

THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOCIALIST VENEZUELA: THE CASE OF US
DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE, VENEZUELAN NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION LAW

by

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(Under the Direction of David Smilde)

ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, the US has provided material and technical support, or democracy assistance, to political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the world. Two theoretical perspectives have governed analysis of this phenomenon, including a neo-Tocquevillian and a neo-Marxist perspective. These two perspectives, however, contain several theoretical blindspots that require rectification. To provide a more robust theory of US democracy assistance efforts, I have selected Venezuela as a case study. As a result of previous theoretical shortcomings, I have developed a neo-Weberian perspective. Similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, this perspective recognizes that the US mainly promotes US-style liberal democratic policies in the countries that it operates, and, similar to both perspectives, this perspective recognizes that US democracy assistance primarily flows to the Venezuelan opposition. Unlike the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, this perspective recognizes that the US has provided assistance to actors that have not always pursued democratic measures, and it recognizes that a multiplicity of legitimate forms of democratic politics exist, including the radical and participatory politics that the Venezuelan government has promoted. Unlike the neo-Marxist perspective, this perspective can make sense of the select instances in which the US has

funded actors that have worked with and commended the Venezuelan government. Most importantly, this perspective asserts the centrality of US officials' ideological motivations, and shows how these officials understand the Venezuelan government in colonialist and racist terms. This perspective asserts that these understandings of the Venezuelan government serve as the basis and justification for US democracy assistance endeavors in the country. Finally, I examine the Venezuelan government's passage of anti-NGO legislation in 2010. I argue that while the Venezuelan government sought to pass a highly restrictive form of anti-NGO legislation that would prohibit foreign funding for all NGOs in 2006, it stalled this legislation due to influence from several foreign countries and international groups. In 2010, following the Venezuelan government's consolidation of relations with an anti-US nexus of countries, the Venezuelan government successfully passed a less comprehensive piece of anti-NGO legislation that prohibits foreign funding for political parties and political NGOs.

INDEX WORDS: Venezuela; US Foreign Policy; Democracy Assistance; Political Sociology; Globalization; Non-Governmental Organizations; Socialism

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2016

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August 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people that I must thank for assisting me in the development and completion of my dissertation. From my first semester at the University of Georgia, David Smilde, my dissertation advisor and mentor, has provided me with an incredible amount of guidance, confidence, and support. I took four courses with David (Sociology of Religion, Development of Sociological Theory, Sociology of Culture, and Political Sociology), and, in those courses, I learned more about how to understand, critique, and do sociological research than I have anywhere else. Some of my greatest memories from the last seven years have been the debates, arguments, and jokes that transpired within David's seminars. Outside of the classroom, David has been more than generous with his time and attention. Shortly after arriving at UGA, David and I were at Barberito's talking about Michel Foucault's conception of power and knowledge. I'm not sure what all those in earshot thought about the conversation, but I am so very grateful that David was willing to work with me over nearly the past decade.

During this time, David always seriously entertained my interests, ideas, and claims. From my first semester onwards, David listened to me ramble about C. Wright Mills, Alvin Gouldner, punk music, Cleveland, wrestling, and, of course, my interest in Venezuelan politics and US foreign policy. There is no doubt that I came to UGA intellectually rough around the edges. I feel all the more confident as a junior scholar, knowing that I have worked so closely with David and that I have absorbed some of his sociological wisdom over these last few years. He has provided me with a number of opportunities regarding Venezuela that I would not have had should I have went to another university. More than this, David has become a friend over the years, and someone that I thoroughly to seeing whenever I can.

I served as a teaching assistant for David in his undergraduate theory courses, and much of my approach to interacting with students comes from David. It is an unfortunate truth that there are teachers and professors that cannot connect with students, disregard their teaching, and remain loathe to engage with students within and beyond the classroom. David, however, showed me that you can be an extremely productive scholar and a talented teacher too. David showed respect for his students, and they showed him respect in return. Learning from David's approach and demeanor towards the students has provided me with an essential resource in my own work in the classroom.

Outside of the classroom, David has provided my academic career with much excitement. He asked me to help him organize the Georgia Workshop on Culture, Power, and History for two years; selected me to work with him and Rebecca Hanson on *Qualitative Sociology*; and co-authored a paper and several pieces for the Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights blog with him, as well as serve as co-moderator. All of these endeavors have provided with an incredibly rich academic experience that I never expected. The Georgia Workshops were events that I greatly looked forward to every semester. They involved vigorous academic discussion, where all participants were treated as peers and no condescension emerged. And, of course, I greatly looked forward to post-Workshop festivities out on the town. I will very much miss those meetings and outings in Athens, but I look forward to the years ahead with my colleagues.

Patricia Richards has also provided me with recurrent support, guidance, and feedback throughout my time as a graduate student. In my second semester, I took a course on social movements with Patricia, and, in my second year, I served as a teaching assistant for her in a course on Latin American politics. In my interactions with Patricia, I have continually found that one can conduct sociological research and still maintain a critical viewpoint. I have also found

myself enjoying a nice chuckle during each interaction I have had with Patricia, whether it was on my continuous usage of “what not” or a discussion on dealing with students in the classroom.

Pablo Lapegna has been the third source of support to my dissertation puzzle. Although I did not enroll in any courses with Pablo, that is, because he arrived following my completion of coursework, I have learned very much from Pablo in our continual conversations in Baldwin Hall, during my comprehensive examinations, and at the Georgia Workshops. Pablo has provided me with much insight on journal publishing, developing interesting research questions, clarifying the importance of my research, and honing my methodology. Beyond my own project, I have thoroughly benefited from our conversations on Latin American politics more generally and punk music throughout the world. Pablo took over the Georgia Workshop following David’s move to Tulane, and maintained an equally cordial and welcoming atmosphere. He also continued the tradition of post-Workshop festivities that, as I noted above, became one of the highlights of each semester.

Beyond my dissertation committee, I have also greatly benefited from interactions and instruction from Jim Dowd, Dawn Robinson, and Mark Cooney. Jim was the first professor that TA’d for at UGA. I was not sure what to expect and was given a number of new responsibilities. Jim, however, provided a warm atmosphere and always made time to discuss any issues that arose as a break-out session leader. Jim possesses a breadth of theoretical and empirical knowledge, as well as much insight on life in general. From the beginning until the end of my time at UGA, Jim has been an individual that I could consistently count on to take my ideas seriously, but give me his honest opinion and not beat around the bush. One of the first ideas I floated to him was to study the motivations behind US citizens expatriating to Central American countries. This was seven years ago, and, at a dinner in Athens only just a couple months ago

he was asking me about this project. I had not thought about the project in years. I am very grateful to have had Jim's encouragement – at workshops, presentations, as a professor, and as a friend.

Dawn Robinson is someone that possesses an impossibly sharp understanding of the workings of sociology. In my second year as a graduate student, I took a course on contemporary sociological theory with her, and, since then, I have maintained an ongoing conversation with her concerning my research, my aspirations, the state of sociology, and a whole array of odds and ends. She is someone that cultivates a welcoming atmosphere in Baldwin Hall and shows an interest in all students and their work. Throughout my time at UGA, I have very much appreciated her presence. I never enrolled in any courses with Mark Cooney, but, like Dawn, I have very much appreciated his presence at UGA. He has also worked hard to cultivate an open environment in Baldwin Hall and has always been willing to share his views on particular pieces of research, particular theoretical viewpoints, and his own pure sociological perspective. Throughout the past seven years, I have always looked forward to my interactions with Mark. I also very much appreciate his fielding of my constant questions about life and dynamics in Ireland.

I also want to thank the professors I have worked with beyond UGA. I attended John Carroll University beginning in 2003, and there were a number of professors who confirmed that sociology was the correct path for me to pursue. Kenneth Eslinger initially introduced me to C. Wright Mills, perhaps the most important sociologist I encountered during those early years. Mills' work confirmed for me that the academy could be exciting and that you could pursue all those critical hunches you developed in your youth, while living in Cleveland, listening to punk rock, and witnessing all the disparities that puzzled your mind. I hesitantly took a course on work

and industry at JCU with Paul Lipold, and learned so much in that course and in my exchanges with Paul. I took several courses with Richard Clarke, including a course on violence and a course on the death penalty. Although I did not pursue studies in criminology, those courses further confirmed that one could become a social scientist and maintain respect for all individuals, regardless of their past transgressions. In retrospect, those courses with Dr. Clarke were firmly rooted in the Jesuit tradition of developing compassions for all individuals, especially the poor and oppressed, more than any other courses I took at John Carroll. Wendy Wiedenhof's theory course was the first time I really engaged with thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Pierre Bourdieu. That course confirmed that I wanted to attend graduate school. I craved more time with these thinkers and their ideas. I also took several courses with Duane Dukes, who brought so much joy and laughter to the learning experience. He encouraged me to attend graduate school and always provided me with time to knock around sociological ideas and find what area of sociology would suit me best. I never enrolled in any courses with Gloria Vaquera, but I had several important conversations with her about what I could expect within graduate school, and, even though she did not know too much about me, she continually urged me to continue my sociological studies. The interactions were few, but she said those things that I needed to hear at a time when, in retrospect, I felt like I was stumbling around in the dark.

At Cleveland State University, I was also fortunate to garner knowledge from a number of professors that helped me hone my interests. I enrolled in an independent study with Peter Meiksins on Marxist theory, and it is within those interactions that I believe that I truly learned how to critique sociological theorists and put them into dialogue. It is in those interactions that I felt that I could begin to articulate my own ideas, have them seriously considered, and engage in an academic dialogue. Peter also served as my thesis advisor and helped me to hone my

sociological thinking, develop an intensive theoretical framework, and pushed me to do more work than I thought I could do at the time. Donald Ramos also served as a thesis committee member, and he helped me write in a more academic manner. At the time, he was aware I was playing in a band, so he would regularly remind me that I cannot write academic prose in the same way I write lyrical content. That was a lesson that I needed to learn, and I am fortunate that someone helped me to understand certain ideas on my own terms. I enrolled in a theory course with Jim Chriss, and it became a highlight of my week and my semester. Jim would say that sociology and stand-up comedy were fairly similar – both professions made the familiar strange. Jim himself brought both rigor and a sense of humor to the classroom. He also introduced me to Alvin Ward Gouldner, and urged me to consider the relationship between him and Mills. I thank him for that, and for helping me to develop the first idea I would use to publish a sociological research article. Finally, at CSU, I enrolled in a Latin American history course with José Sola. José offered all the time I requested to speak about graduate school, Venezuela, Latin American politics, and my applications. He often treated me with more respect than I thought I deserved as a 23-year old kid. In doing so, he helped me to take myself seriously and develop a sense of confidence within the university.

Back at UGA, I have been surrounded by a number of individuals that have offered friendship, critique, and respite. Without doubt, Phil Lewin has put up with me more than anyone else in the department. From late night ramblings to musical arguments to, shall I say, creative telephone calls, Phil has been someone I could always count on to have my back. I have seen graduate school described as an incredibly isolating experience. There have certainly been moments. However, I have never felt truly isolated with Phil around town. No matter where we've been or what weird situation has arisen (there have been many), he has always brought

joy, laughter wit, and an immense amount of intellect to the table. There are not many other people in this world whose perspective I value more than his. I can always expect him to tell me truth about whatever is at hand: sociology, music, the rubber pencil, alligators throughout the swamps of Louisiana, you name it. I am very grateful for his friendship, and I am very grateful for all the moments and experiences we have shared together. I look forward to more collaboration in the years ahead – in song, in conversation, in alligator-finding, and on an ethnographic analysis of bottles of water. There is only Phil Lewin in the world, and I'm glad to have met him.

Rebecca Hanson has been my cohort mainstay. Becca and I came to UGA at the same time, had the same advisor, worked with the same committee, and on the same country. The first time I met Becca, she asked what I thought of a particular sociologist's research methodology. I was kind of startled to talk about research methodology outside of the classroom and before noon. That confirmed to me that there are some people that really love this thing called sociology. Nearly every course I completed at UGA, Becca was there. She has undeniably enriched how I think about sociological phenomenon, Venezuelan politics, and an array of other issues. She has also undeniably enriched my argumentative skills. She is fully connected with my fond memories of coursework and Workshop discussions at UGA, which involved an endless slew of arguments, big and small. Truth be told, the arguments never ceased at the classroom door. They came and went all over Athens. And they didn't even stop there. She is also fully connected with my fond memories of research in Venezuela. Once at a Chinese restaurant/bar in a working-class neighborhood in Venezuela, we made a fully packed bar go silent for a moment around 11pm with our arguing over who knows what. Needless to say, I am very grateful for Becca and her presence. I have been able to count on her to tell me the truth – no punches pulled.

Taylor Houston has also been a great friend of mine since my beginnings at UGA. From the start, I knew that Taylor and I had a great deal in common: interest in punk rock, appreciation for C. Wright Mills, and, of course, our hearing deficiencies. Over the years, Aiola and I have had a wonderful time hanging out with Taylor and Courtney. All the while, we would bat around sociological ideas. Taylor is someone that always pursues an intersectional approach and implores all those within earshot to do the same. I have appreciated his passion, his joy for life, and his friendship. I look forward to hanging out more in the future, even if we don't get to the cattle auction.

Several other friends at UGA have made for an exciting, stimulating, and enjoyable experience. Conversations with Matt Greife and Jeff Shelton before and after Game of Thrones on Sunday nights will not soon be forgotten, but some of our conversations on those Friday and Saturday nights that turned into Saturday and Sunday mornings might unintentionally be. Jessica Seberger and Zac Watne provided support and conversation during those earliest years in the program. We spent many of our first classes together, and, like Becca, there were always around to share in the ventilation. I will always remember Zac's discussion question in our sociology of religion course regarding how big of a piece of the cross must the piece be to be considered a holy artifact. Could it be a sliver, or does it have to be bigger? It is a question that continues to perplex my mind, keeps me awake at night, and challenges me to become a better researcher. In all seriousness, Zac has been someone I could always rely on for great conversation and to help me put things into perspective. I think I drove him crazy in Jacksonville when I blasted punk music for much of our trip from Athens to Florida. Then when we got the hotel room, I opened my computer and immediately blasted some more music. I remember Zac exclaiming "More?!!!" He requested I turn it off, and I did. I believe that illustrates what great respect I have for him.

Other friends that have enriched my UGA experience are Kait Boyle, who I wish I could insert the frog face emoticon here for, but unfortunately I cannot; Ashleigh Mckinzie, who consistently demonstrated a commitment to thinking about sociology and research, and has pushed all of us to talk more about it; Tim Edgemon, who, although, only recently entered the program, has shared many conversations on theory, research, and just plain living; Eric Klopach, who also only recently entered the program, but in the last two years I knew I could always share a laugh with; Jamie Palmer, who I always enjoyed the Workshop and post-Workshop festivities with, along with several courses; Brittany Martin, who also recently entered the department, but who has been a welcome presence at the wrestling pay-per-view nights, always has something interesting to say, and tells like it is; Jeff Gardner, who I have shared many an enjoyable conversation with concerning Latin America, teaching, and the job market, and shared several course experiences with; Bryan “The Last Man Standing” Cannon, who I have shared many conversations with on music, film, social psychology, and the grad school experience; Arialle Crabtree, who has also pushed us all to think critically about political issues; Ashley Meadow, who just recently entered the program, but I have had the pleasure of meeting just before leaving and, in my final year, had many wonderful conversations concerning Latin America and research; and Tara Sutton, who also recently entered the department, but I have also had wonderful conversations with concerning the job market and life-in-general. There were also a bevy of other individuals that came before me in the program whose presence and friendship I had the privilege to have, including Jackson Bunch, Stephen Watts, and Dave Johnson. Needless to say, all these friends have made for a wonderful experience at UGA that I will never forget.

From an early age, my parents and brothers helped me to develop a mental toughness and a sense of resiliency that remain with me today. Some of those early lessons on wrestling mats

and ball fields were some of the most formative, and it took me a long time to realize that. Similarly, since I was 12, I played in a number of bands. You learn a lot about patience, cooperation, and democracy in those settings. Bands are not always song and dance; they involve lots of arguments and much-needed compromise. There are number of individuals that I met through music that remain some of my most treasured friends, including Jeremy “Rozco” Provchy, Jeff Russell, Nick Gomez, Andrew Epstein, Patrick O’Connor, and, of course, Phil Lewin. Since I was 17, I would always think “well, this will definitely be the last band I’ll be in,” and then I’d meet some amazing human beings and the flames would fire up again. I was now 30, still playing in bands, and trying to work on my dissertation. I think the lesson is that those things you love at 12 will sometimes be those same things you love 20, maybe 50, years later.

At UGA, I even got a back into wrestling after nearly a 15-year hiatus from the sport. That was something I never thought I would get back into. I feel very fortunate that Coach Drew Craver and all the UGA Wrestling Bulldogs accepted an older graduate student, coming into the room, rolling around, and never letting up on me, as I sought to get my heart pumping again. It’s still very weird for me to think about. If I extinguished my last bit of youth out on those wrestling mats at UGA, there is no other way I would have had it. In the end, I won a match to cap off my season. It was a season of nearly all defeats for me, but it somehow felt victorious.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Aiola Ambo. Aiola has persevered and stuck by my side through all the grueling, frustrating, difficult, lonely, late-night, painful, impoverished, and endless experiences of graduate school. I am forever grateful for Aiola coming into my life. Without Aiola, there is no doubt that I would not have made it through graduate school. She has been my companion, my partner-in-crime, my most adamant supporter, and an inspiration to me. We met in a graduate statistics course at Cleveland State University in 2008. The course started

in 2007, but I was too shy to say anything. Fortunately, it was year-long sequence of statistics, and, in the second semester, I found my voice. Aiola is the strongest and most selfless person I know. She has kept me afloat, always encouraged me, celebrated my successes, and helped me hold my head high when I couldn't do it on my own. She approaches life with a sense of wonder and never succumbs to that jaded mindset that is supposed to come in your adulthood. She keeps me on my toes and pushes me to get off the couch, stop napping, get up, and do something. I could write a whole treatise on all the gifts that Aiola has brought to my life. I wake up each morning, excited to discover what new adventure will come our way next. I love you so much, Aiola.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Case Study

Although US government leaders have long promoted the idea of democracy and its multiplicity of benefits, US foreign policymaking contains a lengthy history of support for dictatorships that in some places, such as Saudi Arabia, has continued into the present (Gaddis 2005; Grandin 2006; Robinson 1996, 2006; Sikkink 2007). During the mid-to-late 20th century, for example, successive US governments furnished authoritarian dictators throughout Latin America with economic and military aid, including the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua and the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. US government leaders justified these seemingly contradictory practices with reference to theories of modernization and containment. While modernization theorists purported that democracy could not take hold unless countries reached a particular level of economic development, proponents of containment asserted that anti-communist efforts must take precedence over an absolute commitment to democracy promotion. In other words, during the mid-20th century, US political leaders prioritized eradicating socialist/communist movements, even if these efforts included supporting undemocratic governments, and modernization theory provided additional, theoretical support for these seemingly contradictory practices.

Beginning in the 1980s, US policymakers began to establish programs and agencies specifically charged with providing governments, newly developing political parties, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the developing world with financial and technical support, or what is termed democracy assistance, for constructing democratic political systems. Researchers continue to dispute why US policymakers initiated these changes during the late 20th century (Carothers 1999; Robinson 1996; Sikkink 2007). What is certain, however, is that during this period, communism had begun to lose its international vitality, as communist governments began to formally transition into capitalist democracies.

Thomas Carothers (1999), for one, argues that this international shift away from communism allowed the US to adamantly pursue democracy promotion without suspicion that citizens might elect socialist/communist-inspired governments that would align with the Soviet Union and threaten, however vaguely conceived, US national security interests. William Robinson (1996, 2006), in contrast, has argued that as popular social movements were beginning to unseat authoritarian dictators in places such as Iran and Nicaragua, US leaders searched for a new policy that would prevent these political developments and allow the US government to carefully control international civil society. In addition, he has argued that dictators had become anachronistic vestiges that prevented the full spread of neoliberal economic policies, as these leaders often engaged in crony capitalist policies such as awarding domestic businesses to friends, family members, and political supporters. In his perspective, moderate- to right-leaning governments that were democratically elected could provide the soundest basis for the stability of global capitalism and the spread of transnational corporations. Taken together, Robinson (1996, 2006) argues that these two dilemmas – increasing social unrest and crony capitalist policies within dictatorial countries – pushed the US to switch to a new imperialist modality that would allow for more strategic control over peripheral countries.

Under these political programs, the US has developed state institutions that provide governments, political parties, and NGOs with democracy assistance. Specifically, this has included offices within the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State. In addition, US policymakers created the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its four associated groups – the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), and the Center for International Private Enterprise

(CIPE) – to provide political parties and NGOs with complementary assistance. The NED and its associated groups receive nearly all of their funding from US Congress, but they possess independent boards of directors and only provide US Congress with annual reports on their programs and policies throughout the world. And so, they exist as a sort of quasi-government institution in contrast with US state offices within USAID and the US Department of State. All together, these groups encompass the heart of what Thomas Melia (2006) has termed “the democracy bureaucracy,” which also includes a smattering of additional private organizations, foundations, and other groups that contract with these state organizations that I will discuss in Chapter 2.

Similar to mid-20th century US foreign policy, contemporary US democracy assistance practices remain quite controversial. Neo-Marxist scholars, for instance, have argued that the US only provides democracy assistance to a select array of political actors (Clement 2005; Cole 2007; Petras 1999; Robinson 1996, 2001, 2006; Sklair 2001). These include political parties and NGOs that champion, or at least do not seriously threaten, neoliberal economic policies, including trade liberalization, privatization of formerly nationalized industry, and economic deregulation. In a word, neo-Marxists assert that the US supports actors that pave way for the spread of global capitalism and transnational corporations, many of which are headquartered in the US. And while elections might appear free and fair, these researchers argue that the US is able to carefully cultivate political and NGO leaders that it deems worthy of leading developing countries. To do so, US officials lavish these leaders with funding and technical support – or democracy assistance, so that they might effectively compete within domestic elections and outperform their left-leaning counterparts.

Government leaders throughout the world have also criticized US democracy assistance and, in some places, they have curtailed and criminalized the practice (Allen and Gershman 2006; Carothers 2006; Christensen and Weinstein 2013). In Egypt, for example, the newly established government has blacklisted several US-based NGOs and prohibited some local Egyptian NGOs from receiving US democracy assistance. In February 2012, these restrictive policies resulted in the arrest of forty-three civil society workers, sixteen of which were US citizens. The Russian Duma under the direction of President Vladimir Putin passed legislation in July 2012 that labels Russian NGOs that receive US democracy assistance as "foreign agents" and subjects them to stringent financial regulations. The Russian government has also specifically targeted the efforts of USAID, and, in October 2012, shut down their Russian offices and expelled their workers from the country. Similar episodes have also occurred in neighboring Belarus and Hungary.

Government leaders throughout Latin America, including former President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, President Evo Morales in Bolivia, and President Rafael Correa in Ecuador, have also criticized, circumscribed, and, in the instance of Venezuela, entirely prohibited political parties and politically-oriented NGOs from receiving foreign funding. In 2006, the Venezuelan National Assembly considered and passed the Law on International Cooperation (LIC) in a first discussion, but the law ultimately failed to move to a second discussion and become formalized into existing legal code.¹ This proposed legislation would have allowed the Venezuelan government to regulate foreign funding for all NGOs, by directing all funding to one national government organization, which would then distribute these funds according to national goals established by the national government. This law would have

¹ Proposed legislation in Venezuela must undergo at least two successful readings before the executive may convert it into law and publish it within the Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

effectively allowed the Venezuelan government the final say over what NGOs might persist or perish.

Although the Venezuelan National Assembly never passed the LIC, it successfully passed a similar, but less-comprehensive, piece of legislation entitled the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination (LDPS) in December 2010, which prohibits political parties and politically-oriented NGOs from receiving foreign funding. While it does not technically apply to all NGOs, such as those focused on, for example, the environment, as would the LIC, the language of the law remains ambiguous as it extends its jurisdiction to include any organization that has as its purpose “to promote, divulge, inform, and/or defend the full exercise of citizens' political rights.” It also prohibits these groups from sponsoring foreign individuals to enter the country that, in turn, criticize the national government. Since many NGOs indeed support the expression and defense of, what could certainly be understood as, political rights, such as electoral rights and freedom of the press issues, it is conceivable that the Venezuelan government could subject a range of Venezuelan NGOs and their leaders to fines and criminal prosecution based on this new legislation.

A Case Study: US Democracy Assistance Efforts and the Venezuelan Government's Response

Setting the Stage

Utilizing Venezuela as a case study, this research project addresses two central questions that have confronted social scientists when examining US democracy assistance and its response from abroad. First, this project examines the nature of US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration. Indeed, there is perhaps no other country where US democracy assistance programs have been as controversial as they have been

in contemporary Venezuela. The central event that precipitated the Venezuelan government's hostility towards the US and its democracy assistance programs includes the April 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President Chávez for two days. During this time, a collection of anti-Chávez actors, which included support from members of several domestic NGOs and political parties, detained Chávez and flew him to a military base on an island off the coast of the country. In the meantime, dissident military members allowed Pedro Carmona, the head of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, to become sworn in as the temporary president, and, following this ceremony, Carmona dissolved the National Assembly and the judiciary, and suspended the Venezuelan Constitution. After a mass showing of popular support and several defections from the transitional government, former President Chávez returned to Caracas, and resumed power.

