement for the new bases had to be framed in a way that would avoid Congress ratification, or a debate between opposition and government forces. Even if Uribe, and later Santos, had enough support in Congress to ratify the agreement, neither of them wanted to damage their political strength by going through a lengthy and public debate about how they were ceding Colombia's sovereignty to the United States. This the Constitutional Court picked on to nullify the agreement, for the court believed Congressional approval was required to approve the new obligations contained in the agreement.

9.3 Quasi-bases and the continued US military presence in Latin America

Failed negotiations to open or renew US formal bases are not the end of the story. Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru offered the US different alternative options when formal bases were not possible. They offered to grant access to the US military to different local bases, without a formal contract or base lease. These bases, formally in control of the host country, also host US airplanes, civilian and military personnel, US equipment, and in several cases their infrastructure has been developed with US funds and by US contractors. To most students of US bases, these qualify as such. But to the host government and to the United States, these bases are not counted as US military installations, and are only acknowledged as a form of security cooperation.

This way, the United States has bypassed the obstacles of formal basing negotiations and has managed to continue to pursue its security interests in Latin America. While formal bases seem to be no longer an option in the region, given the high risk of politicization,

quasi-bases have provided access to the US military to many countries in Latin America, including those where formal bases were denied.

Formal bases have already been studied and conceptualized in the literature. Quasi-bases, on the other hand, have so far been studied indistinctly as bases, or ignored. In this study, three types of quasi-bases were observed. On the lowest level of formality and commitment, Ecuador and Peru opened quasi-bases on a “gas and go” scheme, where US military planes are allowed to land and refuel, and their crew are allowed to spend a short time. In these type of quasi-bases, US personnel is not allowed to conduct operations or operate intelligence or communications equipment from the bases. These facilities do, however, serve as supporting facilities in the network of military facilities from where the United States projects its aerial capacities.

US troops may be stationed and may operate in temporary access bases, a second type of quasi-base. Guatemala and Costa Rica recently allowed the US to operate from local bases, from where the US manages communications and intelligence equipment, trains local forces, and in some cases engages in actual combat against drug-traffickers in the sea routes leading to Central America. The access to these bases and operations were restricted by both governments to short periods of time, in both cases under a year. No treaty or contractual obligation establishes the lease of bases, but the “security cooperation” agreements that allowed the US to operate from these countries specified that the government was required to revise and renew the authorization for US military access to these countries periodically. In practice, as long as the governments of these countries continue to align their security policies with the United States, no major source of instability is likely to arise for these agreements.

Two other countries, Colombia and Honduras, host US quasi-bases that are not restricted in time. The Soto Cano base in Honduras has hosted US operations, construction, and permanent occupation for three decades and, apart from the short-lived administration

of Manuel Zelaya, no Honduran government has jeopardized US *de facto* control over the installations. This base is so important for the US military in the region, that the US Southern Command chose it to host one of its two elite forces in the region. In Colombia, seven military bases are counted as hosting US facilities by the US Department of Defense. These bases also serve for stationing and refueling US planes, operating intelligence and communications equipment, and training local forces. While no combat operations are performed by US troops in Colombian territory, the US has a constant military presence and has played an important role in the transformation of the Colombian security panorama in the last 15 years.

Historically, the United States has relied on imposing bases in weaker states or negotiating leasing agreements (Harkavy, 2007). But both these possibilities are increasingly more difficult in a time of democratization and condemnation of US interventionism. While a number of governments have worked around the limitations of domestic politics and opened US quasi-bases in their territories, not all governments facing complex security situations and drug-related threats have allowed the United States to operate from its territory. Figure 9.1 shows the countries that host US bases and quasi-bases in Latin America. They have been divided into three levels of closeness or “alignment” with the United States, using two revealing, although imperfect, proxies. In the first column appear countries that have a free trade agreement with the United States, as a proxy for their alignment with the United States. In the third column appear countries that have joined the Venezuela-led *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* (ALBA), which openly contests US military presence in the region. In the middle column appear countries that are neither align nor oppose the United States.