Following this series of events, former President Chávez and other Venezuelan government leaders castigated the US for attempting to destabilize their government by supporting groups and individuals that it allegedly knew were attempting to undermine the Venezuelan government with democracy assistance. And it is following this period that the Venezuelan government began to voice support for legislation that would prohibit the US from funding domestic groups and political parties within the country. However, as described above, it would take the Venezuelan National Assembly nearly a decade before it would pass legislation that would indeed take aim at foreign funding for NGOs and political parties.

To address both of these issues, that is, US funding efforts for Venezuelan NGOs and political parties, and how the Venezuelan government has responded to these efforts, this study uses a number of data sources in its case study approach. First, this study utilizes semi-structured, qualitative interviews with representatives from foreign donors and Venezuelan

NGOs. Second, it includes an analysis of US embassy cables that were obtained through the WikiLeaks database. These cables were initially provided to Julian Assange by Private Chelsea Manning, who is currently imprisoned as a result. Third, this study also involves an analysis of US state policy documents from the NED and its associated groups that detail US democracy assistance programs within Venezuela. And finally, it includes news publications that have detailed former President Chávez' relations with his international allies, as well as his relations with foreign leaders he retained mostly hostile relations with, including the US.

The Objectives of the Case Study

Through this case study, this project aims to bring theoretical clarity to US democracy assistance efforts and rectify the blindspots that currently characterize the two dominant perspectives that have governed previous analyses. These two perspectives include the neo-Tocquevillian and the neo-Marxist perspectives. Ultimately, this case study finds that both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives fail to provide an accurate view of contemporary US democracy assistance efforts. Due to this situation, I have developed a third perspective, that is, a neo-Weberian perspective, that provides a more theoretically robust understanding of US democracy assistance efforts abroad and rectifies the blindspots of these two perspectives.

On the one hand, influenced by the work of Alexis de Tocqueville and his belief in the inherent beneficence of civil society groups, neo-Toquevillian scholars² have argued that

² I have bestowed the neo-Tocquevillian title on a group of scholars that encourage US democracy assistance for political parties and NGOs that endorse liberal democratic principles. These scholars also do not possess a critical disposition towards US democracy assistance efforts and/or recognize the biases imbued within these practices. While some of these scholars have explicitly recognized Tocqueville's influence, others indeed have not. Another potential title for these scholars includes pluralist theorists/researchers. However, pluralist theorists/researchers generally assert that many political systems, such as the US political system, are not inherently responsive to any one set of actors, namely economic elites, and that many interest groups have the ability to achieve their will through

governments should furnish political parties and NGOs with democracy assistance in order to generate a healthy civil society and pluralist democracy. These political parties and NGOs should include groups that promote liberal democratic efforts, such as civil liberties, human rights, and political pluralism, and avoid groups that do not encourage these efforts. These scholars believe that civil society and democracy are mutually reinforcing, and, without the other, each would not properly operate. They believe that these political parties and NGOs that promote liberal democratic policies democratically strengthen the societies they inhabit, and, where democratic consolidations have not transpired, they believe that these groups can play essential roles in catalyzing democratic change. Indeed, we would expect that neo-Tocquevillian scholars would recognize that US funding primarily flows to groups that oppose the Chávez government, and that these scholars would account for this by asserting that the Chávez government is undemocratic and does not respect the rights of its people.

On the other hand, and in contrast to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, neo-Marxist scholars have asserted that US democracy assistance efforts are governed by transnational capitalist class interests, namely the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. They argue that US officials use democracy assistance in order to prop up groups and political parties that promote, or at least do not seriously criticize, neoliberal policies. In doing so, neo-Marxist scholars argue that the US aims to manage the political affairs of other countries so that they operate in a way that is most conducive to the interests of the transnational capitalist class, many of whose members are located in the US. Similar to neo-Tocquevillian scholars, neo-Marxists have demonstrated that US democracy assistance has primarily flowed to groups that have

institutional politics. And so, this heading does not accurately characterize the types of theory and research that depicts US democracy assistance as a beneficent effort that encourages democratic practices. Of course, these practices include the promotion of political pluralism, that is, the presence of a multiplicity of democratic actors, but these scholars differ from pluralist theorists/researchers that aim to empirically demonstrate that the state is a level playing field on which many groups vie for power and can potentially succeed in their ambitions.

actively opposed the Chávez government (Clement 2005; Cole 2007; Golinger 2006, 2008; Robinson 2006). However, neo-Marxist scholars have asserted that above all the US remains interested in promoting transnational capitalist class interests, and they do not consider the importance of alternative motivations. Rather, they argue that US interest in democracy and human rights is merely an ideological ruse designed to cultivate support for political parties and NGOs that champion, or at least do not seriously threaten, neoliberal economic policies.

Due to the inadequacy of both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives to fully account for the nature of US democracy assistance efforts abroad, which I discuss in more depth in the following chapter, I have developed a neo-Weberian perspective in order to more robustly understand contemporary US democracy assistance efforts abroad. Unlike the neo-Marxist perspective, this perspective takes the role of ideas and ideal interests seriously, and asserts that a US-style liberal democratic framework has undergirded the conceptual politics of US democracy assistance efforts, which generally encourages the same features of governance that the US has championed within its own domestic confines. In addition to private property rights, US-style liberal democratic politics involve policies that enfranchise individual rights, including voting rights, civil liberties, limited government, decentralization of services, law enforcement, and indeed private property rights. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars also recognize the emphasis that the US places on US-style liberal democratic policies, but they fail to recognize that the US variant of liberal democracy is only one variant of liberal democracy, and only one variant of democracy writ large.

Neo-Tocquevillian scholars also fail to link US democracy assistance practices with a history of US Empire that has envisioned many Latin American leaders as uncivil, erratic, undemocratic, and unfit to govern, and their supporters as hysterical, gullible, and unable to

recognize what would actually benefit them. The US has indeed historically Orientalized and racialized many Latin American leaders and their supporters, and these efforts have resulted in a paternalist pattern of US foreign policymaking (Said 1978). From a neo-Weberian perspective, this project will, in fact, link US democracy assistance efforts with this paternalist history, and demonstrate how US officials have depicted former President Chávez as an uncivil, anti-democratic, megalomaniacal, and erratic individual both in embassy cables and within program reports on US democracy assistance efforts. These Orientalist and racist depictions have served as the justification for the paternalist policies of the US and its US democracy assistance efforts.

Similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective also recognizes how US democracy assistance is biased towards particular NGOs and particular political parties, and this includes those groups that promote US-style liberal democratic policies, that is, policies which have generally run counter to the radical democratic politics endorsed and pushed by the Chávez government. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars might contend that the US primarily supports anti-Chávez actors, because the Chávez government has frequently operated in an anti-democratic and unconstitutional manner. However, two theoretical issues arise as a result of this line of thinking.

First, neo-Tocquevillian scholars fail to acknowledge that competing visions of democracy, writ large, exist. While the US government has largely championed a particular, liberal variant of democracy, the Venezuelan government has pursued a radical and participatory form of democracy that has its roots in the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx, instead of the ideas of John Locke and Alexis de Tocqueville alone. And while US liberal democrats have promoted civil and political rights, radical democrats, such as former President Chávez and other Venezuelan leaders, have prioritized social and economic rights, which they

have understood to enfranchise the majority of the Venezuelan population. This is indeed a normative critique of the neo-Tocquevillian perspective.

Second, and on the empirical end, the neo-Weberian perspective can also recognize that much US funding has actually flowed to actors that have behaved in anti-democratic and unconstitutional ways themselves, such as supporting the 2002 coup d'état and the transitional government that temporarily sidelined the Bolivarian Revolution and displaced former President Chávez for two days. Indeed, many of the groups that the US has continually worked with supported the coup as well as the transitional government. This illustrates that US agencies are not absolutely committed to their own supposed allegiance to liberal democratic principles. Instead, it illustrates that US agencies possess a partisan bias towards anti-Chávez groups, regardless of these groups' lack of democratic credentials.

In contrast with the neo-Marxist perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective does not reduce US democracy assistance efforts to transnational capitalist class interests, but emphasizes how the US has indeed championed the centrality of the individual in contrast to a strong centralized state, as neo-Tocquevillian scholars have recognized. However, and again, the neo-Weberian perspective links US democracy assistance with a history of US foreign policymaking that has involved regional paternalism, racist beliefs, and an Orientalist understanding of many Latin American leaders. Indeed, these Orientalist and racist visions have justified the development of democracy assistance programs. In addition, the neo-Weberian perspective allows room to recognize how some of the groups that have received US funding have also, at times, lent credence to the Venezuelan government and its claims to represent a majority of the populace, including electoral observation groups. Some groups have even occasionally worked with the Venezuelan government on particular projects. Thus, unlike the neo-Marxist

perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective can properly deal with instances where US democracy assistance ends up functioning in an ultimately ironic manner, that is, by supporting the organization that it has allegedly set out to undermine: the Venezuelan government.

Beyond analyzing the trajectory of US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela, this project addresses why the Venezuelan government prohibited foreign funding for political parties and politically-oriented NGOs through the LDPS at the time that it decided to do so, that is, in December 2010. Much classical political sociological theory, including pluralism and neo-Marxism, has largely centered on the domestic sphere and the composition of the domestic electorate to explain the passage of legislation. In Venezuela, however, *chavistas* dominated all branches of government since 2000, and even easily passed an anti-NGO piece of legislation in a first discussion in 2006, as discussed above. Moving beyond the domestic sphere, several theories of globalization also fail to successfully explain this law's passage, including world cultural theory and realist theory. While the former theory would predict that governments would refuse to crack down on NGOs as a result of world cultural beliefs that endorse human rights, liberal democracy, and the ability of NGOs to freely operate, the latter theory would predict that the Venezuelan government would have passed anti-NGO legislation at a much earlier point in time, such as in the aftermath of the 2002 coup d'état that resulted in a transitional government taking power that received support from several prominent NGOs and temporarily displaced former President Chávez.

Instead, borrowing from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Julian Go, this project uses a global fields approach with an emphasis on the Venezuelan government's shifting international relations in order to make a sense of the passage of the LDPS. In doing so, I argue that when the Venezuelan government sought to pass anti-NGO legislation at earlier points in time, it remained

keyed into a nexus of relations with the US, Western European countries, and several multilateral institutions through contracts, heightened trade relations, diplomatic visits, and even democracy assistance programs. These embassies and institutions successfully influenced the Venezuelan government to stall anti-NGO legislation in 2006, as the Venezuelan government remained highly concerned with its democratic reputation throughout the world and further souring its relations with the US, Western Europe, and several multilateral groups.

Following the 2006 presidential election, however, former President Chávez consolidated relations with an anti-US, sovereignty-hardening network of allies, including Belarus, China, Iran, and Russia, in addition to a regional, anti-imperial network of allies, including Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. What is more, the Venezuelan government diminished relations with the US, Western Europe, and several multilateral institutions, including the European Union and the United Nations. And when the LDPS came onto the agenda in 2010 from a different government committee than the one that drafted the LIC, the Venezuelan government did not consult with these latter countries and institutions or even seem concerned with their perspective on the legislation. What is more, at the same time, Venezuelan allies, including Belarus and Russia, were also considering and passing similar pieces of legislation that aimed to limit the operations of domestic NGOs. Within this new nexus of relations, anti-NGO legislation was thus not transgressive, but increasingly normative.

Conclusion and the Path Ahead

In this chapter, I have laid out the two issues that will guide the rest of this research project. These two issues include the nature of US democracy assistance efforts abroad and how foreign governments have responded to these efforts. In order to examine these issues, I have

selected a case study involving contemporary Venezuela. US democracy assistance efforts have been no more controversial than they have recently been in Venezuela under the Chávez government. What is more, the Venezuelan government has pursued legislation that has taken aim at foreign funding for NGOs and political parties. Given these two situations, a case study involving the country provides an excellent opportunity to examine each of these dynamics and, subsequently, build upon and extend existing sociological theory. In addition, the hope is that this research project can prove transferable to future research endeavors on similar issues.

The ensuing chapters unfold as follows. In Chapter 2, I provide a history of US democracy promotion since the inception of the US, and I discuss the rise of democracy assistance beginning the 1980s. From there, I detail the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives, and I develop an alternative to these two perspectives, that is, a neo-Weberian perspective. In Chapter 3, I discuss Venezuela's recent political history, and its evolving relations with the US, and, in Chapter 4, I lay out the methodology for this research project, including a detailed justification for the use of the case study method and the selection of Venezuela. In addition, I provide a detailed look at the sources of data that I will utilize in subsequent chapters.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I generate a historical chronology of the NED and its associated groups' funding during the early years of the Chávez Administration, and, in Chapter 7, I provide a theoretical analysis of these funding efforts, ultimately demonstrating that a neo-Weberian perspective provides the most theoretically robust conceptualization of US democracy assistance efforts. In Chapter 8, I analyze and explain why the Venezuelan government passed the LDPS in 2010 and failed to pass anti-NGO legislation in earlier years. And last, in Chapter 9, I draw some

final conclusions, and I discuss how this research project might inform future research endeavors on related topics and what research I intend to pursue hereafter.

Chapter 2: Sociological Theory and US Democracy Assistance

In this chapter, I provide a historical overview of US democracy assistance, and thereafter I lay out several sociological perspectives on the practice. These perspectives include a neo-Marxist and a neo-Tocquevillian perspective. On the one hand, neo-Marxists generally view US democracy assistance as the political counterpart to the promotion of neoliberal economics. These researchers argue that the US only provides support to NGOs and political parties that promote, or at least do not threaten, transnational capitalist class interests, namely neoliberal economic policies. In their perspective, US democracy assistance is a highly partisan endeavor that prioritizes only certain groups, including those that promote neoliberal economic policies. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars, on the other hand, assert that US democracy assistance for NGOs and political parties buttresses a healthy democracy and promotes democratic pluralism. These scholars assume that US democracy assistance efforts are naturally beneficent endeavors, and they fail to recognize the lengthy history of US paternalism, especially in the Western Hemisphere, and critically assess these efforts abroad. They also fail to recognize that the version of liberal democracy that the US promotes represents only one version of liberal democracy and only one version of democracy writ large.

Although both neo-Marxist and neo-Tocquevillian scholars have advanced social scientific thinking on US democracy assistance efforts, these two perspectives contain several blindspots that require recognition and rectification. For their part, neo-Marxists have confined themselves to a materialist approach to US democracy assistance efforts, and their analyses have remained closed to alternative perspectives concerning the nature and roots of US democracy assistance efforts. These scholars have reduced US democracy assistance efforts to an economic logic that subordinates all other considerations to transnational capitalist class interests, namely

the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. That is, they fail to consider additional, potential US interests that might guide its democracy assistance endeavors. They also fail to recognize that the US has, at times, worked with the Venezuelan government and provided assistance to groups that have ultimately supported the Venezuelan government and have bolstered its democratic credentials.

By contrast, neo-Tocquevillian scholars fail to critically interrogate the objectives and historical relevance of US democracy assistance efforts. They do not consider the range of competing understandings of democracy, and how US-style liberal democracy is only one variant of democratic politics. In addition, they fail to link US democracy assistance with a history of US paternalism that has envisioned foreign leaders as uncivil, anti-democratic, megalomaniacal, and unfit to govern their citizens, and their supporters as hysterical and unbeknownst to their true interests. And finally, neo-Tocquevillian scholars do not recognize that US democracy assistance might actually flow to actors that have promoted anti-democratic policies, such as coup d'état efforts and other unconstitutional behaviors.

In order to address and rectify the blindspots these two perspectives possess, I develop a neo-Weberian perspective, and I demonstrate how this perspective can build upon and rectify the problems that underlie previous work. Similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective indeed recognizes that the US promotes US-style liberal democratic policies abroad and that its funding efforts will primarily include groups that are aligned with the Venezuelan opposition. While the Venezuelan government has promoted a participatory democracy that has in some ways curtailed the absolute right to private property, the US has promoted policies and groups that share the same visions of liberal democracy that US officials possess. Unlike the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives though, the neo-Weberian

perspective takes the ideal interests of US officials seriously and does not necessarily reduce US democracy assistance efforts to transnational capitalist class interests, that is, the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. This perspective recognizes that US democracy assistance efforts might not always privilege US economic interests, and that other US interests might govern US policies, such as an idealistic vision to correct foreign behavior and bring democracy to other nations.

This perspective thus recognizes that a continuing effort by the US towards regional paternalism characterizes US efforts. These efforts indeed parallel late 19th/early 20th century colonialist endeavors in places such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico, and US foreign policy programs in Latin America during the 20th century, which sought to destabilize governments that espoused ideologies distinct from the US emphasis on its form of liberal democratic policies. This perspective recognizes that US officials often possess Orientalist and racist views of foreign leaders and their supporters, and that these views end up justifying US democracy assistance practices abroad. Finally, this perspective leaves open the possibility that US democracy assistance efforts might sometimes involve actors that bolster the Venezuelan government, and might even on select occasions involve members from the Venezuelan government, that is, individuals that have continually criticized neoliberal economic policies.

A Brief History of US Democracy Promotion and Democracy Assistance

US Democracy Promotion from Inception to the Mid-20th Century

Many historians point out that international efforts to promote democracy have a lengthy history within US foreign policy circles. In fact, Jeff Bridoux and Milja Kurki (2014: 3) state that it “is difficult not to consider the United States as the cradle of democracy promotion.” They

argue that since the very inception of the US, US leaders have sought to promote democracy throughout the world. Similarly, Tony Smith (2013) observes that the US government has subscribed to a liberal internationalist foreign policy framework since its founding, albeit with varying emphases throughout its history. Smith (2013: 13) argues that “the prime mover of liberal theory is the ability of democratic peoples and governments to maintain an enduring peace among themselves based on their character as individuals, groups and political units.” This liberal internationalist framework espouses and promotes the existence of liberal democracy, economic openness and economic interdependence, multilateral institutions, and US leadership. Smith points out that liberal internationalists disagree with both realists and Marxists. Liberal internationalists believe that regime type, namely the existence of liberal democratic government, matters in terms of cooperation and conflict. That is, they expect democratic governments to possess particular qualitative properties that authoritarian regimes do not and which make cooperation among democracies more likely. Liberal internationalists also clearly disagree with Marxists in that they believe that capitalism does not necessarily result in antagonistic and exploitative relations between countries. Rather, they believe that economic interdependence through a capitalist system diminishes rather than facilitates conflict.

Smith (2013), among other historians, argues that US leaders have promoted democratic governance since the establishment of the US, and he views early US leaders as promoting a pre-classical form of liberal internationalism. Early US revolutionaries endorsed democracy as an anti-monarchical form of governance, and early US leaders, including George Washington and John Adams, conceived of the US as an example that might inspire other revolutionaries throughout the world (Bridoux and Kurki 2014; Smith 2013). And when individuals developed national movements to free themselves from monarchical European governments, as in Latin

America during the early 19th century, US leaders enthusiastically supported them. Smith (2013: 21) argues that this tendency to serve as an example and rhetorically support burgeoning democratic movements continued until the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, who ushered in a period of classical liberal internationalism. He points out that former President Wilson endorsed the creation of the multilateral League of Nations and sought to “make the world safe for democracy.” He argues that Wilson thus became the first president to actively pursue democracy promotion in both word and deed.

In the early 20th century, economic support became the primary means through which the US sought to cultivate democracy. While US leaders formerly offered rhetorical support for developing democracies and sought to lead by example, the US government began to institutionalize and provide foreign aid to developing countries in order to assist them with “economic modernization.” Influenced by the then-dominant modernization perspective, US leaders believed that political development, that is, the development of a stable liberal democratic system devoid of communist influence, could only be achieved after a certain level of economic development had ensued. Carothers (1999: 21) writes that “aid was expected to produce economic development, which was in turn expected to foster democracy. Aid was not directly targeted at political institutions and processes and thus was not democracy assistance in the sense the term has come to be used in recent years.” In keeping with this perspective, following World War II, the Truman Administration, for example, furnished the Greek and Turkish governments with several hundred millions of dollars of economic, as well as military, aid in order to stifle communist movements. In addition, the US government established the European Recovery Program, otherwise known as the Marshall Plan, in order to supply several

European countries including France and the United Kingdom, with economic aid following the decimation of their infrastructure.

Two administrations later the US government sought to consolidate its assortment of economic aid programs throughout the world. The Kennedy Administration passed the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and established the US Agency for International Development (USAID) as the government's unified organization for the delivery of economic aid. During this time, USAID "focused on budgeting, project development, and personnel management ... [with] no specific democratic focus" (Carothers 1999: 21). In 1966, Congress added a new portion, Title IX, to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 in order to explicitly charge USAID with promoting democracy. However, USAID still remained focused on economic aid and development, as "assistance for political parties, elections, and political education sounded to many USAID officers like out-and-out meddling in politics, something they were disinclined to do" and something that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was already covertly engaging in (Carothers 1999: 26).

Carothers (1999: 19) points out that while "foreign aid became a major component of US policy toward the developing world in the 1950s, democracy promotion was not a priority" due to the US government's overarching anti-communist leanings. Social scientists coming from a range of perspectives also agree on this point. Taking inspiration from world-systems and post-colonial theory, Julian Go (2011), for instance, argues that as the US garnered the largest portion of world GDP and manufacturing following World War II, it displaced the United Kingdom as the global hegemon. In doing so, he argues that the US began to rely upon an informal form of empire to control international political-economic arrangements. This informal form of empire involved developing client – often dictatorial – regimes through economic and military

assistance, and covertly supporting counter-revolutionary groups where alleged or actual socialist-communist sympathizers had gained control of foreign governments, such as in Guatemala under Jacobo Arbenz and Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. In other words, where democracy developed and anti-communist forces were in power, the US did not interfere. And even where democracy did not develop and anti-communist forces were in power, the US did not interfere. However, where democracy brought groups that allegedly or actually sympathized with or endorsed socialist-communist practices, the US worked to undermine them (Go 2011; Grandin 2006; Mann 2012b; Robinson 1996, 2006).

Go (2011) also demonstrates that the US developed an informal form of empire due in part to several additional dynamics. He shows that due to consolidated nation-state structures, a nearly ubiquitous discourse of anti-colonial nationalism, and support from the USSR for liberation movements throughout the developing world, the US could not colonize territories as the British had during their hegemonic period in the 19th century. Because of this, he argues that informal imperial modalities became best suited for US interest in containing communism.

Several researchers are not quite as incisive as Go (2007, 2011) in their criticism of early-to-mid-20th century US foreign policy. Kathryn Sikkink (2007), for example, argues that US foreign policy towards Latin America mostly involved “mixed signals” during this time period as a result of the disparate emphases that different administrations and diplomats placed on policies such as anticommunism, human rights, and democracy promotion. She argues that while the US government supported some efforts to depose democratically elected governments in Latin America, there were also moments when US government leaders and diplomatic representatives pushed authoritarian governments to enact stronger democratic and human rights policies. For example, she points out that the Carter Administration moved human rights policies to the

forefront of its foreign political agenda and at times suspended foreign aid to, for example, the Somoza government in Nicaragua due to human rights concerns. Nonetheless, she acknowledges the intermittent support for dictatorial regimes and the implicit support that government officers, such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, gave for the brutal policies enacted by anti-communist leaders in, for example, Argentina and Chile.

Enter Explicit Democracy Assistance

While the US government had provided economic and military aid, as well as offered rhetorical support, to some foreign governments throughout the early-to-mid 20th century in its attempts to establish democracy, it was not until the 1980s that the US government began to explicitly provide “democracy assistance.” Even more, it was not until the 1990s that we see a striking increase in the provision of democracy assistance (Burnell 2000). Democracy assistance involves providing government and state institutions, political parties, and NGOs largely throughout the developing world with financial and technical support for advancing democratic political systems. In comparison with negative efforts to promote democracy including sanctions and more militaristic policies such as direct intervention, Peter Burnell (2000: 9) asserts that “democracy assistance occupies the positive terrain, comprising elements of support, incentive, inducement and reward. The provision of advice and instruction, training, equipment and other forms of material support to institutional capacity building are typical examples, as are financial subventions to pro-democracy bodies and subsidies to cover costs of certain democratizing processes.”

Explicit democracy assistance came to the fore of foreign policy discussion under the Reagan Administration. Reagan believed that the US should actively cultivate democracy as an

ideology throughout the world in order to combat the Soviet Union (Carothers 1999: 30-1; Grandin 2006). Under the Reagan Administration, US Congress agreed to provide initial funding for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which then provided funding for its four associated groups: the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Reagan conceived of the NED and its associated groups as organizations that could lead the ideological battle on behalf of the US. Carothers (1999) also argues that new thinking about the relationship between democracy and development began to develop in many policy circles. No longer were politicians and government functionaries wedded to the idea that “economic modernization” must necessarily precede democracy, and former President Reagan himself believed that democracy must be promoted as an ideology in order to balance Soviet influence throughout the world.

William Robinson (1996, 2006), however, disputes this account of the origins of democracy assistance and argues that it generally developed in response to the unstable nature of US-backed dictatorships. That is, dictatorships, in places such as Iran and Nicaragua, were becoming unified objects against which popular groups rebelled, and, in not a few instances, socialist/communist-oriented groups that were not as respectful of US investment and US national security interests had come to power. He argues that the democracy assistance programs that developed under the Reagan Administration were designed to ensure that political leaders came to power that championed free market capitalism and US national interests, that is, by only supporting these groups with democracy assistance. Robinson’s perspective on democracy assistance is dealt with in more detail below.

Although dispute remains concerning the origins of democracy assistance programs, scholars have noted several reasons why democracy assistance as a new modality of US foreign policy eventually took off in the 1990s, and continues as a powerhouse into the present. Carothers (1999: 44-5), for one, asserts that by the 1990s a new consensus developed within the US foreign policy-making community, due to "the global trend towards democracy, the end of the Cold War, and new thinking about development," that placed democracy assistance firmly on the US foreign policy agenda.

First, many historians illustrate – and some US government leaders acknowledge – that the US supported many dictatorial governments throughout the mid-20th century due to the threat of communism. In many places throughout the world, communism as an ideology influenced both insurgents and political parties. However, during the Cold War between the US and USSR, US government leaders were willing to forgo their alleged commitments to democracy in order to stifle any socialist-communist governments, should they achieve power through revolution as groups did in Cuba and Nicaragua or the ballot box as political parties did in Chile and Guatemala (Gaddis 2005; Grandin 2006; Robinson 1996, 2006). Even when governments did not openly espouse socialism or communism, land redistribution programs, nationalization programs, and trade with the USSR could be enough to warrant covert intervention by the US in order to destabilize alleged socialist-communist sympathizers. With the beginning of the end of the Cold War commencing in the 1980s and the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe by the early 1990s, historians argue that the US was now free to fulfill its primordial identity centered on democracy promotion. That is, with the discrediting of communism and the absence of the USSR to prop up socialist/communist sympathizers, the US need not worry about socialist/communist-inspired governments taking power either by bullets or ballot box.

Therefore, the US could now embark on a full-fledged mission to promote democracy worldwide.

Second, during this time, the idea of promoting civil society organizations generally speaking gained steam, which has now become a main component of democracy assistance programs. Carothers (1999) attributes this focus to the euphoria produced by the success of NGO-led movements throughout Eastern Europe, as well as Asia and Latin America, during the 1980s. Carothers (1999: 207-8) writes that the

"current keen interest in [the] venerable but for many generations almost forgotten concept [of civil society] was stimulated by the dissident movements in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, particularly in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The rise of these movements, and their triumph in 1989, fostered the appealing idea of civil society as a domain that is nonviolent but powerful, nonpartisan yet prodemocratic, and that emerges from the essence of particular societies yet is nonetheless universal."

Civil society, of course, is an expansive concept that includes a multiplicity of groups, from sports clubs to human rights organizations, and from groups that champion animal rights to those that endorse libertarian values. In terms of democracy assistance though, the US government has "focused on a limited set of the broad fabric of civil society in most recipient countries: nongovernmental organizations dedicated to advocacy for what aid providers consider to be sociopolitical issues touching the public interest – election monitoring, civic education, parliamentary transparency, human rights, anticorruption, the environment, women's rights, and indigenous people's rights" (Carothers 1999: 210).

Last, the modernization perspective that formerly governed thinking about development began to give way to new conceptions regarding how development could technically unfold.

Many US government leaders and academics formerly believed that democratic transitions could only take place after countries had reached a certain level of economic development (Almond and Verba 1963; Bhagwati 1966; Lipset 1959; Parsons 1966; Rostow 1960). If particular countries were not yet understood as economically developed, US government leaders and academics believed that aid aimed exclusively at constructing democratic systems would be futile. However, this perspective has drastically altered since the mid-20th century, and government functionaries, as well as academics, largely believe that both economic and political development can be simultaneously promoted abroad (Carothers 1999; Diamond 2009; Mitchell 2013).

The Democracy Bureaucracy and its Main Players

Thomas Melia (2006) describes the current US democracy assistance community as "the democracy bureaucracy," wherein an array of government and private actors promotes democracy throughout the world with little coordination among them. Melia (2006: 9) observes that although the US Secretary of State is generally understood as the US government's foreign affairs head, "[t]here is ... no 'command and control center' of the democracy promotion community, no single place where overarching strategy is developed or coordinated." Rather, a variety of US government organizations, US government-funded semi-autonomous organizations, US government-funded private contractors, and US private organizations and foundations deliver democracy assistance. These primarily include USAID, the Department of State, and the NED and its associated groups, but they also include a smattering of other organizations.

USAID remains the most prominent, contemporary provider of democracy assistance. The Kennedy Administration established USAID with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Prior to this act, several government agencies provided economic aid to foreign governments. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, however, unified economic foreign assistance under one agency: USAID. At this time, its mission was to provide developing countries with economic assistance in order to bolster national industry. In doing so, much assistance was contingent upon the purchase of US goods, including machinery, products, and vehicles for agriculture and industry.

Today, USAID provides both economic and political aid (i.e. democracy assistance) for a range of countries throughout the world, and it describes its missions as

“invest[ing] in ideas that work to improve the lives of millions of men, women and children by: [i]nvesting in agricultural productivity so countries can feed their people, [c]ombating maternal and child mortality and deadly diseases like HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, [p]roviding life-saving assistance in the wake of disaster, [p]romoting democracy, human rights and good governance around the world, [f]ostering private sector development and sustainable economic growth, [h]elping communities adapt to a changing environment, [and e]levating the role of women and girls throughout all our work.”³

More specifically concerning democracy assistance, USAID states it is

“focused on: [s]upporting more legitimate, inclusive and effective governments, so that they are responsive to the needs of their people; [h]elping countries transition to democracy and strengthen democratic institutions, capitalizing on critical moments to

³ <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do>

expand freedom and opportunity; and [p]romoting inclusive development, so that women, minorities and vulnerable populations benefit from growth, opportunity and the expansion of rights.”⁴

Furthermore, within USAID, democracy assistance is primarily handled by two offices contained within USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance: the Office of Transition Initiatives and the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance.

The US Department of State has served as a crucial part of the US government since its inception. The US Department of State generally engages in foreign diplomacy, and its efforts are led by the Secretary of State. Below the Secretary, the State Department contains several bureaus relating to various regions of the world as well as its different objectives. Within the Department of State, the Bureau on Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) is charged with delivering democracy assistance. DRL defines its purpose as “[p]romot[ing] democracy as a means to achieve security, stability, and prosperity for the entire world; [a]ssist[ing] newly formed democracies in implementing democratic principles; [a]ssist[ing] democracy advocates around the world to establish vibrant democracies in their own countries; and [i]dentify[ing] and denounc[ing] regimes that deny their citizens the right to choose their leaders in elections that are free, fair, and transparent.”⁵

The final main component of the US democracy bureaucracy, which the Reagan Administration created in 1982, is the NED and its associated groups (the NDI, IRI, CIPE, and ACILS). In later chapters, I specifically discuss the origins, history, and theoretical perspectives on the NED and each of its associated groups. In addition, the NED also heads the World

⁴ <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance>

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/democ/index.htm>

Movement for Democracy, a global network of academics, government leaders, and activists that holds nearly annual meetings in order to discuss democracy promotion around the world. The NED and its associated bodies receive nearly all of their funding from US Congress and must inform it of their activities on an annual basis. However, the NED and its associated groups possess independent boards of directors and consider themselves to be autonomous entities that ultimately render their own decisions as to how and where they will provide assistance.

In the private sphere, a number of groups provide funding and technical support to foreign NGOs, including the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Rockefeller Foundation, Freedom House, and the Pan American Development Foundation. These private organizations are similar to the NED in that they solicit funding proposals from foreign groups and retain an independent board of directors. However, while some of these organizations receive government funding, they also receive much private funding for their pursuits. There are indeed several private groups, though, that act as government contractors including Development Alternatives, Chemonics, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Like the NED, they retain private boards of directors and receive their funds from the US government, but unlike the NED, they possess no autonomy in terms of where they provide assistance.

Sociological Theory and US Democracy Assistance

The Neo-Tocquevillean Perspective

Tocqueville: The State vs. Civil Society

Alexis de Tocqueville believed that the practices of early 19th century US citizens and their political-institutional arrangements generated favorable prospects for a new modern period where citizens could truly experience individual liberty. Tocqueville, in fact, pioneered the US

exceptionalism thesis, which still remains prominent within contemporary sociological research. In his journeys to the US, Tocqueville found that unlike France, the US did not contain a powerful national government, and, unlike England, the US did not contain a historically enfranchised aristocracy.

Instead, US citizens worked through local associations to accomplish communal tasks. Tocqueville (2003 [1840]: 596) observed that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds – religious, moral, serious, futile, extensive, or restricted, enormous or diminutive." Yet, it was not only the capability of US citizens to self-sufficiently complete their objectives that inspired Tocqueville, but also the social solidarity produced by associational life. Tocqueville believed that through associations, citizens cultivated a sense of fellowship and ultimately wove the moral fabric that unified society.

Tocqueville understood the state and civil society as engaged in a zero-sum relationship. By entrusting the government with societal responsibility, he believed that citizens must necessarily forfeit some of their liberty. In doing so, he assumed that citizens would ultimately pave way for totalitarian societies. Tocqueville (2003 [1840]: 598) believed that "the progress of [all society] depends upon the progress [associational life] has made. Amongst the laws which rule human societies there is one which seems to be more precise and clear than all others. If [individuals] are to remain civilized, or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased."

For Tocqueville, the health of entire societies rested upon the development of civil society groups. If these groups did not proliferate, we could expect societies wherein citizens no

longer possess liberty and the ability to guard against government domination. Tocqueville assumed that these groups were a naturally virtuous aspect of society, and he believed that it was morally correct for citizens to handle all possible societal affairs. Governments, in his opinion, should only possess a minimal role, by providing order, ensuring the rule of law, and providing an arena in which interest groups might contend for political power. Besides these features, Tocqueville believed that citizens must limit government as much as possible.

Neo-Tocquevillian Theory: Civil Society, Democracy, and Democracy Assistance

While many scholars do not explicitly utilize the “neo-Tocquevillian” heading to describe their work, many scholars indeed work with many of the same assumptions that Tocqueville himself operated with. That is, many scholars assume the natural beneficence of civil society writ large, and they do not recognize the range of anti-democratic civil society groups that exist within civil society. In addition, these scholars do not seriously interrogate the nature of US democracy assistance programs that have promoted civil society groups abroad. Rather, these scholars direct attention to how the US can enhance its programs, and how these programs have historically assisted groups in bolstering democratic transitions and buffering against authoritarian leaders. And so, while some of the scholars I discuss below might indeed object to the neo-Tocquevillian title, I assert that these scholars work with many of the same conceptual underpinnings that Tocqueville himself also worked with.⁶

Many government functionaries, practitioners, and researchers agree that the prospects for enhancing democracy through foreign assistance, including democracy assistance, remain quite feasible. Laurence Whitehead (1996), for instance, estimates that nearly two-thirds of

⁶ See footnote 2 on why I have utilized the neo-Tocquevillian title instead of pluralism, which possesses a lengthy history within political sociological scholarship.

democracies existing near the end of the 20th century achieved democracy through some form of foreign intervention. Whitehead, however, refers to all forms of democracy promotion, including democracy assistance, but also military intervention. The main distinction between forceful impositions of democracy and the modality of democracy assistance is that democracy assistance providers recognize that “the primary motive force for democratization is and must be internal to the country in question. Outsiders lend support to a process that is locally driven” (Burnell 2000: 9).

Like their predecessor, neo-Tocquevillian scholars emphasize how NGOs contribute to well-functioning democracies throughout the world (Carothers 1999; Diamond 2009; Fung 2003; McFaul 2003; Mitchell 2013; Putnam 1993; Wiarda 2003). For them, a symbiotic relationship exists between an expansive civil society and a well-functioning democracy. For example, Robert Putnam (1993) has demonstrated how in contemporary Italy, the presence and strength of civic communities – from political groups to choral societies – have resulted in more responsive local governments that perform better than those located in areas that lack an expansive civil society. In northern Italy, where individuals join together with great frequency for both social and political ends, citizens report more trust in one another. In addition, governments respond to the demands of citizens with more efficiency and their economy is much more developed and diversified than in southern Italy, where individuals do not join organizations with great frequency.

Neo-Tocquevillian scholars believe that democracy should no longer exist as the privilege of high-income societies. Rather, they believe that all world citizens should enjoy the benefits of democracy, and where democracies do not exist or where they are still developing, they believe that foreign actors should promote them (Carothers 1999; Diamond 2009; McFaul

2003, 2009; Mitchell 2013; Wiarda 2003). Michael McFaul (2003: 153) argues that “as new international norms protecting the human rights of individuals have gained strength, the sanctity of state sovereignty as an international norm has eroded.” McFaul (2003) observes that the proliferation of global treaties, covenants, and declarations including, for example, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, illustrates how a norm promoting the global spread of democracy and human rights now trumps earlier norms supporting national sovereignty. Claims to national sovereignty, he argues, should not deter government and NGO leaders from promoting democracy throughout the world. Similarly, borrowing from Emile Durkheim, Wade Cole (2012) describes the amalgamation of global treaties, covenants, and declarations that champion democracy and human rights as comprising a global totem of world cultural values that are increasingly coming to replace nation-based laws and values. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars thus argue that it is the responsibility of the international community to promote these world cultural values and ensure that governments respect them.

In this regard, neo-Tocquevillian scholars agree with US leaders whom also encourage democracy promotion. For example, while chairing a 2010 congressional hearing on democracy, Representative Howard Berman (D-CA) asserted that a

"core American principle is that all people should enjoy freedom of speech, expression and religion, and freedom from tyranny, oppression, torture, and discrimination. U.S. foreign policy should reflect and promote those core values, not only because it implicates fundamental human freedoms, but also because it serves U.S. national interests. Violent extremism that threatens U.S. national security flourishes where democratic governance is weak, justice is uncertain, and legal avenues for change are in

short supply. Efforts to reduce poverty and promote broad-based economic growth are more effective and sustainable in a political environment in which fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are respected, government institutions are broadly representative, and corruption is held to a minimum."

Democracy is thus expected not only to internally benefit those populations that should enjoy it as a "fundamental human freedom," but it is also expected to benefit the US by producing a more safe and secure world that will generate the stability required for increased trade between countries.

US leaders also present the use of democracy assistance as involving constructive rather than coercive relationships between democracy assistance providers and newly developing political parties and NGOs throughout the world. Lorne Craner and Kenneth Wollack (2008: 9), presidents of the IRI and NDI, assert that "'[r]egime change' is not a goal or objective of democracy assistance. Incremental improvements and democratic reform – at a pace that each body politic sets – define the mode of operation ... [democracy] cannot be orchestrated or imposed by outside forces. Dictatorship is an imposition; democracy is about choice." Instead of regime change, Craner and Wollack (2008: 10) argue that democracy assistance is about "building political parties that are internally democratic, open, and responsive to constituencies; helping parliaments conduct pluralist political debate that includes public input and leads to legislation and executive oversight; assisting civil society organizations that engage in policy advocacy and accountability activities; and supporting journalism, the rule of law, civic education, and citizen participation." According to them, democracy assistance is aimed at strengthening political parties or NGOs that endorse US-style liberal democratic principles. In addition, they argue that US democracy assistance efforts are aimed at increasing the overall

quality of democracy within a particular national context by supporting an array of political parties and NGOs in order to cultivate a pluralist democracy where many voices thrive in the public sphere.

Researchers have also both quantitatively and qualitatively illustrated the success of US democracy assistance efforts in supporting democratic transitions and consolidations throughout the world. In South Korea, for example, Lorenzo Fioramonti and Antonio Fiori (2010) point out how a democratic transition would not have transpired without the presence of aggressive, foreign-funded NGOs. They describe how a

"window of opportunity for civil society opened in late 1983, when the military regime led by Chun Doo-hwan decided to adopt some liberalization policies in order to strengthen its legitimacy. Not only did this decision provide some oxygen to a hitherto agonizing civil society, but it also allowed for the reemergence of political opposition. These two forces grew over time, giving birth to a large anti-authoritarian movement, which gradually began to involve also those members of the urban middle class that had refrained from taking a firm political stance up until then. Finally, on June 29, 1987 – despite the numerous attempts by the government to sideline the opposition – mass mobilizations forced the regime to restore democratic elections in the country" (Fioramonti and Fiori 2010: 90).

In South Africa, the same authors illustrate how foreign-funded NGOs and social movements ultimately catalyzed the demise of the apartheid system. And in Taiwan, Yun Fan (2004) argues that foreign-financed NGOs were primarily behind the push for a democratic transition, and that without these NGOs a democratic transition would not have ensued.

Elsewhere, scholars note the critical role specifically played by the US government in promoting democratic transitions and assisting in the consolidation of existent yet weak democracies. In Romania, Thomas Carothers (1999) underscores the role played by USAID and the NED in aiding newly established Romanian political parties run campaigns, develop platforms, and conduct elections during their transition to democracy. In addition, USAID and the NED helped Romanian citizens to establish NGOs and cultivate democratic leadership among youth and students. In Poland, Janine Wedel (2000) argues that the US government helped several NGOs network with other groups throughout Poland and ultimately pave way for the demise of the communist system. And, in Georgia, Lincoln Mitchell (2013) argues that US agencies helped to keep democratic hope alive by providing the democratic opposition with funding during a period when the Shevardnadze government became increasingly authoritarian and refused to respect electoral results.

Finally, some quantitative work has also attested to the importance of US democracy assistance programs in providing democratic advances. Steven Finkel et al (2007: 406) generate “the first comprehensive examination of the effects of U.S. democracy assistance on democratization worldwide over a large portion of the cold war period.” In doing so, they examine the effect of USAID’s assistance on democratization as measured by Freedom House and the Polity IV indices. Finkel et al (2007: 414) generally find that between 1990 and 2003 USAID’s democracy assistance generated “consistent positive impacts ... on overall levels of democracy in recipient countries, as measured by the Freedom House and Polity IV indices over time.” The authors argue that international pressure and support can lead to democratic advancement in two ways: “indirectly, by transforming some of the structural conditions that serve as prerequisites for regime transition or survival, and directly, by empowering agents

(individuals, political institutions, and social organizations) that struggle for regime change in the domestic arena” (Finkel et al 2007: 410). This direct empowerment primarily involves funding for civil society groups including women’s rights groups, indigenous rights groups, and groups that monitor, for example, attacks on journalists. James Scott and Carie Steele (2011: 65) also echo these earlier findings and illustrate how USAID expenditures on democracy assistance indeed play “a consequential role ... as external sources of democratization.”

Neo-Tocquevillian Expectations and Criticisms

Based on a neo-Tocquevillian perspective of US democracy assistance, we can expect US democracy assistance in contemporary Venezuela to be characterized by several features. First, we would expect that the US will provide democracy assistance to a number of democratic actors that endorse US-style liberal democratic principles, such as civil liberties, political pluralism, the rights of individuals, and rule of law. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars, of course, hope that this is the case, but their analyses have also largely assumed that this is the case. In doing so, they have generally praised US endeavors to effectively promote democracy throughout the world.

Second, based on this perspective, we would expect that the US would provide democracy assistance primarily to organizations that strive for US-style liberal democratic ends, such as electoral monitoring, government transparency, and the rights of minority groups, rather than primarily for highly partisan ends such as removing Chávez from office, recalling Chávez from office, and mobilizing opposition groups against Chávez and his administration’s policies. Third, we would expect that the US will primarily work with groups that identify with the opposition, and we would expect that neo-Tocquevillian scholars would justify this by asserting that the Chávez government itself has not acted in a democratic manner. We would expect

though that the US would fund groups for nonpartisan endeavors instead of policies that directly attempt to unseat the Chávez government.

Neo-Tocquevillian scholars are not mistaken for emphasizing how the US supports and promotes US-style liberal democratic policies abroad. However, they are normatively suspect due to their inability to offer any serious criticism of contemporary US democracy assistance practices. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars have not seriously disentangled the variety of democratic policies that governments throughout the world have pursued. In doing so, they have failed to consider alternative democratic policies that differ from standard liberal democratic features of governance that mimic domestic US policies.

Neo-Tocquevillian scholars, most notably including representatives from US democracy assistance agencies themselves such as Lorne Craner and Kenneth Wollack, also depict US democracy assistance programs as generally inclusive of a multiplicity of democratic actors. They portray the US as only promoting particular programs that enhance US-style liberal democratic policies, such as civil liberties and decentralization efforts. That is, these scholars fail to consider whether we can understand US democracy assistance efforts as, in fact, partisan endeavors that only provide support for some organizations. Of course, these scholars might respond that the groups that they fund are the true champions of democracy, but they fail to recognize that competing visions of democracy persist. What is more, these scholars fail to consider whether or not US funding flows to groups that have actually supported anti-democratic measures, such as, for example, coup d'état efforts and other unconstitutional efforts. Within recent Venezuelan history, a number of actors indeed supported the violent removal of former President Chávez from power, and some groups have continued to push for the removal of the

chavistas from power. Funding for these sorts of groups also calls the democratic credentials of US funding practices into question.

The Neo-Marxist Perspective

Karl Marx: The Critique of Civil Society

While continuity and consistency within Karl Marx's writings is debatable, throughout nearly all his writings, a critique of capitalism is continual and consistent. Despite his contempt for capitalism, he believed that capitalism was a necessary terminal *en route* to a truly egalitarian future. Since the bourgeoisie had developed the industrial machinery and production techniques that allowed for the possibility of providing for all, he believed that they were indeed a revolutionary class. He believed, though, that these powers should be harnessed to produce a just and equitable society that would place human need and human dignity over the capitalist quest for private profit, which, in his opinion, inevitably resulted in monopoly, alienation, extreme inequality, and premature death.

Under capitalism, Marx (1978 [1848]: 475) argued that the state acted "as an executive committee for managing the common affairs of the entire bourgeoisie," that is, as an instrument of the capitalist class. He believed that state functionaries were beholden to the interests of capitalism and relied upon investment and capital in order to maintain their own privileged positions. Within a truly socialist society, Marx believed that the state would become superfluous, since socio-economic inequalities would be eradicated and decision-making powers would devolve down to local communities and workplaces. Ironically though, within actually existing socialist societies, socialist bureaucracies dominated their populations in the way that Max Weber had predicted. Distinguishing between capitalist and socialist societies, Weber (1994

[1917]: 286) wrote that the "embarrassing thing would be that, whereas [under capitalism], the political and private-economic bureaucracies ... exist alongside one another ... as separate entities, so that economic power can still be curbed by political power, [under a socialist system] the two bureaucracies would then be a single body with identical interests and could no longer be supervised or controlled."

Yet, despite Marx's inaccurate prediction of where and how socialism would develop, Marx accurately illustrated how economic inequalities indeed come to pervade many aspects of capitalist society. With the rise of democratic political systems and the promotion of civil liberties throughout parts of Europe and the Americas, many liberal philosophers, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill, lauded the development of civil society and political freedom, believing that it would rectify existent inequalities and provide all citizens with a political voice. Marx (1978 [1844]: 35) agreed that "[p]olitical emancipation certainly represents great progress ... [but he also believed that] it is not the final form of human emancipation ... [Rather,] it is the final form of human emancipation within the framework of the prevailing social order." The "prevailing social order," that is, the capitalist order, encourages political emancipation, but in doing so, Marx asserted that it places individual liberty and the pursuit of private interest above all else. Although Tocqueville believed that liberty and freedom from government formed the basis of an ideal society, Marx argued that it fell short of encouraging the full development of citizens and societies. Instead, Marx believed that the preoccupation with individual liberty encouraged selfishness, placing the individual over the collective, and the private pursuit of profit over the welfare of the populace.

In his critique of several US state constitutions as well as the French Declaration on the Rights of Man, Marx (1978 [1844]: 45) writes that "[n]one of the so-called rights of man [sic] ...

go beyond egoistic man, beyond man as a member of civil society – that is, an individual withdrawn into himself, into the confines of his private interests and private caprice, and separated from the community ... Political emancipation is the reduction of man ... to a member of civil society, to an egoistic, independent individual." For Marx, a liberal democratic civil society could not accomplish "the final form of emancipation;" true emancipation would only take place within a socialist society. That is, this final form of emancipation would include emancipation from the anti-humanist confines of the capitalist system.

Neo-Marxist Theory: Imperialism and Hegemony

Although Marx analyzed England's Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution of 1848, and other international current events, Marx's analysis of capitalist systems largely involved analyses of class relations within particular national societies. Marx indeed made reference to the global expansion of capitalism, and he discussed, for example, English imperialist efforts in India and Ireland; however, the extension of his mode of analysis to include relations between and beyond national confines largely fell to later scholars, including V.I. Lenin and more contemporary sociologists such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Leslie Sklair, and William Robinson.

Writing at the beginning of the 20th century, V.I. Lenin (1917) broadened Marx's class analysis to incorporate relations between countries and regions of the world. Lenin began his analysis by observing that within the most industrialized countries of the world, monopolies and cartels had developed that controlled a majority of industrial production. However, corporate control did not end at the national borders of, for example, Germany, the US, or Britain. Corporate leaders were now extending their economic domination into the developing world and partitioning it among themselves. Lenin believed that revolutionaries could no longer wait on the

working class of the developed world to catalyze a worldwide socialist revolution. He perceived the working class of the developed world as increasingly benefitting from an international division of labor that exploited labor in the developing world and allowed the working class of the developed world to consume cheap imported products. He thus believed that the working class of the developing world would have to construct socialist/communist systems without the assistance of socialist/communist states that were expected to presumptively arise in the developed world.