As we would expect, a cluster of countries in the north-west corner of figure 9.1

Figure 9.1: US alignment and presence of bases and quasi-bases

		US ally	Neutral	Opposed
		FTA with US		Member of ALBA
Bases		El Salvador, Ecuador**		Cuba
Quasi-bases	Long-term	Honduras, Colombia		
	Temporary	Guatemala, Costa Rica		
	Gas and go	Peru, Panama, Chile		Ecuador**
No bases		Mexico, Nicaragua*	Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay	Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua*

*Nicaragua signed an FTA with the United States as part of the CAFTA-DR in 2004 under the US-aligned Liberal Party. In 2007 the opposition Sandinista party replaced the liberals in power and joined the ALBA group.

**Ecuador advanced negotiations for an FTA with the United States, but these broke in 2005. In 2009 Ecuador evicted the US from its base in the country and in the same year it joined ALBA.

indicates that countries that are aligned with the United States through free trade are also more likely to offer bases or the quasi-bases alternative to their northern neighbor. In contrast, all the countries members of ALBA are reluctant to offer access to the US military to their bases and territories. Ecuador compromised after it evicted the US from its base in Manta, and allowed a gas and go program. The US formal military base of Guantanamo is officially within Cuban territory, but the Cuban government firmly opposes US presence on the island—at least rhetorically, as the presence of the base provides a source of nationalist sentiment that benefits the regime— and has called for the withdrawal of US troops and the termination of their questionable activities in the base. However, the existence of a formal contract containing a perpetual lease to the United States, and not only its military might, allows the United States to claim the authority to stay in Cuban territory.

Further research is needed to explore the magnitude of the phenomenon of quasi-

bases in other regions of the world. Some evidence indicates that informal or secret bases are spreading around the globe, and might even been one defining characteristic of what Nick Turse has called “The changing face of Empire” (Turse 2012). While this project restricted its scope to Latin America, a natural continuation of this line of research would be to expand the analysis to other regions and document other types of arrangements that populate the world of foreign military presence.

9.4 Can formal bases exist in contemporary Latin America?

The dissertation recognized a case where political opposition to US bases did not prevent the establishment and later renewal of a base in El Salvador. In this case, the political benefits from the base spread to both the governing party and the opposition, making resistance to the base minimal. In this particular case, even the opposition recognized the political importance of having (and demonstrating) a good relation with the United States. In all other cases, where the political benefits of bases were restricted to the governing party, electoral challenges or institutional veto players ended the opportunity to open formal US bases in Latin America. The model constructed in chapter 3 seeks to describe the ideal-typical version of this process.

The case of El Salvador illustrates how foreign military bases can coexist with political systems in the Americas where the opposition is strong. When bases benefit most political groups, basing agreements can be discussed in Congress and be dutifully ratified, thus providing the legitimacy of legal international treaties. When the opposition recognizes the importance of a foreign base, even if it is for self interested political reasons, no electoral threat or institutional veto is likely to stop a basing agreement. This situation, however, is not common. All other cases of basing negotiations concentrated the benefits in the ruling party and its political allies, and opposition forces became fierce challengers of US military bases.

On the long run, if the United States seeks to open a new formal military base in the region, US officials will have to take into account the likelihood of domestic opposition and prepare to offer benefits to political groups outside of the ruling coalition. This way, the United States might avoid entering into secret agreements that do not provide legal support for US operations abroad. The operational capacity of formal bases might be limited by congressional oversight, but the US would gain legitimacy by abiding to international and national laws and allowing its bases to be monitored. As an additional advantage, formalizing its bases would provide stability to basing agreements in changes of government occur in the host country. Opposition movements might win upcoming elections as they have in many countries already. If this is the case, formal basing agreements would provide a form of semi-legal protection to US operations never provided by quasi-bases.

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