Within Russia, Lenin proposed that a professional revolutionary class, or a professional vanguard, would have to develop that could accurately interpret Marxist theory and understand exactly how and when to carry out the revolution. Although Lenin's Bolshevik Party and the Red Guard had played a large role in forcing the Russian tsar out of power, they did not initially achieve power with the tsar's abdication. It was only when the Bolsheviks dissolved the Russian Constituent Assembly in January 1918, after having suffered an overwhelming electoral defeat against the Socialist Revolutionary Party, that they took control of Russia and eventually established the Soviet Union.

Although many international socialist groups aligned themselves with the newly named Communist Party of the Soviet Union, others had their misgivings with the way in which the Communists maintained power. In Italy, Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist intellectual and leader of the Italian Communist Party, made a habit of practicing "cultural messianism," whereby he lectured to workers and youth, and created Marxist and socialist study circles (Davidson 1974: 126-7). Gramsci believed that socialists developed through both class struggle and cultural education. He believed that parties were necessary, but he did not believe that change would

ultimately ensue as a result of party directives, especially outside of the national state, in a place such as the Soviet Union.

Gramsci (1971) argued that capitalism dominates individuals not only at the point of production, but also through culture and ideology. More than sheer economic domination, Gramsci believed that culture and ideology enabled the capitalist class to perpetuate their domination. For Gramsci, culture and ideology are autonomous entities to the extent that individuals retain the ability to alter and challenge them. In this way, Gramsci provides more agency to human actors than Marx's base/superstructure model, which views the state, culture, and nearly all else as ultimately epiphenomenal and determined by the economic mode of production. For Gramsci, culture and ideology are "no longer the thing to be explained but ... now a thing that does the explaining" (Bergesen 1993: 13).

Gramsci distinguished between two forms of domination wielded by state and class powers: coercive and hegemonic domination. While the former refers to the use of the military and police to forcefully dominate populations, the latter refers to domination achieved through culture and ideology. Within non-industrialized societies, Gramsci argued that political power is maintained through coercive domination. In these societies, political conditions necessitate wars of maneuver – or forceful assaults directed against the state. In liberal democratic societies where civil societies have expanded and developed, Gramsci argued that political power is maintained largely through hegemonic domination. In these societies, socialist/communist revolution necessitates a war of position, whereby socialists/communists aim to undermine cultural and ideological domination. In doing so, Gramsci believed that a new consciousness could develop, that is, one that understood the contradictions of capitalism and would allow citizens to undermine it.

Neo-Marxism: Hegemony and Democracy Assistance

Writing nearly a full century after Lenin, William Robinson (1996, 2006) widens the international Marxist lens of analysis to include, like Gramsci, the provinces of civil society. Robinson adjusts Lenin's imperialist focus to capture not only the workings of the capitalist mode of production and the use of force within the developing world, but also what he understands as historically novel, transnational forms of hegemonic domination. Like Lenin and other internationally-minded scholars, such as world systems analysts (Bergesen 1980; Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000; Chase-Dunn et al 2000; Wallerstein 1974), globalization theorists (Castells 2000; Ritzer 2003; Robertson 1992), and theorists of global capitalism (Beck 2005; Robinson 1996, 2001; Sklair 1995), Robinson (2001, 2007) asserts that globalization has rendered state-centric analysis obsolete. Robinson (2006: 101) "stress[es] the collective nature of [transnational domination], [and] disagree[s] with the prevalent notion that the emergent global capitalist order is based on US hegemony." Rather, he understands global capitalists as working together to ensure access to cheap labor and raw materials.

Robinson believes that two new transnational forms of economic and political practices define our current epoch, and these respectively include neoliberal economics and the promotion of polyarchies through democracy assistance. Robinson (2006: 97-8) "suggest[s] ... that not only are these two linked, but that what Washington refers to as 'democracy' has become a functional imperative of economic globalization ... The promotion of 'free markets of democracy' is intended to make the world both available and safe for global capitalism by creating the most propitious conditions for the unfettered operation of the new global production and financial system." By neoliberal economics, Robinson (2006: 102) refers to a political-economic ideology that encourages the removal of government from business and citizen affairs, through policies

such as "deregulation, [trade] liberalization, privatization, social austerity, [and] labor flexibility." By democracy, Robinson (2006: 99) observes that "what [transnational elites and state bureaucrats] ... mean is the promotion of polyarchy ... a system in which a small group actually rules, and mass participation in decision making is confined to choosing leaders in elections that are carefully managed by competing elites." Robinson (2006: 100) asserts, though, that polyarchy "do[es] not ... [fill] the lives of ordinary people with authentic or meaningful democratic content, much less ... social justice or greater economic equality."

Robinson (2006: 100) argues that the promotion of polyarchy is the political counterpart to neoliberal economics in that it provides national economic stability by "co-opt[ing], neutraliz[ing], and redirect[ing] ... mass democratic movements ... [and] reliev[ing] pressure from subordinate classes for more fundamental political, social, and economic change in emergent global society." Within the developing world, Robinson (1996, 2006) points out that the US government has historically supported dictatorial regimes so long as they destroyed socialist/communist movements. This coercion-based political model embodied by brutal anti-communist dictators, he says, has increasingly proved unstable for two reasons. First, according to Robinson (1996, 2006), dictators have become anachronistic, given the imperative for increased global economic integration. Dictatorial regimes, like the Somoza family in Nicaragua, regularized the practice of crony capitalism, whereby national industries were awarded to individuals on the basis of familial relations, and, according to Robinson (1996, 2006), these practices ultimately impede the spread of neoliberal capitalism.

Second, and more importantly, popular mass movements were beginning to unseat dictators throughout the developing world. In places such as Cuba, Iran, and Nicaragua, revolutionaries succeeded in toppling dictatorial regimes and, in some instances, ushering in

socialist/communist systems. Robinson (2006: 104) asserts that the US promotes carefully managed polyarchic systems in order to placate the demands of citizens for extensive political-economic change and to provide "a more efficient, viable, and durable form for the political management of socioeconomic dictatorship in the age of global capitalism."

Like Carothers (1999), Robinson (1996, 2006) writes that the promotion of polyarchy through democracy assistance involves assistance for a multiplicity of organizations. However, he argues that the US government selects only certain political parties and NGOs to receive democracy assistance. These organizations include groups that are "expected to generate ideological conformity with the elite social order under construction, to promote the neoliberal outlook, and to advocate for policies that integrate the intervened country into global capitalism" (Robinson 2006: 108). Similar to Manuel Castells' (2000) conception of the network society, wherein only certain international economic units, corporations, and cities are keyed into the global economy, democracy assistance keys only particular groups into its complex, and these include only those groups that promote, or at least do not challenge, neoliberal capitalism. Instead, they often endorse these policies, and serve to undermine socialist/communist efforts to the contrary.

Neo-Marxist Expectations and Criticisms

Based on a neo-Marxist analysis of US democracy assistance, we can expect US democracy assistance in contemporary Venezuela to be characterized by a number of features. We can expect that the US will primarily grant democracy assistance to NGOs that strive for partisan ends such as removing Chávez from office, recalling Chávez from office, and mobilizing opposition groups against Chávez, rather than for non-partisan ends, such as electoral

monitoring, government transparency, and the rights of minority groups. This will include support for NGOs that define themselves as part of the opposition and thus do not cooperate with the Chávez Administration on projects and programs. These efforts will also include providing support for political parties and political leaders that oppose the Chávez government and build coalitions to defeat it. In doing so, this supports aims to frustrate the efforts of the Chávez government, embolden opposition groups that promote neoliberal policies, and pave way for transnational capital. Indeed, US democracy assistance programs may not solely promote groups that specifically promote neoliberal economic ideas, but they will primarily support groups that combat the Chávez Administration.

These expectations clearly diverge from the neo-Tocquevillian expectations that funding is governed by a US-style liberal democratic focus and flows to groups focused on many nonpartisan endeavors that do not directly enfranchise transnational capitalist class interests, such as promoting groups that emphasize freedom of the press and human rights. Robinson (2006: 104, 108), however, clearly asserts that US funding flows to groups that that pave way for "a more efficient, viable, and durable form for the political management of socioeconomic dictatorship in the age of global capitalism," as well as groups that are "expected to generate ideological conformity with the elite social order under construction, to promote the neoliberal outlook, and to advocate for policies that integrate the intervened country into global capitalism." Distinctions between the neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian perspectives, however, are initially less stark. While, as we will see, the neo-Weberian perspective also foregrounds the possibility that the US will support groups that oppose the Chávez government, the two perspectives differ in how they explain the basis of this support for the opposition. For neo-Marxists, they tether support for the opposition to transnational capitalist class interests, which include US corporate

interests. These interests primarily involve support for neoliberal economic policies, such as trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of industry. They do not consider that US democracy assistance efforts might ultimately result in bolstering particular governments, such as the Chávez government, and that, at times, some groups that receive funding might work with the Chávez government.

In addition, the neo-Marxist perspective does not consider the range of additional interests that might direct US government funding for the opposition. In other words, this perspective reduces US funding efforts to support for neoliberal economic policies. By contrast, other scholars have drawn attention to national security interests, historical paternalism within the Western hemisphere, and racist and Orientalist policies that have depicted non-US and non-European “others” as uncivil, erratic, hysterical, and undemocratic, and the importance these interests have on the direction of US foreign policy endeavors abroad. In order to illustrate support for the neo-Marxist perspective, we must find that the US has primarily funded groups that have indeed sought to combat the Chávez government and its public policies, including groups that have supported neoliberal policies that champion the free flow of transnational capital. In addition, we must see US democracy assistance efforts bolstering transnational capitalist class interests. If this is not the case, we must consider alternative perspectives that enable us to make the most theoretical sense of contemporary US democracy assistance efforts abroad.

A Neo-Weberian Perspective on US Democracy Assistance

The State, Ideal Interests, and Max Weber

On one end of the spectrum, neo-Marxists ultimately reduce US democracy assistance to transnational economic interests. For Robinson (1996, 2001) and others, the idea of “promoting democracy” works in an ideological manner to mask the true motivations of the US government. According to these researchers, instead of a democratic system, what the US state truly demands are governments that are open to transnational corporations and transnational accumulation. And in their perspective, neoliberal policies, such as trade liberalization and privatization of industry, signify this openness and advance transnational interests. Ultimately then, the US seeks to marginalize popular and socialist-oriented groups, and provide assistance to NGOs and political parties that seek to advance neoliberal policies, or at least, in the instance of NGOs, heavily criticize existing socialist-oriented governments. In doing so, they aim to cultivate polyarchies that placate citizens and provide a basic liberal democratic form, but, in the neo-Marxist perspective, provide them with no real democratic substance.

On the other end of the spectrum, neo-Tocquevillian scholars and representatives from US state institutions themselves assert that the US promotes US-style liberal democratic policies and groups that champion these policies. From their perspective, the US aims to generate political pluralism through its support for political parties and NGOs, as well as a countervailing check against potential state abuses by supporting NGOs that monitor an array of issues, such as civil liberties and human rights. According to these scholars, the US acts a beneficent global force that seeks to assist in the transition to and consolidation of democratic systems. And indeed these researchers point to a number of instances where the US has provided funding and support for groups that have advanced democratic transitions in places such as Chile, Poland, South

Korea, and Taiwan. These scholars do not critically interrogate the nature of US democracy assistance efforts, and they do not recognize the racist and Orientalist beliefs that have directed, and continue to direct, US foreign policy

These two perspectives represent two polarized views of US democracy assistance efforts and are based on the theoretical work of two of the sociological discipline's progenitors: Karl Marx and Alexis de Tocqueville. Due to the blindspots involved in these perspectives though, we must develop an additional perspective that builds on the advances of these perspectives, but recognizes and rectifies their blindspots. To do so, I have developed a third perspective that is rooted in the theoretical work of an additional sociological progenitor, Max Weber, whose work chronologically follows Karl Marx and Alexis de Tocqueville. Weber remains renowned within the social sciences for a number of his eclectic research pursuits, including his research on religion, capitalism, social action, and research methodology. His perspectives, though, on ideal interests, bureaucracies, and the state concern us here.

Within much of his corpus, Weber actively converses with Marx and the emphasis that Marx placed on the ultimate determinacy of economic interests. Ultimately, Weber sought to move sociological understandings of social action beyond economic reductions. Of course, Weber argued that social action based on material calculations was certainly a possibility, but he considered a range of social action based on additional motivations, including values, traditions, and emotions. In addition, Weber asserted that the social world contained multiple forms of domination, including legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic forms of domination.

In the contemporary social world, Weber singled out legal-rational domination in the form of the bureaucracy as what had increasingly come to dominate the life of the individual. For Weber, bureaucracies characterized modern life, and, in the realm of politics, the state and its

specialists had come to dominate public affairs. Weber defined the state as involving a number of institutions with a governing body that maintained a monopoly over the legitimate use of force in a particular territory. This institutionalist definition greatly differs from Marx's conception of the state as "as an executive committee for managing the common affairs of the entire bourgeoisie." For Marx, the state possessed little autonomy from the capitalist class, and thus only served to advance capitalist class interests. Weber, however, left open the possibility that state officials possess their own interests and might transgress capitalist – and any other particular – interests in their policy development. Indeed, for Weber, it still remains possible that state officials prioritize economic issues, including capitalist class interests, but this is not a foregone conclusion as it is for neo-Marxist scholars.

Above all, Weber operated as an empirical sociologist that eschewed overarching generalizations that would allegedly transcend time and place. Instead of invariability, Weber sought to understand how particular historical events unfolded, such as the development of the spirit of capitalism in Western Europe and, thereafter, North America. For Weber, as discussed above, a multiplicity of motivations could push individuals to act. And aside from the possibility of economic considerations, Weber allowed room for the role of ideas in catalyzing individuals to act upon the world.

The Autonomy of the State, Liberal Democracy, and Foreign Policy

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, several political sociologists took influence from Weber, and challenged prevailing neo-Marxist, as well as pluralist, conceptions of the state. During this time, instrumental and structural Marxists maintained a vigorous debate concerning the nature of the state. On one side, instrumental Marxists such as Ralph Miliband and Gabriel

Kolko contended that state elites were often socialized in the same schools and social milieus as capitalist elites, and, in some instances, were, in fact, capitalist elites themselves. They thus understood the state as effectively captured by capitalists and their counterparts, and, because of this, capitalist elites could direct state activity. On the other side, structural Marxists such as Nicos Poulantzas and Fred Block asserted that the state maintained relative autonomy from capitalist elites and that not all decisions were rendered in the interest of particular capitalists. They argued, however, that state elites remained dependent upon the capitalist system for their enfranchisement, and that state elites, instead, rendered decisions in the long-term interests of capitalism. At times, this meant concessions to, for example, the working class and minorities in order to contain contentious action that might threaten the entirety of the capitalist system.

Similar to Weber himself, neo-Weberian political sociologists have claimed that state elites maintained their own sets of interests. According to the neo-Weberian perspective, the interests of capitalist elites – or any other civil society group – did not often dictate state policy. Indeed, congressional members remain reliant upon campaign funding and votes. However, many state elites remain insulated from these pressures and enact public policy on a daily basis without requiring passage through publicly elected bodies. In addition, US representatives that are subject to periodic election also possess competing interests that they must often balance when they cast their votes in the legislature.

Michael Mann (1987) has advanced a neo-Weberian conception of the state and historically delineated the institutional powers of the modern state. According to Mann (1987), states have historically possessed a combination of despotic and infrastructural power. By despotic power, he refers to actions that states take “without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups,” and, by infrastructural power, he means “the capacity of the state to

actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm,” that is, to coordinate civil society activities (Mann 1987: 113-14). States that have utilized high levels of despotic power include Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, where state leaders did not contend with civil society groups over public policy so much as render decisions, sometimes over life and death, that were henceforth carried out. In contemporary Europe and North America though, Mann understands the states therein as primarily using infrastructural power, such as, for example, the ability to tax, collect information on citizens, operate transportation, and vaccinate the population. In these latter countries, state elites do not possess high levels of despotic power, that is, they cannot just “brazenly expropriate or kill their enemies or dare to overturn legal traditions enshrining constitutional rule, private property or individual freedoms” (Mann 1987: 114).

Similar to Mann, Stephen Krasner (1978) has analyzed US foreign policy involving natural resources in order to test a theory of the state that takes state elite interests seriously. In doing so, he examines the intersection between the US natural resources industry and US foreign policy. Instead of pursuing corporate interests, Krasner (1978) posits that US state elites pursue a foreign political path that is directed by, what he terms, the national interest. For Krasner (1978: 14), in terms of natural resources, the national interest involves increasing competition, ensuring a steady supply of natural resources, and, above all, the promotion of “broad foreign policy objectives.”

According to Krasner (1978), the broad foreign policy objectives of the US have shifted over time due to the international placement of the US. Before World War II, he says that the US was primarily interested in achieving material security, that is, “enhancing strategic security and furthering economic well-being by increasing competition or promoting security of supply”

(Krasner 1978: 15). Following World War II, however, he says that the US became more interested in pursuing ideological objectives – or what Weber would term ideal interests (Krasner 1978: 15). In the post-World War II world, he argues that US “leaders were moved by a vision of what the global order should be like and that derived from [US] values and the [US] experience – Lockean liberalism and a nonrevolutionary, democratic, and prosperous historical evolution. They were more concerned with structuring the international system and the domestic politics of other countries than with pursuing readily identifiable economic and strategic interests” (Krasner 1978: 15). And this shift, he says, corresponds with “the growth of [the US] global power position” that is, the displacement of the United Kingdom as the global hegemonic power (Krasner 1978: 15).

Borrowing from Weber, Krasner’s perspective on the ideal interests of US state elites greatly differs from neo-Marxist conceptions of the state. For mid-century Marxists, both structural and instrumental,

“the notion of national interest is rejected ... [and the] aims pursued by the state mirror the preferences of the capitalist class or some of its elements, or the needs of the system as a whole ... ideological goals cannot be independent of economic considerations. Ideology is a mask that hides the reality of exploitation and this helps mislead and mollify those who have no real power” (Krasner 1978: 26).

Similarly, while contemporary neo-Marxists broaden their perspective beyond the nation-state and national industry – or mid-century Marxist considerations, they reduce foreign policy decisions of elites to the promotion of transnational corporate interests (Burron 2012; Robinson 1996, 2001; Sklair 2001). And, in doing so, they fail to take ideal interests – or ideological

objectives – seriously beyond their connection to alleged economic priorities, such as the promotion of neoliberal economic policies.

At times, of course, Krasner (1978) finds that government and corporate interests coincide as, for example, when the US wanted companies to invest in Liberia in order to boost US rubber supplies. At other points, however, Krasner (1978) finds that US state elites did not always utilize foreign policy for corporate interests. For example, while the US intervened in Guatemala following land reform efforts and the redistribution of US corporate holdings, Krasner (1978) shows that the US negotiated with the Bolivian government after it nationalized companies owned by US citizens, despite members of the business community calling for intervention. He asserts that the difference lie in the perception of Soviet influence within these countries, and, since US state officials understood Guatemala as a communist threat and did not perceive Bolivia as a communist threat, they intervened in Guatemala and recognized the Bolivian government (Krasner 1978: 282-86).

In addition, he argues that US state action often undermined domestic stability and quite seemingly the alleged long-term interests of capitalism. In Vietnam, for example, Krasner (1978: 33) argues that US intervention resulted in “rising prices, a declining stock market, the demise of Bretton Woods, tensions with allies, and unrest at home.” Despite these consequences, however, US intervention in Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia continued. And so, far from understanding US foreign policy as a logical, political calculation designed to bolster capitalist interests, Krasner (1978: 278) understands US foreign policy as governed by ideological objectives and rooted in “nonlogical behavior ... that contradicts the underlying epistemology of a materialist paradigm to see the behavior of political leaders in other than logical or rational terms.”

US-Style Liberal Democracy, US Democracy Assistance, and the US State

From a neo-Weberian perspective, US democracy assistance efforts represent an attempt by the US state to achieve infrastructural power throughout global civil society. Neo-Marxists also contend that the US aims to control global civil society. However, these theorists reduce this control to neoliberal economic interests. In other words, they argue that US state leaders are concerned with democratic politics insofar as the groups that achieve power through democratic means are groups that support neoliberal economic policies. For them, democracy assistance is not delivered in an effort to ultimately achieve democracy, but rather it is an instrumentalization of democracy assistance to benefit transnational corporations, many of which are headquartered in the US.

Mann (1984) and other neo-Weberian scholars helpfully direct attention to the relative autonomy of the state, and Krasner (1978) helpfully directs attention to the ideological underpinnings of US foreign policy. However, the precise nature of US ideal interests involving its foreign political endeavors requires a bit more unpacking. Although Krasner notes the importance of Lockean liberal democracy, this is largely conflated with a rejection of Soviet influence. As the Cold War has ended, we need to further interrogate the idea of Lockean liberal democracy and its potential influence on US foreign policy, in particular on its democracy assistance efforts around the world.

Democracy, of course, remains an essentially contested concept, and there remains much debate concerning how government leaders should do democratic politics (Held 1997; Robinson 1996, 2006; Ryan 2012). The earliest US government leaders, however, founded the US based on liberal democratic principles that have continued to shape basic US political-economic

contours and the country's approach to promoting democratic political systems abroad. Indeed, there exist several variants of liberal democracy, and I argue that the US has promoted its own US-style liberal democratic principles abroad. As pointed out above, Tony Smith (2013) identifies several periods through which US foreign policy evolved since the inception of the US. What has remained consistent, though, throughout US history has been an emphasis on US-style liberal democratic politics, from George Washington into the present. Indeed, several countries practice liberal democratic politics, including many Western European countries; however, the US has primarily emphasized civil and political rights, both internally and in its democracy assistance programs abroad. And thus, I argue that within Venezuela, the US has ultimately sought to promote these same US-style liberal democratic policies.

Liberal democratic ideas initially developed in response to dismay with the nature of power during the 18th century and earlier periods. Some of the earliest proponents of liberal democratic ideas include John Locke, Montesquieu, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill. In keeping with the ideas of these classical liberal democrats, Alan Ryan (2012: 23, 28) defines liberalism “as the belief that the freedom of the individual is the highest political value,” and asserts that “the history of liberalism is a history of opposition to assorted tyrannies.” Among these “assorted tyrannies,” Ryan (2012) argues that liberal advocates have opposed all forms of absolutist authority, including monarchical rule, totalitarianism, despotism, and theocracy. Instead, what proponents of liberal democracy have promoted is for the state to engage in “as little coercion as possible in its dealings with its citizens” (Ryan 2012: 38-39).

Many of the early liberal democrats laid out the precise contours of what a liberal democracy should involve. While Thomas Hobbes set the philosophical stage for a justification of the modern state, John Locke, whose ideas inspired the US Revolution, initially argued that

the modern state must also have limitations on its sovereign power. Locke believed that all citizens possessed natural rights to life, liberty, and property, and he believed that possession of the latter provided the basis for true freedom (Held 1997; Kurki 2011; Ryan 2012). Similar to Hobbes, Locke asserted that the state remained necessary to protect individuals from other individuals who may not respect others' private property in the state of nature. That is, he argued that "government exists to safeguard the rights and liberties of citizens who are ultimately the best judges of their own interests; and that accordingly government must be restricted in scope and constrained in practice in order to ensure the maximum possible freedom of every citizen" (Held 1997: 81).

Locke thus believed that citizens must limit government and allow it only to preserve law and enforce contracts over a given territory. That is, a liberal democratic government must abide by rule of law and enforce order in a non-biased manner that ultimately respects the freedom of the individual. Although Locke did not specifically detail what a modern state should precisely look like in its operations, he moved individuals towards the ideas of not only rule of law, but also popular sovereignty and citizen control over government. In addition, Locke set the stage for a conception of decentralized state structures, where most governance would transpire at the local level rather than derive from dictations from a centralized national state.

While Locke urged individuals to consider citizen control over government, the work of laying out what this might entail fell to other philosophers, including Montesquieu. For Montesquieu, liberal governments must involve the separation of powers (Held 1997: 85-86). This would include a separate executive, legislative, and judicial branch of government. In this way, a legislative body accountable to the populace through periodic election and a court system governed by law could balance the executive branch of government and ultimately allow for

citizen restrictions on the unrestrained use of state power. All together then, both Locke and Montesquieu advocated for a representative form of democracy where citizens would select individuals to represent their interests within government and curtail the national centralization of executive power.

Beyond rule of law and popular sovereignty, many of the early liberal democrats also espoused support for a free-market capitalist system, including John Locke, but most notably Adam Smith. Locke, of course, made the right to private property a cornerstone of his perspective on freedom and citizenship. Smith, however, truly championed the idea of free market capitalism. For Smith, free markets provided the basis of society as they drew individuals into contact with one another, produced societal economic interdependence, and allowed individual freedom. At a larger level, free markets would allow individuals to specialize in particular tasks and generate an economically rising tide that would benefit all societal inhabitants. For Smith, “rule of law and representative systems of government [arose] from the needs of market ... to ensure efficient grounds for economic interaction” (Kurki 2011: 35). That is, the purpose of governments generally derived from the necessities of a free market economy.

In their totality, the liberal democratic philosophers that influenced the US Revolution and the first US government leaders championed civil and political rights, and, in a phrase, they prioritized the rights of the individual over an encompassing, centralized state. Their vision of democracy deeply contrasts with socialist-inspired perspectives on democracy that have their origin in the work of Karl Marx, and have been endorsed by recent Venezuelan government leaders, including former President Hugo Chávez and current President Nicolás Maduro. For Marx and those influenced by him, representative democracy continues to enfranchise the capitalist class and allows this class to dominate the political-economic system. Marxist scholars

have argued that through campaign contributions and outright bribery capitalist leaders can dictate public policy. For Marx and those he has influenced, true democracy entails social and economic rights, including greatly redistributing wealth and providing the working class with access to key national institutions, such as universities and medical facilities. Instead of representative democracy, Marx and his adherents have promoted direct democracy as well as worker and citizen control over national resources, including land, water, factories, and mines. And so, a US-style liberal democratic focus on civil and political rights greatly contrasts with the social and economic objectives that Marxists have continued to champion in their work.

As particular liberal democratic ideas have infused the continuing history of US domestic politics, we might expect that these ideas would indeed characterize contemporary US democracy assistance efforts throughout the world. In many ways, US democracy assistance indeed embodies the idealistic side of US governance, whereas its recent military interventions in the Middle East and North Africa represent its potential for realist, military activity. Milja Kurki (2011), for one, has recognized that US foreign policy and US democracy assistance efforts remain, at least, conceptually underpinned by the ideas of classical liberal democracy, including, namely, the importance of civil and political rights. Although Kurki (2011) does not systematically examine the particularities of US democracy assistance programs, she underscores how the US government “seems to be unable to move away from a democracy promotion paradigm that puts liberal democracy and free markets at its [center].” Kurki (2011) recognizes that many Western European governments have indeed endorsed varying sorts of liberal democracy that have included more social and economic dimensions, such as the redistribution of wealth and resources, both internally and within their democracy assistance programs. However, she claims that the US has remained committed to a more classical variant of liberal

democracy that prioritizes civil and political rights, such as civil liberties and decentralization efforts. To support her claims, she examines the contours of US reconstruction efforts in Japan after World War II and recently in Iraq, as well as NED, US State Department, and USAID programmatic statements. In doing so, she concludes that classical liberal conceptions continue to shape US democracy assistance efforts. Based on these beginnings, we might certainly expect to find similar patterns within the actual work of these US democracy promoting organizations within contemporary Venezuela, and we can potentially envision the US as promoting its own US-style liberal democratic features abroad through its democracy assistance programs.

US Empire and its Imperial Modalities

Since Alexis de Tocqueville's observations of US society during the early 19th century, several scholars have pointed out, for better or worse, that the US allegedly possesses an exceptional nature (Fischer 2010; Fukuyama 1993; Lipset 1997). Some of the early features of US exceptionalism purportedly include its revolutionary origins and absence of a feudal aristocracy. And although some scholars – and certainly most US politicians – still commend the US for its exceptional character, some current observers have not been as celebratory of US alleged exceptionalism. For example, in comparison with other industrialized countries, some researchers have directed attention to the continued use of capital punishment, absence of a socialized medical system, and the political disenfranchisement of African-Americans (Alexander 2012; Behrens et al 2003; Manza and Uggen 2002).

In keeping with the tradition of the US exceptionalism thesis, several historians have also asserted that the US has maintained an exceptional empire due to its allegedly distinctive set of values since its hegemonic ascendancy during the 19th century and its displacement of the British

Empire following World War II. In comparison with previous European empires, several scholars have designated the US as indeed the first liberal empire (Boot 2001, 2003; Ferguson 2005). They have pointed out that while previous European empires maintained colonies throughout the periphery of the world, the US has never maintained colonial arrangements of power. What is more, they argue that the US has based its empire on liberal democratic principles that have encouraged political and economic freedom, and the advancement of all peoples. All together, these scholars understand the US Empire as a benevolent and often necessary bastion of power that effectively promotes liberty and freedom where it formerly did not exist.

Other scholars, however, have strongly disagreed with the idea that the US Empire remains exceptional and fully distinct from previous empires (Go 2007, 2011; Grandin 2006; Mann 2012a, 2012b). In particular, Julian Go (2007, 2011) takes issue with this particular variant of the US exceptionalism thesis and illustrates how the US empire has, in many ways, mimicked many of the policies and dynamics deployed by the British Empire and British citizens, including the use of colonialist policies, the subordination of foreign territories to US political-economic power, the escalation of the use of its military during its hegemonic decline, and the public denial of empire.

For Go (2011: 7), empires are “sociopolitical formation[s] wherein a central political authority (a king, a metropole, or imperial state) exercises unequal influence and power over the political (and in effect the sociopolitical) process of a subordinate society, peoples, or space.” Empires also involve an array of strategies to exert control over subordinate territories. While empires may engage in formal colonialist policies – or directly control the political-economic arrangements in a particular area, empires may also deploy informal modalities of power. These

informal modalities of power include “money, protection, access, or other resources in exchange for deference ... [and they also include] financial aid or market control, temporary military occupation or deployments of military power, covert operations to topple recalcitrant regimes, or just the threat of military assault” (Go 2011: 11). All together, empires deploy a multiplicity of imperial modalities in order to ensure that foreign leaders govern in a manner that imperial leaders deem appropriate. These strategies have differed, of course, depending on the recalcitrance of peripheral governments and how unmanageable state leaders in the periphery have seemingly become.

Julian Go (2007, 2008, 2011) and Michael Mann (2012a, 2012b) have both emphatically rejected the US exceptionalism thesis and argued that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the US indeed maintained several colonies, including the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and several areas of North America that would eventually transform into US states, such as California, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Far from a liberal empire devoid of colonies, Go (2007, 2008, 2011) has asserted that colonialism characterized the incipient years of US hegemonic ascendancy, before it surpassed the British Empire during the early 20th century and became the sole global hegemon. During the late 19th century, for example, US diplomats attempted to export democracy to the Philippines and Puerto Rico. In doing so, Go (2000: 333-334, 2008) argues that US officials often treated local citizens as children engaged in a political education, and attempted to set up local government structures that could, in the words of US diplomats, serve as a “sort of kindergarten” and allow local populations the chance to “demonstrate a fitness for self-administration.” In the end, US representatives primarily offered support to domestic political and economic elites that it perceived as the appropriate harbingers of democratic

principles, and only allowed certain members of, for example, Filipino and Puerto Rican society to engage in the political process, namely those same political and economic elites.

What is more, Go (2008, 2011) has argued that the US did not possess additional colonies following its consolidation of global hegemony in the wake of World War II, due to developments that transpired beyond the US. Mann (2012b) has also recognized these same dynamics. While some scholars have argued that a distinctive liberal value system precluded the US from maintaining colonies during the 20th century, Go (2008, 2011) has argued that peripheral countries possessed consolidated state structures, and a discourse of anti-colonial liberation pervaded global society. In addition, he points out that the USSR challenged US global power, and, in doing so, encouraged anti-colonial revolutionary movements. Due to these dynamics, US leaders recognized that they could not even attempt to colonize nations lest these countries embrace the Soviet Union and threaten US global power. Overall, Go (2008, 2011) emphasizes the importance of dynamics beyond the US and within the periphery in order to explain US activity, instead of explaining these dynamics based on analysis of an allegedly distinctive US value system that rejects colonialist policies.

Since these dynamics have precluded US colonialism in the 20th and 21st centuries, many scholars have pointed out that the US has deployed alternative imperial modalities in order to exert its control throughout the world. In Latin America during the 20th century, Greg Grandin (2006) has illustrated how the US used both overt and covert tactics to destabilize governments that possessed leftist sympathies, vowed support for socialist-communist policies, and worked with the Soviet Union. In addition to Grandin (2006), Mann (2012b) has argued that the US largely supported proxy, often dictatorial, governments with economic and military aid, so long as they stamped out socialist-communist insurgencies. And indeed, in some instances, the US

even worked with domestic forces to undermine democratically elected governments, such as in Guatemala and Chile during the mid-20th century (Grandin 2006; Mann 2012b; Robinson 1996). Moving towards the turn of the 21st century, William Robinson (1996, 2006) and others have shown how the US has sought to achieve its will in Latin America, among other places, through its democracy assistance programs, which involve the cultivation of particular political parties and NGOs so that they may attain leadership positions within these peripheral societies. However, as discussed above, he reduces US objectives throughout the world to the fulfillment of transnational capitalist class interests, and does not recognize other important dimensions involving contemporary US imperial modalities throughout the peripheral world that also shaped US foreign policy towards the peripheral world in earlier time periods.

Racism, Orientalism, and Regional Paternalism within US Democracy Assistance Programs

In contrast with the neo-Marxist perspective on US Empire and US democracy assistance programs, several sociologists and historians connect US foreign policy with a history of regional paternalism, and an ideological disposition of Orientalism and racism. W.E.B. Du Bois remains one of the first sociologists to recognize the inherent racism within European and US foreign policies towards Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Writing in the early 20th century, Du Bois (1903) wrote that the most prominent issue within the US was the problem of “the color-line,” which resulted in extreme disparities in access to resources between white citizens and persons of color.

Du Bois, however, also recognized that “the problem of the color-line” played out on an international scale within US and European foreign policy. Du Bois (1900, 1915) argued that white Christian nations, such as the US and the UK, had sought to civilize foreign nations, such

as those in Africa and Latin America, through colonialist and imperialist policies that depicted these latter nations and its peoples as uncivilized, lawless, and requiring US tutelage in order to understand how to properly develop political-economic systems. In particular, Du Bois (1900: 111) asserted that “the color line belts the world and that the social problem of the twentieth century is to be the relation of the civilized world to the dark races of mankind.” In addition, Du Bois (1915) recognized that the discourse of US and European democracy promotion often shrouded these governments’ racist beliefs that individuals throughout the periphery could not capably govern themselves without proper assistance from more civilized nations. And, in fact, Du Bois (1903) called on African-Americans to express their solidarity with the subjects of US colonialism, including Cubans, Filipinos, and Puerto Ricans. Indeed, we might expect that Du Bois would continue to characterize contemporary US democracy assistance efforts as imperial practices that reinforce the international color-line within the 21st century.

In more recent years, historian Greg Grandin (2006), for example, has, in fact, linked US foreign policy with a racist and Anglo-Protestant history of paternalist policies that depict Latin American citizens as uncivilized, undemocratic, and unable, and often unwilling, to understand what is truly in their best interest: alignment with the US and its vision of political-economic policies. In addition, Grandin (2006) asserts that similar US policies continue to govern contemporary US behavior in the Middle East, and had their training ground in Latin America during the mid-20th century. Throughout Grandin’s work on US foreign policy in Latin America, his conjectures remain consistent with and parallel the cultural approach taken by Edward Said in his work on Orientalism, as well as Go’s research on US colonialism in the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

For Said (1978), European elites often bestowed negative and backwards characteristics upon populations that existed beyond “the West.” This involved portraying populations within the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America as uncivilized, lawless, intellectually inferior, and prone to emotional outbursts, and thus requiring Western tutelage in order to properly pursue civilization. Borrowing from Emile Durkheim and his work on collective representations, cultural sociologists, such as Jeffrey Alexander (2008, 2012) and Phillip Smith (2005), have also drawn attention to how media elites and journalists deploy a civil/incivil dichotomy in order to portray some actors as civil, democratic, and modern, and other actors as uncivilized, anti-democratic, and backwards. In their own work, Alexander (2012) and Smith (2005) have each respectively examined how media and political elites portrayed President Obama and Senator John McCain during the 2008 presidential race, and how media and political elites portrayed particular world crises, including the Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Although Grandin (2006), Go (2008, 2011), and Said (1978) do not explicitly borrow from Durkheim, we can understand how these aforementioned scholars and cultural sociologists each demonstrate how US officials might work to portray Latin American “others” as uncivilized, anti-democratic, and unfit to govern their subjects should their policies veer from US-style liberal democratic principles. In fact, Grandin (2006: 125) himself points out how US officials have historically utilized “perception management” strategies from the public relations industry in order to portray leftist governments as anti-democratic. He writes, for example, that during the 1980s US officials depicted the Sandinistas in Nicaragua as “‘evil,’ Soviet ‘puppets,’ ‘racist and repress human rights,’ ‘involved in U.S. drug problems.’ [By contrast] [t]he Contras were ‘freedom fighters,’ ‘good guys,’ ‘underdogs,’ ‘religious,’ and ‘poor’” (Grandin 2006: 125). The Contras, of course, were the counter-revolutionary forces that the US government supported

to undermine the Sandinista government. In their efforts to do so, the Contras committed numerous human rights atrocities, including continual murder, rape, and arson. Even with this knowledge in hand, many US leaders, including former President Reagan himself, continued to depict these forces as engaged in an epic struggle to liberate Nicaragua and usher in a free and democratic system.

Many sociologists and historians have also characterized US Empire by its attempts to unseat peripheral, often democratically elected, leaders that allegedly threaten US national security interests. Similar to Grandin (2006) and Go (2008, 2011), Michael Mann (2012b) has asserted that US leaders continue to possess an imperial arrogance and attempt to shore up their global legitimacy by unseating peripheral leaders that challenge US global power and its alleged security interests, including, for example, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the New Jewel Movement in Grenada, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. What is more, Stephen Krasner (1978), as discussed above, has shown how US interest in maintaining its national security, however perceived, has often trumped short-term economic concerns and domestic stability issues. For example, Krasner (1978) indicates how US participation in the Vietnam War undermined domestic stability and economically cost the US, to say nothing of the human casualties. We could assuredly make the same case for the more recent US military ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, and its clandestine, and often unacknowledged, forays in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. The cost of these wars surpass the trillion dollar mark, and US participation at least in Iraq has become perceived by most scholars as a monumental blunder that neoconservative leaders, such as former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and former Vice-President Richard Cheney, built upon wildly inaccurate claims concerning the relationship between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda forces, and the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction. Concerning the contemporary

Venezuelan government, we might certainly find that the US government portrays it as a contemporary national security threat, due to its failure to embody US-style liberal democratic principles. In addition, we might find that the US also describes the Venezuelan government as a national security threat due to the Orientalist characteristics that US officials attach to its leaders: their hysterical nature, their erratic behavior, their lawless and undemocratic form of governance, their wild antics, and their outlandish policies.

Two Major Features of the neo-Weberian Perspective

All together, the scholars discussed in the previous sections draw attention to two important cultural-historical aspects involving US foreign policy. First, these scholars point out how the US has promoted its own brand of US-style liberal democratic politics abroad. While neo-Tocquevillian scholars have indeed recognized that the US promotes liberal democratic politics, this perspective fails to recognize that the US promotes only a particular variant of liberal democratic politics, and, even further, it neglects to recognize that different variants of democracy, beyond liberal democracy, also exist, including the participatory form of democracy that the Venezuelan government has promoted since the election of former President Chávez. And so, we might certainly expect the US to promote its own limited form of liberal democracy abroad, which has prioritized civil and political rights. Indeed, this is a normative critique of US democracy assistance practices, the practices of which neo-Tocquevillian scholars accurately identify within their own analyses of US efforts abroad.

Second, these scholars recognize that US foreign policy leaders might depict foreign leaders and their supporters, especially in areas beyond North America and Western Europe, as ignorant subjects that require instruction from abroad on how to properly govern a society. These

scholars point out that US leaders have evidenced this disposition in their approach towards its North American colonies and beyond during the 19th and early 20th centuries, Latin American countries during the 20th century, and towards the Middle East in the contemporary period. These scholars, however, have largely examined the more headlining generating foreign policy endeavors of their day, and have not fully explored the issue of US democracy assistance programs amid many of these military forays. And so, we might certainly expect that US officials continue to present leaders and citizens, such as those in Venezuela, in an Orientalist and racist manner. And indeed, we might expect these Orientalist and racist depictions to justify US democracy assistance efforts in the region.

Overall, these two particular issues, that is, an emphasis on US-style liberal democratic policies and an Orientalist and racist disposition, might certainly play into US democracy assistance programs in contemporary Venezuela. In the ensuing section, I further discuss what we might specifically expect from US democracy assistance programs in Venezuela if the neo-Weberian perspective were to provide us with the most accurate depiction of these projects.

The Neo-Weberian Perspective and its Expectations

Based on a neo-Weberian analysis of US democracy assistance efforts, we can expect these efforts in contemporary Venezuela to be characterized by several features. First, similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, we might expect that the US will mainly provide democracy assistance to NGOs that develop programs in line with US-style liberal democratic principles, such as support for civil liberties, rule of law, decentralization efforts, and the rights of the individual. We can also expect that the US will mainly provide funding to NGOs and political parties that generally oppose the Chávez government. Of course, neo-Tocquevillian scholars

might respond that the US does not provide funding to the Chávez government, because it is anti-democratic and does not champion US-style liberal democratic policies. However, we can recognize that the Venezuelan government has simply endorsed a different variant of democracy, but nonetheless a vision of democracy, and that the US and Venezuela have seriously differed in their visions of how to do democratic politics.

Second, while the neo-Tocquevillian perspective assumes that US funding promotes democratic actors that endorse US-style liberal democratic politics, we might expect that US funding also flows to Venezuelan actors that have not absolutely prioritized democratic policies. For example, US agencies might promote NGOs and political parties that have legitimized the 2002 coup d'état efforts in Venezuela that temporarily deposed former President Chávez from power. Neo-Marxists would not disagree with this finding, but they would link it with neoliberal economic interests. The neo-Weberian perspective, however, does not necessarily do so. Rather, in the instance of Venezuela, the neo-Weberian perspective might link these dynamics to a continuing history of paternalistic US policies that depict foreign leaders as uncivilized, anti-democratic, and unfit to govern over its citizens. That is, it can recognize the discursive attempts that US officials utilize in order to portray the Venezuelan government in a racist and Orientalist manner.

And finally, while the neo-Weberian perspective might predict that most US funding flows to anti-Chávez actors, this perspective does not assume that all of this funding will necessarily benefit US economic interests. Rather, it leaves open the possibility that some US funding might flow to actors that might ultimately legitimize and assist the Venezuelan government, such electoral monitors and other NGOs. In addition, it also leaves open the possibility that the US might work with the Venezuelan government on select occasions and on

select programs. This finding would certainly complicate the neo-Marxist perspective and its expectation that the US ultimately aims to destabilize the Venezuelan government in order to bring in a government that promotes neoliberal economic policies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out the dimensions of three theoretical perspectives on contemporary US democracy assistance. In doing so, I have discussed what we might expect in the context of contemporary Venezuela. While there indeed exists some overlap between the three theoretical perspectives, there are serious disagreements between these three perspectives, and we will examine the nature of US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela in later chapters to see which perspective most fully accounts for these US efforts.

To recapitulate, neo-Marxists have understood US democracy assistance efforts as advancing transnational capitalist class interests. These scholars assert that only those groups that support, or do not seriously challenge, neoliberal policies receive funding and support, and, in doing so, they argue that the US is able to engineer global civil society in a manner most conducive to advancing transnational capitalist class interests. Neo-Tocquevillian scholars, on the other hand, generally depict the US in a more noble light. For these scholars, the US does not solely provide support for neoliberal-oriented groups, but rather aims to support groups that champion US-style liberal democratic policies, such as respect for civil liberties and reducing the power of a centralized state. In other words, they do not reduce US democracy assistance efforts to class interests, but a rather limited political set of interests.

While these perspectives represent two ends of a spectrum, I have developed a third perspective that incorporates elements from both perspectives in order to potentially make the most theoretical sense of contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela and

beyond. In doing so, I have developed a neo-Weberian perspective that takes the ideal interests of US officials seriously, and seeks to examine what these interests precisely are. Pulling from existing neo-Weberian literature, I have argued that the content of US democracy assistance programs might indeed align with historical US state interests in the promotion of US-style liberal democratic governance. However, this perspective can recognize that US promotes only a certain variant of liberal democratic features, and, even further, that alternative conceptions of democracy exist, such as the radical democratic politics that the Venezuelan government has promoted. In addition, it can recognize that the US has also promoted Venezuelan political actors that endorsed anti-democratic measures, such as the displacement of the Chávez government and support for a transitional government.

What is more, from a neo-Weberian perspective, we can link contemporary US democracy assistance efforts with US imperial modalities. In doing so, we can envision US democracy assistance efforts as an imperial modality that allows the US to potentially exert political control over areas that it has historically designated as its backyard. From this perspective, we can recognize that US depiction of Venezuelan government behavior might continue a paternalist pattern of portraying foreign governments that do not subscribe to the US vision of political-economic arrangements as uncivilized, anti-democratic, and unfit to properly govern. We can expect that within policy documents and embassy cables that US officials indeed depict the Venezuelan government in a racist and Orientalist manner, and utilize this understanding as a justification for their support for opposition political parties and opposition-oriented NGOs.

In the following chapter, I discuss recent Venezuelan history, including the rise of the Chávez Administration, and Venezuelan relations with the US, before moving into a

methodological chapter. From there, I examine the actual content of US democracy assistance programs in contemporary Venezuela under the Chávez government in two chapters, and I analyze these programs in a following chapter.

Chapter 3: Recent Venezuelan History and US-Venezuelan Relations

In this chapter, I trace out the contours of recent Venezuelan history following Venezuela's 1958 transition to democracy through its contemporary period involving the former Chávez Administration. Following Venezuela's democratic opening, the country maintained a two party system dominated by Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI). However, beginning the late 1970s, these parties became increasingly perceived as outdated and corrupt. While the two party system persisted through the 1980s and much of the 1990s, Venezuelan politics reached a tipping point during the 1989 *Caracazo*, when Venezuelan citizens protested against recently instituted International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies, including an increase in public transportation costs. In response to the protests, the Venezuelan military violently repressed protesters leaving, by most accounts, several thousands dead. From this period forward, most Venezuelan citizens would search for an alternative to the ossified two-party system, and ultimately find hope within former President Hugo Chávez, who garnered public attention for leading a failed coup d'état effort in 1992 against former President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Venezuelan citizens elected former President Chávez in 1998, and, thereafter, he would lead the country in controversial fashion until his death in 2013. While former President Chávez initially prioritized the cultivation of a participatory democracy upon coming to office, he would later promote 21st century socialism and the creation of a multi-polar global society that would diminish US imperialism and neoliberal policies.

In addition to describing the recent trajectory of Venezuelan political life, I also discuss contemporary US-Venezuelan relations, and I draw specific attention to how some analysts have depicted US democracy assistance programs in contemporary Venezuela. Indeed, many

journalists and scholars sympathetic to the Bolivarian Revolution have portrayed the US as an empire intent on destabilizing and destroying the Bolivarian Revolution in order to satisfy its economic and security interests. These writers assert that the US democracy bureaucracy, that is, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its associated groups, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of State, utilize democracy assistance programs in order to finance opposition NGOs that publicize information critical of the government and combat its policies. They also argue that the US government furnishes Venezuelan political parties with funding and assistance in order to allow these parties to more effectively compete against the Venezuelan government. Ultimately, they assert that due to the Venezuelan government's promotion of socialist policies and criticism of US foreign policy, the US remains intent on destabilizing the Venezuelan government and helping opposition political parties come to power that are more receptive to US economic and security interests within the region and beyond.

Venezuela: Island of Liberal Democratic Stability Turned Socialist Democracy

Even within the most historically stable Latin American countries, neoliberal capitalist policies have catalyzed new socio-political movements that have destroyed seemingly durable institutional foundations. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Venezuela served as the democratic model for Latin America. In 1958, after decades of military dictatorship, the Catholic Church, the Venezuelan military, and then-dominant political parties agreed to participate and share power within a liberal democratic political system that would promote certain political-economic goals irrespective of what party held power, under an agreement titled the Pact of Punto Fijo. And until nearly the end of the 20th century, Venezuela retained a stable political-

economic environment that successive US administrations often held up as an example of how Latin American countries could experience a democratic transition.

During the mid-20th century, the Venezuela two-party system was dominated by AD, which was then led by former President Romulo Betancourt and COPEI, which was then headed by former President Rafael Caldera. While AD initially promoted a secular form of government that would utilize oil rents to boost development projects, COPEI promoted similar development policies, but sought to offer more institutional power to the Catholic Church and, of course, overtly promoted Christian values. Under the leadership of these two parties, corporatist political practices came to characterize much of Venezuelan life. This involved the development of youth groups, women's groups, unions, and student organizations affiliated with each of the two parties. During the dictatorship, the Communist Party of Venezuela had also developed, but under the Pact of Punto Fijo, the party was banned from participating in formal political life. Indeed, similar to other Latin American countries, Venezuela contained an element of revolutionary leftist groups that sought to overthrow the Venezuelan government and align the country with the Cuban government (Velasco 2011). However, these groups failed to garner an extensive base throughout the country, and were heavily targeted by the Venezuelan government and its military, which received military support from the US government, and specifically the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in these anti-communist efforts (Velasco 2011).

Despite the perceived stability of the Venezuelan political model, many Venezuelan citizens began to either lose interest in politics or demand political and economic change. Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, citizens indeed began to view the two-party system with much cynicism as national politicians became embroiled in political corruption scandals (Crisp 2000; Crisp and Levine 1998; Gates 2010), corporatist political practices buried demands

from increasingly diversified citizen groups (Pilar Garcia-Guadilla 2003; Salamanca 2004), a hierarchical political-institutional system rewarded party loyalty over local accountability (Crisp 2000; Gates 2010), and oil revenue dwindled (Karl 1997).

In 1989, citizen frustrations would reach a tipping point in the country. In that year, the administration of former President Carlos Andres Pérez attempted to alleviate growing economic frustration by enacting a series of neoliberal reforms aimed at improving economic growth. After meeting with IMF representatives and following his election, former President Pérez enacted several economic reforms, including tax reform to solicit foreign investment, the privatization of state industries, and the elimination of state subsidies for gas. The latter reform resulted in public transportation price hikes, which disproportionately affected popular classes that relied upon public transport to move about their respective cities. The *Caracazo* riots developed as a result, and the Venezuelan military responded by firing upon Venezuelan citizens. In the end, the Venezuelan military's domestic offensive left over a thousand Venezuelans dead and, unsurprisingly, further radicalized the political-economic imaginary of many citizens. These events would also leave a deep impact on many Venezuelan military members, many of whom, at the time, refused to fire upon their fellow citizens. One of these members would include former President Hugo Chávez, who had come from the rural state of Barinas, initially in an effort to become a professional baseball player, to serve in a Venezuelan military group located in the capital region.

Following these riots, in February 1992, former President Chávez, then a military commander, led a dissident military group entitled the Movimiento Bolivariano Republicano-200 (MBR-200) in a coup d'état effort that landed him in jail for two years, until former President Rafael Caldera commuted his sentence. However, prior to his imprisonment, the Venezuelan

government allowed Chávez to speak on national television for a brief moment. During this time, former President Chávez asserted that the struggle was over “*por ahora*” (for now), and asked his fellow conspirators to lay down their weapons. After taking responsibility for the coup efforts on national television, Chávez would gain national political prominence and become the face of Venezuelan political-economic frustrations. In addition, his phrase “*por ahora*” would become his and his supporters’ political battle cry and signal that he was not ultimately defeated. As a sign of solidarity in years to come, Venezuelan citizens that supported Chávez and a change of government would sport a red beret, similar to the one wore by Chávez, during his brief speech of national television.

Following a commutation of his sentence, former President Chávez and the MBR-200 decided to pursue legal channels of political change and focused their efforts on grassroots political campaigning throughout the country. Although the MBR-200 initially rejected participation in national elections, Chávez decided to run for president in 1998 on a campaign tailored to Venezuela's popular, and increasingly marginalized, classes. Building on Manuel Castells' ideas concerning postmodern social conflict, David Smilde (2011: 4-5) describes the socioeconomic divides that had come to characterize Venezuelan society during the late 20th century.

"[E]conomic decline of the 1980s and 1990s ... spurred a fundamental realignment in social-class identity political cleavages. In effect, Venezuela moved from a modern conflict between Right and Left, to a postmodern clash between those with a place in organized, formal society and those without ... The former work in jobs with benefits and legal protections, have legally recognized property, and enjoy municipal services such as water, telephone, and police protection; the latter lack formal employment, live in barrios

and rural areas not fully recognized by the state, and do not enjoy full access to the benefits of modern citizenship: job security and protections, professional health care, municipal services, and professional police protection."

Unlike T.H. Marshall's conception of national societies as evolving together and his description of citizens securing equal citizenship rights for all, citizenship rights in Venezuela had ostensibly evolved in an uneven manner and, for many individuals, had regressed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with inclusion in "organized, formal society" becoming the privilege of some to the detriment of the majority of Venezuelan citizens.

Recognizing this situation, former President Chávez initially campaigned for the 1998 presidential election on the idea of convoking a constituent assembly and drafting a new constitution that would emphasize, above all else, a protagonistic and participatory democracy, that is, a new form of Venezuelan government that would include all members of society in decision-making processes regardless of one's location in the Venezuelan social-class hierarchy. Other candidates in the 1998 election included Irene Sáez, the mayor of the upper-class Caracas neighborhood of Chacao and endorsed by COPEI; and Henrique Salas Romer, the Governor of Carabobo and member from Proyecto Venezuela. After several setbacks for the initially leading candidates as well as some confusing eleventh hour changes by then-dominant political parties, the opposition threw all of its support behind Henrique Salas Romer. Despite this attempt to back one candidate against Chávez, Chávez would still emerge victorious in the 1998 elections and take office in 1999.

Since 1999, scholars and historians observe that "a steady radicalization process" marked Chávez's tenure in office (Ellner 2008: 109). In its first year, the Chávez government held three elections, including a referendum for the convocation of a National Constitutional Assembly,

which would write a new constitution; for members of the National Constituent Assembly; and for a new constitution to replace the Venezuelan Constitution that AD and COPEI leaders had drafted and passed in 1961. In all three endeavors, the Chávez government was victorious: a National Constitutional Assembly was convened; 125 of the 131 members elected to the National Constituent Assembly supported Chávez; and a newly drafted constitution was ratified, which indeed promoted the development of a protagonistic and participatory democracy. While opposition political parties asserted that Chávez wanted to consolidate his grip on power, Chávez and other *chavista* leaders continually demonstrated that they were simply putting more decisions to the Venezuelan populace and following the will of the people.

Although former President Chávez' intentions and the political-economic path he desired were not entirely clear at the outset of his election, an anti-neoliberal agenda became evident by 2001. In April 2001, at the Summit of the Americas conference, Chávez registered his objections to neoliberal capitalism by objecting to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and its trade liberalization policies. In the same year, the Chávez government enacted a series of 49 new laws, two of which signaled the beginning of Chávez' anti-neoliberal, economically nationalist, and redistributive domestic policies: the Land Law and the Organic Hydrocarbons Law. The Land Law permitted the government to expropriate unused lands held by large, rural property-owners, with the intent of breaking up land concentration and using idle lands for national food production. The Organic Hydrocarbons Law annulled the opening of the oil sector to foreign investment and re-established the national government as the owner-operator of the Venezuelan oil industry.

In addition to revamping some domestic economic policies, former President Chávez would utilize the Venezuelan military for new purposes, namely the provision of social services

for citizens throughout the country. One of former President Chávez' political-military initiatives included Plan Bolívar 2000.

“‘Plan Bolívar 2000’ was a bold attempt to fuse military capabilities with those of other public institutions to attack social problems with programs of sanitation, health, indigent care, public transport, housing, and the like. The programs delivered immediate, short-term relief to many and demonstrated how the military could aid and not simply repress the population. In this way, Chávez hoped to consolidate the character of government as ‘civic-military’” (Hellinger 2003: 44).

Despite former President Chávez' efforts to enfranchise the lives of the poor, these civic-military programs became controversial, and government opponents claimed that former President Chávez was attempting to militarize society and utilize these forces for strictly his own partisan purposes.

During these early years, former President Chávez also developed significantly tense relations with the US government due to disagreements over several domestic and international policies. I discuss the history of US-Venezuelan relations in more depth below. However, at this point, it is important to note that while the US and Venezuelan governments formerly maintained a strong relationship, this relationship deteriorated under the Chávez Administration. At the center of these disagreements, former President Chávez criticized US military endeavors in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the US Global War on Terror more broadly; refused to allow the US to utilize Venezuela as a base for counternarcotics operations; rejected free trade agreements and neoliberal policies; and was far less critical of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) than previous Venezuelan administrations. For their part, US government leaders would exacerbate their deteriorating relations with the US by urging Chávez to retract his criticism of

the Global War of Terror, routinely referring to him – in one way or another – as a despotic leader, and indeed funding and establishing relations with opposition political parties and opposition-oriented NGOs. In later years, the US government would go even further and place sanctions on several high-ranking Venezuelan government members and also refuse to sell the government military weapons and accessories.

Unsurprisingly, former President Chávez' new political-economic policies irritated many sections of the Venezuelan business community, including large agricultural landowners and oil executives; the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (Fedecámaras), the country's largest business organization; and the Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos (CTV), the country's largest union, which includes many of the workers in the national oil industry. In April 2002, an opposition protest led by Fedecámaras united with the private media and dissident factions within the Venezuelan military to stage a coup d'état that removed former President Chávez from office for nearly two days. Following Chávez' detention, the head of Fedecámaras, Pedro Carmona, became the head of the transitional government. During his brief time in the Miraflores Palace, Carmona suspended the new Venezuelan Constitution, removed the word "Bolivarian" from the country's name (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), and disbanded the Venezuelan legislature and judiciary. This series of anti-democratic and unconstitutional missteps led many individuals that formerly supported the coup to retract their support for the transitional government. What is more, a mass of *chavistas* took to the Caracas streets and demanded that the Venezuelan military return the former president to power. During this time, many military members and politicians feared that more violence might ensue between Chávez' supporters and transitional government supporters, and might potentially evolve into a civil war. After Chávez-supporting military members, namely the Presidential Guard, regained control of

the Miraflores Palace and sent Carmona into hiding, the Venezuelan military returned former President Chávez to Caracas from a military base off the coast of the country, and Chávez resumed the presidency.

In the aftermath of the coup, much confusion developed over a host of factors surrounding its development and execution, including the shooting deaths of several citizens, whether or not Venezuelan organizations had planned to stage the coup in advance, whether or not US leaders knew that Venezuelan groups were preparing to stage the coup, and whether or not US leaders had funded Venezuelan groups that they knew were planning to stage the coup. In the aftermath, both the Venezuelan and US government investigated and supplied their own interpretation of the coup. The Venezuelan government and its leaders have largely understood and publically discussed the coup in the same way that Eva Golinger (2006, 2008) has written about it. In Golinger's and the Venezuelan government's perspective, the US government actively supported the individuals and organizations that executed the 2002 coup primarily through democracy assistance. In their perspective, democracy assistance was not passively provided to the coup plotters at random intervals, but it was actually accelerated in the months and weeks directly prior to the coup. For them, the US decisively plotted with the opposition to overthrow the Venezuelan government, and the decision of the US to immediately recognize the transitional government as the new and legitimate Venezuelan government, as well as their decision to blame former President Chávez and his supporters for the street violence and Chávez' detention, reveal that the US indeed had assisted Venezuelan opposition forces in bringing down the government.

The Inspector General of the US State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors conducted its own investigation into the coup events, which found that while "it is

clear that NED, Department of Defense (DOD), and other U.S. assistance programs provided training, institution building, and other support to individuals and organizations understood to be actively involved in the brief ouster of the Chávez government, we found no evidence that this support directly contributed, or was intended to contribute, to that event" (US OIG 2002: 3). The report acknowledges that US leaders indeed worked with and met with opposition NGOs, political parties, and their leaders, but it concludes that they did not sanction the use of undemocratic and violent channels to remove Chávez from power, and thus were not behind the Venezuelan coup efforts.

In the aftermath of the Venezuelan coup, tensions between the Chávez government and opposition groups continued. The opposition unsuccessfully subjected the country to a damaging oil strike in 2002-03 and a 2004 recall election that were both aimed at removing former President Chávez from office. During this time period, claims continued that the organizations behind these campaigns were continuing to receive US democracy assistance. For example, Golinger (2006, 2008) asserts that those Venezuelan NGOs whom were actually collecting signatures to recall Chávez from office received US democracy assistance for precisely this purpose, including the civic group Súmate. William Robinson (2006) claims that, in general, in the aftermath of the failed 2002 coup, the US government changed its strategy from a policy of overt government overthrow to a policy of strategically and legally removing Chávez from office. After Chávez' victory within the 2004 recall referendum, Robinson (2006) and Golinger (2006, 2008) claim that the US government allocated funds and guidance for the political opposition, in an effort to consolidate coalition fractions and develop a unified leadership base, a strategy that Robinson (1996, 2006) argues the US government employed in Nicaragua in the late 1980s in order to remove the Sandinistas from office. Despite all opposition efforts though,

the Venezuelan government has consolidated its grip on institutionalized political power. Chávez and his party - changing in name from the MVR to the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) in 2007 - accomplished this through the aforementioned convening of the Constituent Assembly in 1999 and elections for the new Venezuelan National Assembly, the appointment of dozens of new judges to the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, and finally Chávez' own 2006 and 2012 presidential victories.

In 2005, Chávez replaced his earlier emphasis on participatory democracy with a newfound emphasis on twenty-first century socialism. At the World Social Forum in Brazil, for example, former President Chávez proclaimed an imminent need to rejuvenate this economic model. He asserted that there “is no solution within capitalism, one must transcend capitalism. Nor is it about statism or state capitalism, which would be the same perversion of the Soviet Union, which was the cause of its fall. We must reclaim socialism as a thesis, as a project and a path, but a new socialism” (Wilpert 2007: 238). In keeping with this emphasis on twenty-first century socialism, the Chávez government intensified and expanded the work of its national missions projects, which focused on education, housing, food distribution, and medicine, among other areas; developed policies and laws promoting communal councils and communes; and, at least discursively, encouraged the devolution of state power unto these popular power bases.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, former President Chávez pushed further with land redistribution efforts and nationalization efforts, which included banks, cement industries, foreign energy firms, and telecommunications firms. Yet, it was also during this period, in 2007, that the Venezuelan government suffered its first major setback as Venezuelans voted against a referendum that, for one, would abolish presidential term limits and permit Chávez to run for a third presidential term in 2012. The referendum included an additional 68 constitutional

amendments, which Chávez stated would permit him to move ahead with the country's socialist agenda. Although citizens rejected this package in 2007, portions of it were still passed through the National Assembly, and, in 2009, an entire new referendum was successfully passed. As a result, former President Chávez would indeed be able to stand for the presidency in 2012 and beyond.

Several scholars assert that Chávez' emphasis on twenty-first century socialism and popular power corresponds with an increasingly contentious relationship between, on the one hand, the national government and, on the other hand, private media, journalists, and NGOs (Corrales and Penfold 2011; Hidalgo 2009). During this period, conflicts between the Venezuelan government, and opposition media sources and opposition leaders, indeed persisted. In 2007, the Venezuelan government refused to renew the contract of RCTV, taking it off public airwaves, and, in 2010, another six television stations were found in violation of particular laws and removed from public airwaves. In 2010, the government arrested the owner of the remaining publicly televised, opposition news media source, Globovisión, on what some consider fabricated claims used to intimidate a key opposition source. In 2010 as well, the Venezuelan government arrested Governor Oswaldo Álvarez Paz for, among other denunciations, referring to Venezuela as a lawless haven for drug smugglers and terrorists. During this period, the Venezuelan government also began its efforts to curtail the operations of Venezuelan NGOs, by attempting to pass legislation that prohibited them from receiving foreign funding.

Although the national government recovered from their 2007 referendum defeat in 2009, the PSUV faced a more serious setback in the September 2010 parliamentary elections. These elections reduced the PSUV's supermajority within the National Assembly and illustrated that many Venezuelan citizens, particularly in urbanized states such as Zulia and Miranda, had grown

frustrated with former President Chávez and the PSUV. The PSUV faced continual accusations that government members were corrupt and skimmed money from public projects in order to enrich themselves, had grown too bureaucratic, and were becoming more repressive and less democratic. In the wake of the PSUV's constitutional setback, the Venezuelan National Assembly pushed through several pieces of legislation, before the new National Assembly would commence in January. During this period, the PSUV would pass several pieces of legislation that sought to consolidate the communal state and deliver more power to community councils. In addition, in December 2010, the Venezuelan National Assembly successfully passed the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination, in two quick discussions in just over a week. This legislation prohibits political parties and politically-oriented organizations from receiving funds from abroad, and it also prohibits organizations from inviting individuals into Venezuela that offend Venezuelan state leaders or attack Venezuelan national sovereignty.

Despite the 2010 parliamentary setback, former President Chávez defeated Henrique Capriles, Governor of Miranda, in October 2012, by over ten percentage points. As a guide for his upcoming term, former President Chávez laid out a second six-year socialist plan that aimed for a full transition toward socialism through the cultivation of a communal state. In March 2013, however, former President Chávez passed away from cancer, and he designated his Foreign Minister, Nicolás Maduro, as his successor. Shortly following former President Chávez's death, Maduro delivered a second electoral defeat to Henrique Capriles, but this time around the margin of victory was slimmer. While Chávez won by nearly 11 points in October 2012, President Maduro won by less than two points six months later in April 2013. As I write, increasing inflation, shortages, and insecurity continue to characterize daily life in Venezuela. Although

President Maduro remains in office, the Venezuelan opposition is moving ahead with its efforts to recall him. The months ahead bode to be quite telling in terms of the direction the country will take for years to come.

The US and Venezuela: Antinomies under the Chávez Administration

The general narrative surrounding the historical trajectory of US-Venezuelan relations since the mid-20th century is rather straight-forward. Following Venezuela's 1958 transition to a two-party democratic system, the US and Venezuela maintained strong relations, and the US could generally count on Venezuela as a reliable ally in the region, with few exceptions. For US leaders, Venezuela represented the possibility that a functioning, liberal democracy could persist without the threat of Soviet-inspired parties taking power. In keeping with their support, the US remained Venezuela's largest trading partner, and the US supplied Venezuela with a wealth of economic aid for agriculture and education, among other areas, through programs such as the Alliance for Progress and through state organizations such as USAID.

With the election of former President Chávez in 1998, historically warm relations between the two countries would become much more tense. Initially, former President Chávez traveled to the US during one of his first overseas visits, meeting with former US President Bill Clinton, seeking to garner US business investment from groups like JP Morgan, and even throwing out the first pitch at a New York Mets baseball game. Differences between the countries, however, would become increasingly manifest in the years to come, and continue to characterize US-Venezuelan relations for years to follow.

In these early years of his tenure in office, former President Chávez rendered several decisions and raised his voice on several issues much to the irritation of the US government. In

1999, former President Chávez refused to accept aid for floods that destroyed hillside housing from the US military that was already traveling across the Caribbean Sea en route to Venezuela. Indeed, US officers were flabbergasted to receive news that they would need to return back to the US without delivering support. In addition to unsolicited aid, former President Chávez also refused the US airspace for US counter-narcotics missions throughout Central and South America, namely in neighboring Colombia. In doing so, he emphasized Venezuelan national sovereignty and how the US could not utilize any airspace it demanded. In 2001, as mentioned above, former President Chávez would also criticize and reject the ideas of free trade and representative democracy, asserting that both were a detriment to the poor and working classes of Venezuela and beyond.

During his foreign travels, Chávez would also irritate the US government. He made no secret that he was willing visit with US opponents, including Saddam Hussein in Iraq, to discuss oil and energy policies. What is more, former President Chávez lambasted the US decision to invade to Afghanistan and Iraq, holding up pictures of deceased Afghan children on his weekly television show, *Aló Presidente*, in order to illustrate the consequences of these US invasions. Despite US criticisms of Venezuela's position on the Global War on Terror and its diplomatic visits abroad, former President Chávez and other Venezuelan leaders continued to emphasize their country's national sovereignty and their desire to render decisions based on their own – and not a US – calculus.

While US leaders have focused the bulk of their criticisms of Venezuela on democracy and human rights, Venezuelan government leaders and sympathizers have largely attributed US differences to other motivations. Venezuelan-American lawyer and activist Eva Golinger (2006), for instance, attributes much of the US state's dismay with the Venezuelan government to

economic and security interests. She argues that since the Venezuelan government has sought more control over its energy resources and refused to support all US anti-terrorist and counternarcotics missions that the US has promoted the overthrow of the Venezuelan government. And she has argued that the US has aimed to accomplish this feat by supporting opposition political parties and opposition-oriented NGOs in their quest to unseat to former President Chávez.

Golinger (2006) has generally portrayed US democracy assistance programs in Venezuela under the Chávez Administration in the same neo-Marxist manner that William Robinson has depicted US democracy assistance programs elsewhere. She, like Robinson, argues that the US possesses no true interest in bolstering human rights and democracy, as it has maintained strong relations with countries, such as Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia, that possess authoritarian, and in the instance of Saudi Arabia, dictatorial governments, which evidence no genuine regard for human rights. Golinger has thus depicted the US as seeking to engineer Venezuelan civil society in a manner most conducive to transnational economic and security interests. In addition, she argues that the US has been absolutely committed to destabilizing the Venezuelan government and overthrowing Chávez, and now Maduro.

At the heart of these interests in Venezuela, Golinger (2006: 4-6, 31-2) argues that US officials want to secure unimpeded access to Venezuelan oil, and that they would prefer a national government that supports the US Global War on Terror, its counternarcotics missions, and other policies deemed in the interest of international security. And indeed, the Venezuelan government has seemingly contravened these alleged US interests by criticizing US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq; maintaining close relations with US opponents such as Belarus, China, Cuba, and Russia; enacting the Hydrocarbons Law, which restricted the extent of foreign

ownership over Venezuelan oil ventures; “focus[ed] on policies to reduce poverty and promote[d] a participatory democracy, ideas repulsed by diehard market economists”; and denied airspace for counternarcotics missions and removed the US Drug Enforcement Administration from the country (Golinger 2006: 4-6). As a result of these policies, she argues that the US government has sought to “penetrate[e] all sectors of civil society, political parties, and the Venezuelan Armed Forces ... to facilitate several attempts to overthrow Venezuela’s democratic government” (Golinger 2006: 6). And she argues that the US will not cease these efforts until the *chavistas* are out of power.

Golinger (2006) asserts that the cornerstone of US efforts to overthrow the Venezuelan government is its use of NED, USAID, and Department of State democracy assistance programs to destabilize the Venezuelan government and build a coalition of political and civil society forces to replace the Venezuelan government. What is more, Golinger (2006) goes even further and says that the NED and USAID ultimately serve the CIA in their pursuit to intervene into Venezuelan civil society. That is, she links US democracy assistance programs with a history of CIA involvement in Latin America, as it has historically involved events such as the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion, support for General Augusto Pinochet’s overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, the destabilization of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and other unconstitutional and undemocratic assaults on governments throughout the Latin American region.

Concretely, Golinger (2006), among others (Cole 2007; Clement 2005; Robinson 2006), asserts that US state representatives have actively selected particular Venezuelan politicians to lead the opposition movement against the Chávez government. She alleges that the International Republican Institute (IRI), one of the NED’s four core grantees, had been charged with

organizing opposition political parties to challenge the former Chávez government throughout its early years. She argues that “IRI was ready to back any party capable of beating Chávez,” including Primero Justicia, Union por El Progreso, Proyecto Venezuela, and Movimiento al Socialismo (Golinger 2006: 38). In doing so, Golinger (2006) points out how the IRI brought US Republican Party representatives from the US to Venezuela to discuss, for example, political communication efforts, platform building, youth activism, and the training of political party activists.

What is more, she asserts that the US government, and specifically the IRI, has taken special interest in Primero Justicia, an opposition party largely composed of young conservatives such as former opposition presidential candidate and current Miranda Governor Henrique Capriles, and states that the IRI “has been able to form and mold party leaders and determine and shape the party goals, strategies, and platform, essentially building the party from scratch” (Golinger 2006: 42). In addition to political party training, she discusses how Republican representatives, such as Mike Collins, a press secretary for the Republican Party, met with local libertarian journalists in Venezuela to discuss how to report on and frame political events. In doing so, she argues that the IRI linked Venezuelan opposition politicians with US politicians in order to help opposition politicians develop a plan to defeat the *chavistas* and assume political power.

While the IRI trained and allegedly molded opposition political parties, Golinger (2006) argues that the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), another one of the NED’s four core grantees, supplied funding and a platform for the views of opposition NGOs, including Fundación Momento de la Gente. In particular, she has argued that this NGO “was one of the leading civil society groups in the growing opposition movement to President Chávez” and

that NDI funding allowed this group to take on a leadership role within the opposition movement (Golinger 2006: 50). And so while the IRI worked with opposition politicians, she has argued that the NDI has worked with NGOs in order to bolster the Venezuelan opposition and their abilities to unseat former President Chávez. And in addition to NDI, she has also argued that the NED also directly funded several Venezuelan NGOs all “with one characteristic in common: a public aversion to President Chávez” (Golinger 2006: 51). These funding efforts included groups focused on combating former President Chávez’ education reforms and other Chávez-supported legislation; opposing military involvement in politics during a time when the Chávez government indeed sought to involve the military in social projects; and other groups that allegedly aligned with the opposition in their attempts to overthrow former President Chávez and bring a right-wing political party to power.

In these early years of the Chávez government, Golinger argues that these NGOs and political parties, alongside business and labor groups also funded by NED core grantees, played prominent roles in the April 2002 coup d’état that temporarily removed former President Chávez from power. As discussed above, former President Chávez was displaced from his office for 48 hours in April 2002 by dissident military officers, anti-Chávez police units, and anti-Chávez protesters, with communications support from several private television and radio stations. Upon returning to power, Golinger argues that the NED and its associated groups continued funding some of the very same groups and individuals, who supported Pedro Carmona’s transitional government and were even named to positions within the new government. These include “Asamblea de Educación, whose president, Leonardo Carvajal, had been named education minister by Carmona ... Fundación Momento de la Gente, whose director, Mercedes de Freitas, had tried her best to explain to the NED that a coup never took place by claiming that Carmona

was a ‘legitimate leader placed by civil society,’ ... [and] Asociación Civil Liderazgo y Visión,” an anti-Chávez group whose leader signed the Carmona Decree and supported the Carmona government. Other forms of democracy assistance that persisted included the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), one of the NED’s four core grantees, funding the Center for the Dissemination of Economic Knowledge for Liberty (CEDICE), whose leader endorsed and signed the Carmona Decree, and the IRI’s continued work with Primero Justicia, Proyecto Venezuela, Movimiento al Socialismo, and other opposition parties. All together, she argues that these groups continued to attempt to displace the former Chávez government, in the wake of the failed coup efforts, and that the US government was there to assist these groups despite their anti-democratic behavior.

In the coup’s aftermath, Golinger (2006: 88) also draws attention to USAID setting up an Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) in Venezuela, and she argues that despite then-Ambassador Shapiro’s call to look past its bureaucratic title, the OTI “was a way to penetrate civil society even further than the NED ... [and that] its ultimate goal had always been to facilitate the removal of President Chávez from office.” To facilitate USAID’s OTI programs, she says that USAID contracted with Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), a private contracting firm. DAI established a program titled the Venezuela Construction of Confidence Initiative (VICC), the purpose of which was to promote dialogue between the government and opposition, and prevent any further violence.

Golinger, however, asserts that through this and other programs, USAID/OTI, alongside the NED and its counterparts, continued to finance groups that had participated in and supported the coup efforts. She also accuses DAI of assisting the opposition with creating anti-Chávez radio and television ads, following the coup and leading into a period when PDVSA employees

were leading a general strike against the government (Golinger 2006: 94). Following the failure of this strike, she argues that USAID/OTI and the NED and its counterparts helped organize the Coordinadora Democrática (CD), an opposition coalition of business groups, civil society groups, and political parties that now sought the premature electoral defeat of former President Chávez through a recall referendum.

To further pursue this goal, she argues that the NED and USAID provided immense financial support for Súmate, “a technologically advanced, elections-focused non-profit led by opposition-aligned wealthy Venezuelans” and an organization with the explicit mission statement of recalling former President Chávez (Golinger 2006: 107). Although she acknowledges that US funds were not given with the express mandate to gather signatures to recall former President Chávez, she says that the funds were delivered for “electoral observation, voter registration monitoring, and training of poll site officials – activities that when conducted at the behest and supervision of a foreign government are *sure signs of intervention*” (Golinger 2006: 110, emphasis mine). What is more, Golinger (2006: 116-18) has argued that USAID/OTI provided funding for particular projects in Petare that opposition deputy Carlos Ocariz from Primero Justicia might have diverted to bribe citizens with, to vote against former President Chávez in this recall election. In all, she argues that the US worked on all fronts through its democracy assistance programs to lead a successful recall effort against former President Chávez and, now, legally remove him office. Despite all of this though, as discussed above, these efforts failed, and former President Chávez won his recall election and nearly every subsequent election that he and his supporters would participate in, until his death in 2013.

Golinger’s account is one among similar accounts of the objectives of US democracy assistance programs in Venezuela (Cole 2007; Clement 2005; Robinson 2006). The general

narrative is that the US government initially used its democracy assistance programs to foment and support a coup that US government members knew opposition members were putting together. That is, the argument goes, the US initially pursued an undemocratic route to unseating Chávez. When these efforts failed in the wake of popular protests and transitional government blunders, the US walked back its celebration and decided to pursue a more democratic route, that is, by supporting a recall election and continuing their efforts to funnel money to opposition NGOs and opposition political parties, so that the latter group could more effectively compete in elections. In both periods, US democracy assistance programs were assumed to actively court opposition members in their pursuit of unseating Chávez and installing a new government. And according to these scholars, US democracy assistance programs are similar to mid-20th century CIA efforts in places such as Guatemala and Chile at the height of the Cold War, where the US worked to unseat democratically-elected, socialist leaders. The same anxieties concerning anti-capitalist leaders and popular politics that drove CIA efforts during the mid-20th century are also understood to drive US foreign policy and dictate the US government's policy positions towards contemporary Venezuela.

Outside of these US democracy assistance efforts and despite the veracity of their motivations, there are plenty of additional signals that US-Venezuelan relations deteriorated under the former Chávez government. Indeed, despite some attempts at rapprochement throughout Chávez' years of governance, with more serious efforts developing under the Obama Administration, relations between the Chávez government and the US continued to generally plummet under Chávez's presidency. While former President Chávez maintained somewhat of a working relationship with former US President Bill Clinton, the Chávez and Bush Administrations would possess a highly acrimonious relationship. On the Venezuelan end, aside

from criticizing the Global War on Terror, former President Chávez would often engage in personal insults. On his weekly television show, former President Chávez would often refer to former President Bush as an alcoholic, a drunk, and a donkey. And during the 2006 United Nations General Session, former President Chávez would perform the Sign of the Cross, and proclaim that the podium smelled of sulfur from its recent visit from “the devil,” former President Bush.

Under the Bush Administration, former President Chávez made considerable efforts to cultivate an anti-US nexus of allies, which namely included Belarus, China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia. This also included regional allies such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, that is, countries that also criticized neoliberal policies that were allegedly headed by the US government and its corporations. In addition, former President Chávez even cultivated relationships with pariah nations, such as Syria and Zimbabwe, simply due to their anti-US dispositions and despite their horrible, domestic human rights records (Corrales and Romero 2013).

Above all, the Venezuelan government asserted that it alone controlled its sovereign decisions, and that it would cultivate relations and trade with any country of its own choosing, despite what the US or any other country suggested that it should do. Throughout the years of the Bush Administration, former President Chávez would continually claim that former President Bush was plotting to overthrow him, and that the Venezuelan government would continually need to take certain precautions in order to ensure the safety of former President Chávez. In 2008, these accusations came to head when former President Chávez expelled the US Ambassador, Patrick Duddy, from the country for allegedly fomenting plans to destabilize the Venezuelan government and overthrow former President Chávez. The US denied the existence

of these plans, but, following suit, the US also decided to expel the Venezuelan ambassador from the US. Indeed, since these events in 2008, the two countries have yet to reinstate an ambassador and normalize their relationship.

Under the Obama Administration, the Venezuelan government had hoped for a more productive relationship with the US government. Indeed, shortly after coming to power, former President Chávez provided US President Barack Obama with a copy of *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, a book which details US efforts in Latin America to economically exploit its people and resources, at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago. Unfortunately, despite the hope that the US and Venezuela would resume normal diplomatic relations, they would not.

In 2010, following the Summit of the Americas, the US would nominate a new ambassador, Larry Palmer, to the country to replace Patrick Duddy, and indeed resume relations. During the nomination hearings for Palmer, however, he asserted that there was low morale within the Venezuelan military and that the Venezuelan government allowed many FARC members to have safe haven within Venezuela, as Venezuelan officials were themselves involved in narco-trafficking. As a result, former President Chávez rejected Palmer's ambassador nomination and stated that he would not allow the potential ambassador to assume his position in Caracas.

At other points in time under the Obama Administration, there have indeed been brief glimmers of hopes for dialogue between the US and Venezuela, but they have been dashed by one statement or another from a US diplomat that, in turn, severely irritates the Venezuelan government. For instance, in June 2013, Venezuelan law enforcement arrested a US filmmaker at the airport outside of Caracas before he departed the country. Venezuelan law enforcement

claimed that the US filmmaker had provided funding for student groups that sought to destabilize the Venezuelan government. In the meantime, the US Secretary of State John Kerry and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua decided to initiate a dialogue over this episode and other issues. And while the two diplomats agreed to start a constructive dialogue between the two countries, these efforts would not last through July. In late July 2013, Susan Rice, then-nominee to become the UN Ambassador, stated, that as UN Ambassador, she would contest “the crackdown on civil society” that persisted in countries such as Venezuela (NYT 07/20/2013). As a result, the Venezuelan government terminated the dialogue, stating that it would not accept interference into its domestic affairs from external powers.

And so, despite the hope that the US and Venezuela would normalize their relationship under Obama, this has been far from the case. Indeed, the Venezuelan government, now under the Maduro Administration, continues to assert that the US is waging an economic war against the Venezuelan government, and that the US government is ultimately behind the scarcities and shortages that the country now faces. On his end, President Maduro hardly allows a speech to pass by where he does not indict US imperialism and blame the US for the economic woes that the country is experiencing. And indeed, Venezuelan government leaders continue to assert that the US is attempting to destabilize the Venezuelan government by funding and providing assistance to opposition political parties and opposition NGOs, despite legislation that prohibits the practice.

What is more, the Obama Administration recently passed an executive order that deems Venezuela a national security threat. Despite the US government walking back this title and stating that it a mere formality in order to sanction Venezuelan officials, the title remains. In addition, the US initially refused to recognize the electoral results between President Maduro and

Henrique Capriles, which took place following the death of Chávez. Far from rapprochement, US-Venezuelan relations appear nearly as worse as they ever were under the Clinton and Bush Administrations. And despite the recent developments between the US and Cuba, it does not appear likely that President Obama will reach out to the Venezuelan government before his term expires next year.

The US Embassy in Venezuela: Racist and Orientalist Depictions of Chávez and his Supporters

While it is clear that US-Venezuelan relations have deteriorated under the Chávez Administration due to decisions on both sides, it is also clear that US diplomats have articulated a considerably unfavorable and derogatory perspective on former President Chávez and his supporters in Venezuela. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, US diplomats evidence a racist and Orientalist view of former President Chavez within many of the US embassy cables in which US diplomats detail current events in Venezuela and how the US ought to respond to them. Specifically, US diplomats, including several former US ambassadors to Venezuela, have depicted former President Chávez as mentally unstable, delusional about the international importance of Venezuela, juvenile, uncivil, and power-hungry. In addition, they depict Chávez' supporters as "frenzied" and tragically susceptible to former President Chávez' "laughable" and "semi-coherent" ramblings.

In this final section, I illustrate how these US diplomats have presented former President Chávez in the restricted setting of US embassy cables in the manner described above. I discuss the nature of US embassy cables in more depth in the following chapter. However, US embassy cables involve statements on current events within particular countries from US diplomats situated within those countries, and they often conclude with brief commentary from US

diplomats on how the US should proceed with its engagement with each particular country. These cables are highly revelatory of the way in which US officials develop foreign policy towards particular countries, such as Venezuela, and how they are thinking about their counterparts abroad.

First, US officials, including Chargé d' Affaires John Caulfield, have depicted former President Chávez as an individual that “craves attention and influence abroad” (CableGate 06/16/2009). Despite Chávez’ ambitions, however, Chargé Caulfield has labeled former President Chávez a “world leader wannabe” (CableGate 04/01/2009). In his attempts to become a world leader, Chargé Caulfield has stated that “Chávez travels extensively and doles out substantial foreign assistance in an effort to achieve international status as Latin America's foremost leader. He jealously guards his exaggerated self-perception, and reacts negatively to other Latin American countries' receptivity to USG initiatives and USG attention focused on other Latin American heads-of-state” (CableGate 04/01/2009). Caulfield thus presents Chávez as a highly jealous leader, and he hypothesized that Chávez would be jealous of all the attention paid to US President Obama at an upcoming Summit of the Americas conference (CableGate 04/01/2009).

Yet, despite the Venezuelan government’s attempts to capture international attention and become a prominent global actor, US diplomats have routinely attempted to cut Chávez down to size in their cables. These cables also suggest how US diplomats aimed to annoy him on this issue by illustrating apathy and indifference to his comments on the US. Indeed, while Chargé Caulfield, an Obama appointee, referred to Chávez as a “world leader wannabe,” the Deputy Chief of Mission to Venezuela under the Bush Administration, Stephen McFarland, also dismissed former President Chávez’ international ambitions. Under an embassy cable section

ironically titled “The World Revolves around Caracas,” former DCM McFarland wrote that Chávez' speeches on his weekly television program “demonstrated a typical, exaggerated view of Venezuela's geostrategic importance and of US media coverage of Venezuela” (CableGate 02/24/2005). In a seemingly nonchalant response to Chávez, McFarland claims that the US Chargé d' Affaires under the Bush Administration told local radio “that ‘[the US Embassy] didn't know if President Bush was aware of Chávez's comments,’ a statement calculated to annoy President Chávez” (CableGate 02/24/2005). In doing so, US officials attempt to convey that Venezuela is rather unimportant to the US, and that Chávez is delusional about the significance of his country.

And while the Venezuelan government might not have been first on the agenda of the Bush or Obama Administrations, US diplomats within the Venezuelan embassy have spent an exorbitant amount of time collecting information on former President Chávez, his relations with other countries, his relations even with his family members, his state of mind, and his relations with other members of government. And so, although US diplomats worked to appear nonchalant, the amount and detail concerning Chávez' relations, and the petty attempts “to annoy the Bolivarian gentleman,” betray their disposition, and indeed illustrate that the US government remained concerned about the Venezuelan government and its daily affairs both within the country and abroad.

Second, US diplomats have continually depicted former President Chávez as a mentally unstable individual. In May 2006, former Ambassador William Brownfield, for example, posted a lengthy cable titled “Is Chávez Losing It?” In this cable, Brownfield writes that Chávez “has flown off the handle in front of international microphones” by criticizing former President Bush, neoliberal policies, and alleged US support for the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed

him (CableGate 05/03/2006). Brownfield remarks that he is unsure about “whether Chávez’s job is getting to him, but his public antics are making him appear increasingly on edge. Whatever the cause, we can take advantage of his volatile behavior” (CableGate 05/03/2006). Brownfield concludes that “Chávez’ narcissism cannot be overestimated. Part of his self-worth derives from the amount of international attention he receives ... With this in mind, we should not respond to every one of his nutty remarks” (CableGate 05/03/2006). In this cable, Brownfield clearly attempts to show that Chávez is mentally unstable, erratic, and often deploys “nutty remarks” that are unworthy of a US response.

Other diplomats have also routinely described former President Chávez as unstable and unpredictable. In January 2007, Deputy Chief of Mission Kevin Whitaker wrote that Chávez “has gained a well-deserved reputation for being a predictably unpredictable megalomaniac ... [that] appears increasingly thin-skinned and confrontational” (CableGate 01/09/2007a). Indeed, US diplomats continually discuss former President Chávez’ sensitivity to criticism, that is, how he is “thin-skinned” and “lashes out” in response. In May 2006, former Ambassador Brownfield wrote that the Venezuelan government reacted to a US government report that criticized the Venezuelan government’s lack of support for anti-terrorist policies with a “communiqué ... the hysterical contents [of which] have become commonplace” (CableGate 05/04/2006). In addition, he writes that Chávez “lashed out at [the report] ... and began accusing the USG of harboring terrorists for not extraditing accused Cuban airline bomber Luis Posada Carriles” (CableGate 05/04/2006). Similarly, in January 2007, DCM Whitaker noted that Chávez “lashed out at two actors who urged reconsideration of the [the decision not to renew an opposition-oriented television station’s public broadcasting license, RCTV], OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza and the Church, churlishly insulting Insulza and calling for his resignation, and telling

the Church to mind its own business” (CableGate 01/09/2007b). Later in January 2007, Brownfield cabled that Chávez “lashed out against a USG expression of concern about a pending Enabling Law ... consistent with Chávez’ increasingly thin-skinned and hot-headed response to any criticism, no matter from whom it comes” (CableGate 01/22/2007). All together, former Chargé Caulfield portrays Chávez as “hypersensitive to any opposition, particularly perceived criticism from the United States ... [and] quick to react to criticism with irrational counter-arguments” (CableGate 04/01/2009). These cables present Chávez as a rather “irrational” individual that cannot control his “hot-headed” emotions, and, instead, he quickly “lashes out” against any criticism.

In addition, US diplomats have been quick to describe as the policies of the Chávez Administration as “outlandish” and “bizarre.” In September 2007, former Ambassador Patrick Duddy wrote a cable titled “We aren’t Making this Up: The BRV’s Bizarre Policy Highlights.” This cable reported on a series of changes that included, for example, moving the country’s time zone back 30 minutes so that individuals could travel to work and school in the daylight, and limiting alcohol sales over a holiday weekend. Nonetheless, Duddy stated that these “outlandish policies ... clearly illustrate the arbitrary and capricious nature of Chávez’s regime” (CableGate 09/17/2007). DCM Whitaker has also described former President Chávez as “untethered by voices of restraint or even reason ... [and that an] untethered Chávez presents a rather brittle situation” (CableGate 01/12/2007).

Third, US diplomats have depicted former President Chávez as immature, “juvenile,” and “unstatesmanlike.” Indeed, DCM Whitaker described Chávez as “untethered” in the passage above, because he believed that Chávez was “without a mature advisor” that could provide him with some reason, suggesting that he believed that Chávez possessed a rather immature mind on

his own (CableGate 01/12/2007). In February 2007, former Ambassador Brownfield also wrote that “Chavez lashed out at President Bush ... [and] invoked the names of more than one historical figure in his juvenile damnation of President Bush,” which included Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, following President Bush’s criticism of the Chávez government (02/02/2007).

US diplomats have also routinely noted that they believe that former President Chávez behaves in a manner unfitting for a world leader. Following Chávez’ criticism of the OAS and the Catholic Church for their commentary of the Venezuelan government’s refusal to renew RCTV’s license, DCM Whitaker reminded his audience about Chávez’ speech before the UN General Assembly just a few months earlier when Chávez referred to former President Bush as the devil. Following this criticism, DCM Whitaker wrote that “Chávez once again has engaged in outrageous, vulgar personal attacks, and unstatesmanlike rhetoric” (CableGate 01/09/2007b). In addition, DCM Whitaker has described Chávez’ speeches as “long and rambling,” “semi-coherent,” and “at times laughable,” and he has described former President Chávez himself as possessing “mastery of bovine scatology” (CableGate 06/19/2006).

Fourth, US diplomats have continually depicted former President Chávez as a dangerous authoritarian that desires power alone. In June 2006, DCM Whitaker cabled that like “many autocrats intent on maintaining power, [Chávez] uses rhetoric as a blunt political weapon that seeks to vivisect society along class, political, social, and race lines” (CableGate 06/19/2006). Three years later, in June 2009, former Chargé Caulfield similarly wrote that Chávez’ preference for “loyalty over competence, creation of parallel Bolivarian institutions, efforts to forge a one-party state, and chest-thumping nationalism also smack of creeping totalitarianism” (06/16/2009). US diplomatic leaders have thus portrayed former President Chávez as an anti-

democratic leader that is gravitating towards totalitarianism and the creation of a one-party state. This, of course, does not mesh with the reality that former President Chávez continually participated in elections that included numerous opposition political parties. What is more, US diplomats have also used a rather animalistic and racist discourse that depicts Chávez in quite beastly terms: “chest-thumping,” “hot-headed,” and continually “lashing out.” All together, these depictions of Chávez indeed illustrate how US diplomats have routinely deployed a racist and Orientalist discourse similar to how Europeans depicted individuals throughout the Middle East within their own writings that Edward Said (1978) examined.

Finally, US diplomats have also depicted Chávez’ supporters in Orientalist terms. These depictions largely include a “frenzied” mass of supporters that eschew free thinking for unwavering support for their leader, which is ultimately rooted in fear. In June 2006, DCM Whitaker wrote that to “outsiders Chávez’ long and rambling speeches are semi-coherent and at times laughable. To the average Venezuela, however, Chávez’ words have meaning, offering hope or fear, depending on the message” (CableGate 06/19/2006). In addition, DCM Whitaker states that Chávez’ rhetoric results in “a frenzied and fearful, or at best intimidated, population incapable of resolving basic conflicts ... [and this] frenzied populace [is] afraid to express anything other than support, genuine or not” for the Venezuelan government (CableGate 06/19/2006). Under this explanation, Whitaker generally depicts Venezuelan citizens as automatons that follow Chávez’ lead and possess no critical thinking capabilities. In addition, he presents Chávez’ supporters as under the emotional control of their leader’s oratorical skills and incapable of independent thought. In other words, he paints these supporters as irrational individuals, that are incapable of utilizing any type of reason to understand that *chavista* policies are not beneficial to them or Venezuelan society. From the outside, US officials argue that

Chávez' speeches are "laughable," but to the rather simple minds of the Venezuelans, they insinuate, these speeches offer hope.

Conclusion

Since the development of democracy in Venezuela, the US and Venezuela remained strong allies. As mentioned above, while AD and COPEI sporadically switched their presidential seats in the Miraflores Palace, both parties remained committed to rooting out communist supporters and revolutionaries from the country (Velasco 2011). In doing so, they received much economic and military support to both continue these efforts and economically develop the country. In the latter instance, USAID, particularly under former US President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program, attempted to enhance the capabilities of, for example, Venezuelan education and agricultural programs.

While there are many facets to the relationship between the US and Venezuela – oil and energy, cultural affinities, and ideological differences, I focus here on the portrayal of US democracy assistance programs in Venezuela, which was briefly touched upon above. While interactions between high-ranking government members have often captivated media attention, for example, as when former President Chávez provided President Obama with a book on neo-colonialism in Latin America in 2009, the more routine and everyday doings of US foreign policy exist within the realm of US democracy assistance programs, and the US "democracy bureaucracy," that were discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, I have illustrated how US diplomats have depicted former President Chávez as a mentally unstable individual that remains power-hungry and engages in juvenile and uncivil behavior. In addition, they have depicted Chávez' supporters as "frenzied" individuals that buy into former President Chávez' "semi-

coherent” ramblings that are often directed against the US Empire and the Venezuelan capitalist class.

Chapter 4: The Case Study Method

In the previous chapters, I have discussed several issues that this study intends to address. First, this study examines US democracy assistance efforts throughout the world. Theoretical disagreement continues surround US democracy assistance, and it is the objective of this study to provide a more theoretically robust understanding of US efforts abroad. To do so, I have selected the case of Venezuela under the Chávez government. Given the tense relationship between the US and Venezuela, and given former President Hugo Chávez' recurrent critiques of the US government and US imperialism, this case study provides an excellent opportunity to examine the nature of US democracy assistance efforts abroad. While neo-Tocquevillian scholars have not specifically broached the issue of contemporary Venezuela, several neo-Marxist scholars have asserted that the US has sought to destabilize the Venezuelan government in order to promote transnational capitalist class interests, namely the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. In contrast to these theories, I have developed a third, neo-Weberian perspective that I will also plan to test when analyzing US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela.

Second, this study examines the Venezuelan government's response to US democracy assistance efforts, as well as their more general response to foreign funding for political parties and NGOs within their country. Since a coalition of anti-Chávez actors and institutions deposed former President Chávez in 2002, the Venezuelan government has targeted US funding for political parties and NGOs. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Venezuelan government did not pass legislation combating the practice until December 2010, that is, nearly ten years after the coup d'état. What is more, the Venezuelan government stalled legislation in 2006 that it could have clearly passed through the National Assembly, given its supermajority

and institutional dominance. This study thus seeks to explain why the Venezuelan government passed anti-NGO legislation in 2010 and failed to do so at earlier points in time. And so, in addition to examining the trajectory of contemporary US democracy assistance, this study examines how peripheral countries have sought to bolster their national sovereignty and crack down on domestic NGOs that governments have often feared are seeking to destabilize them.

In order to examine both of these issues, this study utilizes a historical case study method. In doing so, it uses a variety of data sources, including US policy documents that describe US democracy assistance efforts within Venezuela, US embassy cables published through the WikiLeaks database, qualitative interviews with representatives from foreign donor groups and Venezuelan NGOs, and news periodicals from the US and beyond. In doing so, the aim is to provide the most complete picture of US efforts within Venezuela, and how the Venezuelan government has sought to combat these efforts. Ultimately, these research pursuits are not amenable to quantitative analysis or survey data, and, while an ethnographic approach to these issues would yield incredibly rich data, gaining access to US and Venezuelan officials is an exceedingly difficult task, to say nothing of the prospects of participating in professional policy discussions concerning US foreign policy in Venezuela. Therefore, US policy documents describing US democracy assistance programs, US embassy cables detailing these behind-the-scenes discussions concerning US foreign policy, interviews with policymakers and NGO representatives, and the use of news periodicals provide us with the best available resources to form a complete picture of how the US has promoted democracy in Venezuela, and how the Venezuelan government has responded to these programs.

Examining US Democracy Assistance and Government Response to These Efforts

In order to examine US democracy assistance efforts abroad and how governments have targeted these efforts, several pieces of data are required to complete the research. First, we would need an aperture into the dynamics of US democracy assistance programs and a look at how democracy assistance is, in fact, provided. That is, we would need to examine what groups receive assistance and for what particular purposes. In addition, it would be ideal to sketch out an historical chronology of this funding over an extended duration of time beyond, at least, a calendar year. This would allow the researcher to draw stronger findings concerning the comprehensive nature of US democracy assistance programs in a particular location.

For this study, qualitative, semi-structured interviews would provide an excellent glimpse into the ways in which individuals that work within the US democracy assistance community understand their behaviors abroad, as well as understand the idea of democracy writ large. If possible to undertake, these interviews could provide great insight into how US diplomats work with NGOs and political parties, and how they potentially work with and interact with government leaders in the places that they provide assistance. If foreign government leaders push back against these US policies, interviews could also offer information concerning how US diplomats have pitched their programs and sought to assuage the fears that foreign leaders possess relating to these operations. All together, this data could serve a central place in the analysis of US democracy assistance efforts abroad.

Access to political and economic elites is a notoriously difficult research endeavor (Conti and O'Neil 2007; Hertz and Imber 1995; Khan 2012). This is, of course, an important undertaking, however, as elites often set policies, pass legislation, and invest their wealth in opportunities that the rest of society must live and deal with. It is no revelation, though, why elites are difficult to access. In a phrase, elites often operate in seclusion from the rest of society:

they live in gated communities, they use private transportation such as private jets and limousines, they often possess a staff that keeps them on highly restricted schedules, and they rarely make themselves available to the media, journalists, and academics. In some instances, not only are they highly difficult to establish communication with and include within research projects and reporting, but their job descriptions might even formally prohibit some political and economic elites from speaking directly with media representatives, journalists, and researchers. As a result, many elite organizations and elite individuals themselves speak through spokespersons and public relations specialists. Given this situation, studies involving political and economic elites are often quite difficult to complete without possessing social links to these individuals, or some form of ties with individuals that are only a few steps removed from these elite individuals. Therefore, researchers and journalists must often seek access to the behavior and perceptions of political and economic elites through alternative mechanisms.

Fortunately, as it concerns this study, there are several mechanisms that have allowed, at least, for the possibility of accessing the behavior and perceptions of political elites, and the information they have documented concerning their endeavors abroad. That is, while researchers might have difficulty meeting and directly communicating with US officials, such as US diplomats and congressional representatives, the US has permitted citizens to make formal requests to examine US state documents that outline public policies and analysis of currents, and, in some instances, they might even provide communications transcriptions, such as in the recent inquiry into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's communications over her private Internet server.

With the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), citizens may formally request state documents, including policy documents, embassy cables, communications, and

generally any type of information that concerns particular persons or particular events that a US agency might have discussed or involved itself with. Within each state agency, such as, for example, the US Department of Transportation and the US Department of Homeland Security, there exists a FOIA liaison that handles public requests for information from that agency. Citizens may submit formal requests to these agencies, and, by law, these agencies must provide an initial response within a period of weeks. While the ability to make FOIA requests with US state agencies is the good news, the bad news, unfortunately, is that US state agencies have become notorious for delaying the release of information, denying access to information based on vague reasons such as “national security,” and, in the instance of this researcher, even subjecting requesters to condescending questions and ideological monologues designed to discourage the pursuit of their inquiries and to encourage terminating their requests. Despite these drawbacks, some researchers have indeed gained access to US state documents by making repeated FOIA requests (Robinson 1996; Golinger 2005; Keen 1992). Even in these instances though, documents often involve many redactions. However, they may provide, at least, some glimpse into the shrouded, behind-the-scenes world of US foreign policymaking and US government pursuits abroad.

Another piece of the good news concerning access to foreign policymaking documents and the behavior of political elites is that, in recent years, several individuals have also leaked US state documents to the public, including Private Chelsea Manning, who is currently imprisoned, and former CIA contractor Edward Snowden, who currently fears imprisonment and lives abroad. While Snowden initially leaked documents to journalists from The Guardian primarily concerning the National Security Agency and their surreptitious attempts to collect data, Manning provided Julian Assange with US embassy cables from 2004-2010 involving all

US embassies throughout the world. In the latter instance, Assange published these cables on his WikiLeaks website. For the current research topic, these cables could serve as a critical piece of data that shows how US foreign policymakers have pursued particular policies and interacted with other leaders behind closed doors. In addition, while the US Department of State has indeed released some of its embassy cables through FOIA requests, these cables are more often than not heavily redacted and usually only offer descriptions of current events, and they redact diplomatic opinions of and decisions on these current events, which are often found at the very end of each US embassy cable. By contrast, the cables leaked by Private Manning contain no redactions and thus offer a more complete picture of how US diplomats have engaged in their foreign policymaking abroad.

In addition to qualitative interviewing with US diplomats and analysis of US state documents obtained through FOIA requests, a third source of data might include qualitative interviews with individuals within countries where the US delivers democracy assistance. Two points of data could include interviews with individuals that work within NGOs and individuals that work within foreign governments. Qualitative interviews with individuals within both of these spheres could yield significant data. Concerning NGO representatives, one could develop questions about the delivery of US democracy assistance, interactions with US government members, interactions with one's own government, and interactions with other donors beyond the US, such as the European Union and the United Nations. Concerning individuals that work within foreign governments, one could develop questions about why foreign governments have sought to restrict US democracy assistance, how foreign governments have specifically sought to restrict these practices, how foreign governments interact with their counterparts in the US and

from other foreign donors, and how foreign governments have interacted with domestic NGOs that receive assistance from abroad.

Finally, a research project centered on these issues could also pull from a range of secondary sources on contemporary events. Certainly, documents obtained through formal FOIA requests and the WikiLeaks database could serve as essential pieces of data, but secondary sources, including news periodicals, could also serve as an additional point of reference in order to assist in the triangulation of the data. That is, US embassy cables, FOIA documents, and/or even information gleaned from semi-structured, qualitative interviews with government and NGO representatives could contain personalized perspectives on contemporary events that might potentially skew some of the data. This is not to suggest that news periodicals do not potentially contain the perceptual biases of journalists. However, journalists are, at least, trained to operate as the objective watchdogs of the government and other elite institutions, and their publications can serve as an additional point of reference in order to confirm events as accurately and precisely as possible.

Introducing the Case Study Method

Given that a study of US democracy assistance efforts and foreign government response to these efforts should include an array of data sources, a case study approach to the research questions at hand might ultimately serve the research endeavor best. In contrast with other research methods, such as surveys and experiments, Robert Yin (2002: 1) has asserted that the case study method is best suited for research endeavors when “‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.” Indeed, this research endeavor seeks

to examine *how* the US has provided democracy assistance, *how* we can best understand these efforts, and *how* and *why* foreign governments have sought to prohibit this assistance for domestic groups. In addition, unlike in an experiment, there is no room for the researcher to manipulate US democracy assistance efforts and government response to them. These endeavors involve a multiplicity of individuals acting in a real-life setting that remains immune from research manipulation. And further, these questions are not amenable to statistical analysis, as what this research endeavor is concerned with is the substance of US democracy assistance efforts and the tactics deployed by foreign governments in order to curtail these efforts. What is thus required is an intensive analysis of the dynamics at hand. Quantitative analysis, while greatly useful in many contexts and within many other research endeavors, could only skim the surface of these issues, if at all. Therefore, a case study method is most appropriate, given the types of questions that have been raised by the researcher, the nature of the phenomenon, and the types of data sources that the researcher must work with in order to arrive at the most complete explanation of these phenomenon.

Indeed, since the institutionalization of sociology as an academic discipline, sociologists have utilized the case study in order to describe, explain, and predict social phenomena. In these endeavors, sociologists do not seek to explain a particular case in order to arrive at an explanation of that case alone. Rather, sociologists test social scientific theories in order to extend and build upon them, and hopefully inform future work on similar issues. In doing so, case study research deploys intensive, as well as extensive, data gathering in order to provide the fullest answer to the research questions that are posed. As discussed above, researchers often utilize the same sorts of data that other sociologists utilize; however, they use more data sources

than studies that strictly use one source alone, be it surveys, experiments, or any other one source of data.

There is no question that all empirical sociological research endeavors involve cases *per se*. For example, we might describe a study that involves the statistical analysis of survey data gathered from 10,000 Latino male youths, as involving 10,000 cases. Likewise, we might describe a comparative study of the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions as involving two cases. What distinguishes the case study from, for example, the quantitative analysis of survey data or an experiment is the ability of the researcher to investigate each case in fine-grained fashion (Hammersley and Gomm 2000; Platt 1992; Ragin 1989; Yin 2002). Case studies involve capturing complex historical sequences of events that would be difficult, if not practically impossible, to arrest if one were only to utilize quantitative analysis, experiments, or any other one data source.

Even further, the case study allows researchers to actively sift through a host of variables and view how salient each variable is for the research question. While researchers using survey data are confined only to those questions that are asked in a particular survey and those responses that are often provided for the respondents in advance, researchers utilizing a case study approach must actively attend to those variables and instances that appear consequential to the research at hand. Researchers using the case study method, of course, do not operate in a theoretical research vacuum. Rather, they use theory as well as previous research as a guide and, likewise, aim for some form of generalization or transferability that might assist future researchers (Hammersley and Gomm 2000; Flyvbjerg 2006; Platt 1992; Ragin 1989). Qualitative researchers utilizing the case study method are thus not solely interested in the particularities of their research project, but they are also interested in what their cases are *cases of* (Becker 1992;

Ragin 1987; Yin 2002). By establishing what their cases are indeed *cases of*, case studies can then be used to inform future work or, in other words, become transferable to future research on similar phenomena. And, in doing so, case studies contribute to the accumulation of knowledge that attempts to build upon social scientific theory and assist future researchers in their own endeavors.

The Case of US Democracy Assistance in Venezuela and the Venezuelan Response

Within the Western Hemisphere, and even perhaps throughout the entirety of the world, US democracy assistance programs have been no more controversial than they have been in contemporary Venezuela under former President Chávez and into the present under Chávez' hand-picked successor, President Nicolás Maduro. Since the mid-1990s, a range of US agencies, including USAID and the NED, have provided funding to a variety of political parties and NGOs within the country. While their programs started just shortly before former President Chávez' 1998 election, these programs took on an increasingly controversial role under his leadership.

As discussed in Chapter 2, from the beginning of Chávez' presidency, US leaders were worrisome about what sort of policies he might pursue and what countries he might align with. Although he maintained cordial relations with, for example, former US President Bill Clinton, relations ground to a halt under former US President George W. Bush. Despite the acrimonious tit-for-tat verbal sparring that ensued between leaders from the two countries, US democracy assistance programs stood at the center of the controversy.

Following the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President Chávez, Venezuelan government leaders began to take explicit aim at these programs, asserting that they undermined Venezuelan national sovereignty, and sought to destabilize and ultimately depose

the Venezuelan government. Although Chávez continually proclaimed that Venezuela would clamp down on these US programs and forbid the US from funding destabilization efforts within the country, it took the Venezuelan government nearly a decade to pass legislation that indeed cracked down on the practice.

Given this situation, Venezuela provides a strong case in order to examine the nature of US democracy assistance efforts abroad and how governments have sought to restrict the practice. For neo-Marxists, Venezuela should provide a sure example of how the US has attempted to promote transnational capitalist class interests through its democracy assistance programs. Indeed, the Venezuelan government exerted more control over its oil industry, nationalized a number of additional industries, expropriated rural landholdings from large landholders, continually criticized US foreign policy efforts and US imperialism, and began promoting 21st century socialism beginning in 2005. Taken together, Venezuela would appear ground zero for US democracy assistance programming, if it were, in fact, governed by transnational capitalist class interests.

This case also provides an excellent opportunity to interrogate the veracity of the neo-Tocquevillian claims concerning the true nature of US democracy assistance efforts abroad. In contrast with the neo-Marxist perspective, they have not argued that the US remains ultimately concerned with transnational capitalist class interests. Of course, economic interests might play a part within the overall concerns of the US, but it is not the main thrust of these endeavors. In addition, neo-Tocquevillian scholars do not criticize the basic nature of US democracy assistance efforts, and they do not offer an understanding of how these efforts might actually favor particular groups and particular political parties over others. They also do not consider the variegated nature of the concept of democracy itself. Due to this situation, I have developed a

third perspective, a neo-Weberian perspective, in order to rectify the blindspots that these two perspectives possess, and I have discussed these blindspots, as well as the particular features of the neo-Weberian perspective also in Chapter 2. Suffice it is to say that the Venezuelan case also provides an excellent opportunity to test the assumptions of this perspective, amid what we might expect from the additional two perspectives given the political-economic dynamics that have characterized contemporary Venezuela under former President Chávez.

Finally, this contemporary context also provides an excellent opportunity to examine how and why the Venezuelan government decided to crack down on foreign funding for NGOs and political parties, at the time that it decided to do so. In many countries, political leaders have indeed threatened to crack down on US democracy assistance efforts and other sources of foreign funding, especially in the wake of the Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe and Central Asia during the early 21st century (Carothers 2006). However, only a few countries have committed to legislatively prohibiting foreign funding for NGOs and political parties, including Venezuela (Christensen and Weinstein 2013). By contrast, some countries have kicked out USAID workers and arrested civil society representatives, but they have not formalized these endeavors into existing legislation. Venezuela thus provides an ideal opportunity to examine these pursuits, and could certainly inform future work on this increasingly prominent tactic.

Data Collection for this Project

In the above passages, I have discussed the importance of using a case study to examine US democracy assistance and contemporary efforts by foreign governments to prohibit this practice. I have also discussed what sorts of data a case study on these topics might include, and I have settled on the case of Venezuela for several reasons that I have delineated above. In this

section, I detail what sorts of data I have, in fact, utilized in this study, and I discuss how I have analyzed this data.

This case study on contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela, and the Venezuelan government's legislative response to it, involves the use of qualitative in-depth interviews with Venezuelan NGO leaders and representatives from foreign donor groups located in the US and the European Union, as well as a host of secondary data, namely US embassy cables published through the WikiLeaks database, newspaper publications, and policy documents from the NED and its associated groups (i.e. the IRI, NDI, ACILS, and CIPE) detailing their US democracy assistance programs in Venezuela under the Chávez Administration. Throughout my research, I have triangulated my data, utilizing a multitude of sources to confirm events and rumors concerning the US and the Venezuelan government (Denzin 1978). This was completed for three particular reasons.

First, Venezuela is a politically polarized country with individuals and organizations often strongly supportive of or vehemently opposed to former President Chávez and current President Nicolás Maduro. This necessitated that I confirm what was said by one individual or organization with other individuals and organizations in order to confirm the veracity of events, claims, and practices. Second, since former President Chávez had been in office for fourteen years, some events were not precisely in the forefront of individuals' minds. For example, events surrounding the 2002 coup d'état seemed much more distant than events and issues surrounding the passage of the LDPS in 2010. This, again, necessitated that I confirm what individuals and organizations said occurred, with other individuals and organizations, in order to generate the most accurate depiction of events. In addition, this necessitated that I confirm dates and facts surrounding a number of meetings and events that occurred behind-the-scenes involving the

Venezuelan government, the international community, and foreign governments. The WikiLeaks database, in particular, was instrumental in concretizing dates and discussions between members of the international community, the US government, foreign governments, and the Venezuelan government. In addition, the NED and its associated groups' documents were instrumental in detailing their efforts in Venezuela under the Chávez Administration. Finally, not all individuals have had equal access to, for example, US and Venezuelan government sources, important NGO meetings, and Venezuelan and US media outlets and journalists. Thus, it was important that I confirm events with individuals who have had more extensive access to certain US and Venezuelan government individuals and organizations and who have also perceivably played a more critical role in particular events, such as, for example, the struggle over the proposed LIC and the passage of the LDPS.

This case study, first, involves the use of qualitative in-depth interviews with prominent actors within the Venezuelan NGO and foreign donor community. All together, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 42 representatives from Venezuelan NGOs and international donor groups that provide funding for them. I interviewed 22 representatives from 18 Venezuelan NGOs, six of whom were interviewed on two occasions, and 14 representatives from eight groups, including state and private organizations, that have funded and worked with Venezuelan political parties and NGOs.

From June-August 2010 and June-August 2012, I traveled to Caracas, Venezuela, in order to meet with and interview representatives from NGOs located in Venezuela. During this time, I met with individuals from 22 political and human rights NGOs located within Caracas, and I conducted 28 qualitative in-depth interviews. Although there is no consensus number for the amount of political and human rights NGOs that operate in Venezuela, I would estimate,

based on my interviews with civil society representatives in Venezuela, that the number of these NGOs that operate on an annual basis, possess an organizational office, retain a full-time staff of at least five members, and remain clearly focused on political and/or human rights, is less than 50. And thus, while 22 political and human rights CSOs may initially appear quite low, it does in fact cover a great deal of terrain within the Venezuelan political and human rights-based civil society community. As several members of the foreign donor community would routinely remark, Venezuelan civil society appears much less developed and contains many less NGOs than other countries in the region, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia.

In order to locate and interview prominent actors within the Venezuelan civil society community, I utilized a purposive and snowball sampling technique. My sampling is purposive, because I am particularly interested in only those NGOs that focus on political and/or human rights issues, and my sampling is partially snowball-based because I identified and located several individuals based off recommendations from actors within the Venezuelan civil society community and individuals familiar with Venezuelan civil society. For my research purposes, I considered organizations to be human rights and/or politically based NGOs if they included particular terms in their organizational objectives, mission statements, and/or founding documents. This language includes either explicit reference to "*derechos humanos*" or some reference to civil liberties and/or political rights, including the use of the words "*libertad*," "*derechos civiles*," "*derechos políticos*," and/or "*democracia*."

As there is no official database for political and human rights NGOs in Venezuela, I used four methods in order to locate representatives from human rights and politically-oriented NGOs. First, there are several Venezuelan NGOs that routinely appear within Venezuelan, US, and international media outlets as experts on particular political and human rights issues. When, for

example, violent prison uprisings and confrontations between prisoners and state forces have developed within Venezuela, Venezuelan, US, and international media outlets have consulted with a particular, small set of NGO representatives for comment and analysis. In addition, Venezuelan, US, and international media outlets will often publish figures and findings from a similar set of NGOs on political and human rights issues. From these media sources, I compiled a list of NGOs that routinely appeared, signaling their prominence within Venezuelan civil society. Second, I consulted with my major professor, David Smilde, who has lived and worked in Venezuela for over twenty years. Smilde possesses much familiarity with Venezuelan civil society and assisted me in identifying as well gaining access to several representatives from prominent human rights and politically-oriented NGOs. Third, I consulted with annual reports and other documents published by the US government that outline what groups the US government has worked with during certain time periods. In particular, I looked at lists and documents available from the US Department of State, USAID, and the NED and its associated groups. Fourth, I employed a snowball sampling technique to identify individuals and organizations, whereby I asked interviewees to suggest individuals and organizations with whom they thought I should also speak with.

Regarding members from foreign governments, I also used a snowball sampling technique. In doing so, I asked representatives from Venezuelan NGOs what members from the international community they worked with and routinely spoke with, and what individuals I ought to speak with concerning my research project. After identifying several members of the international community that worked with Venezuelan civil society members, I asked these individuals for further recommendations for additional individuals that I should speak with.

Interviews with NGO representatives took place in Caracas, and most interviews with representatives from foreign donors occurred in Caracas or Washington, DC, with three conducted with electronic software. Individuals were contacted either by telephone or electronic mail, and interviews were conducted within individuals' organizational offices, with the exception of two interviews that took place in an individual's home and a restaurant-lounge setting. Interviews lasted between 24 and 113 minutes, and six individuals were interviewed on two occasions. Many respondents were employed by or volunteered for more than one NGO, and, in the course of interviews, several NGOs with which individuals worked were referenced and discussed in terms of previous or current work. While 14 interviews were recorded and transcribed, I took notes throughout 28 interviews and/or recorded my own thoughts and recollections directly after the meeting and transcribed them. I used Atlas.Ti to analyze and code all of these interviews and notes for thematic content.

During the course of the interviews with NGO representatives, I used an open-ended interview instrument that allowed respondents to express themselves in their own words. Respondents were asked about the organization(s) the individual worked with, the organization's objectives, and the individual's role within the organization(s); how the individual's organization secures funding and how they understand their relations with international actors, particularly US actors; the trajectory of the relationship between the organization and the Venezuelan national government; why and how the organization maintains, for example, cooperative, hostile, non-existent, or other relations with the national government; how the organization has responded to legislation that may limit its ability to receive funds from abroad; how the LDPS, in particular, has affected the organization; and the individual's understanding of why the national government

has pushed for such legislation. Although conversations often diverged from this battery of topics, they formed the lion's share of the interviews' contents.

During the course of the interviews with foreign donor representatives, I also used an open-ended interview instrument that allowed respondents to express themselves in their own words. Interviews were personally tailored to contain content specifically related to the particular donor organization. However, respondents were generally asked about support for particular groups at particular points in time; why an organization has worked with particular Venezuelan NGOs; overall understandings of democracy; overall understandings of democracy assistance and their objectives within Venezuela; relations with the former Chávez government; how the LDPS has affected any of their operations in Venezuela; how each organization has responded to legislation that has aimed to curtail democracy assistance; and why they believe that the Venezuelan government has sought to curtail democracy assistance.

Following the completion and transcription of the interviews, I have used Atlas.TI in order to code the interviews. I employed an open coding format in which I developed particular codes related to particular themes and particular events, as they related to the research questions at hand. These codes included, for example, response to the LDPS, dialogue with the Venezuelan government, relations with the US, and relations with additional foreign donor groups. This allowed me to utilize the interview content in order to fully address the research questions that I had set out to answer, including issues involving the LDPS and the US trajectory of foreign funding for Venezuelan NGOs and political parties.

The second piece of data that I have used for my study involves secondary documents, including US embassy cables, newspaper articles, and NED and its associated groups' policy documents outlining their activities in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez

Administration. First, I used diplomatic cables from several US embassies that discuss Venezuela's moves to restrict NGO funding and the international community's strategy for combating them. I obtained the cables through the WikiLeaks database. US Army soldier Chelsea Manning initially obtained these diplomatic cables and provided them to Julian Assange of WikiLeaks, who then electronically published them. Concerning Venezuela, WikiLeaks has published all diplomatic cables coming from the US Embassy in Caracas from January 2004 to February 2010. I used Atlas.Ti to analyze and code all cables dealing with the US and the international strategy for combating legislation targeting NGOs, for thematic content. The WikiLeaks database possesses query-search functionality, where one can search each cable for keywords that appear within the diplomatic cables. In order to locate cables that dealt with the NGO laws, I searched for several terms related to the laws, including NGO, NGO law, the Law on International Cooperation, and the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. In addition, I examined each US embassy cable in the two months leading up to the passage of each piece of legislation, and two months following the passage of each piece of legislation, to see whether or not these issues arose within any of the diplomatic accounts of current events within Venezuela utilizing other terms than those I searched with.

Second, I also used newspaper publications to chart President Chávez' diplomatic visits and foreign relations, and I used the LexisNexis database to locate them. Within the LexisNexis database, I used the search terms Hugo Chávez and Venezuela to produce search results. These searches yielded publications not only from prominent sources within the US and Western Europe, including the New York Times and the BBC, but also English-language government publications from countries such as Belarus, China, Russia, Iran, and Vietnam, among several other countries that former President Chávez traveled to during his tenure in office.

And third, this project also involves policy documents from the NED, IRI, NDI, ACILS, and CIPE. In preparation for this research project, I initially made several Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with three US state organizations, including the US Department of State, USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy. Although these requests were made in August 2013, these three organizations have all provided no documents regarding its funding for Venezuelan NGOs and political parties nearly three years later. Instead, I located policy documents from Venezuelan-American lawyer-activist Eva Golinger's Venezuelan FOIA website. On this site, Golinger published documents from the NED and its associated groups, in addition to a smattering of additional documents from the US government, including some heavily redacted US embassy cables. Although this site is currently defunct, I was able to access the website through the Wayback Time Machine, a service that allows users to frequent websites from previous points in time. This website takes "snapshots" of heavily frequented websites and stores them within their own database. So long as one possesses a website's address, one can potentially view previous snapshots from websites that continue to operate and those that are no longer operational. And so, through this site, I was able to access these policy documents.

Golinger's site contained documents from 2000-2004 detailing US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela. The most detailed documents the site contains include documents from the NED and its associated groups, that is, the IRI, NDI, ACILS, and CIPE. From the NED, this includes contracts with each particular NGO that the group worked with from 2000-2004. These contracts contain descriptions of the organization receiving funding, descriptions of the political-economic situation in Venezuela, and descriptions of the activities that these NGOs planned to carry out with NED funding.

While the NED provided documents for each contract, its associated groups provided quarterly narratives involving the projects, NGOs, and political parties each group has particularly worked with. The IRI, for example, details the political parties they worked with throughout 2000-2004. In doing so, they describe their meetings with political party leaders and the types of technical support they have provided to these political parties. The NDI, CIPE, and ACILS provide similar documentation. And while the NED has provided funding for particular projects with particular groups in Venezuela, its associated groups have received funding from the NED to provide technical support for a multiplicity of political actors at once. Utilizing these documents, I have generated chronologies of these organizations' funding efforts during the early years of the Chávez Administration. While I initially developed summaries of each of the policy documents, thereafter I used these summaries to craft readable narratives covering these years. Chapters 5 and 6 detail the NED and its associated groups' funding efforts during this time period, and Chapter 7 provides an explicit theoretical analysis of these efforts.

Conclusion

All together, this research project takes a case study approach to answering the research questions set out in Chapter 1 involving the trajectory of US democracy assistance in Venezuela, and the Venezuelan government's passage of anti-NGO legislation in 2010. Since these questions cannot be answered with one piece of data alone, I have employed the case study method in order to fully address and answer these questions. In doing so, this project has involved several pieces of data. These involve semi-structured, qualitative interviews with foreign donor and NGO representatives, US embassy cables, newspaper articles, and policy documents from several US organizations that detail their democracy assistance efforts abroad.

The hope for case study research is not that it can solely explain the case at hand. Instead, the hope is that such research can, first, test, build upon, and potentially extend existing social scientific theory regarding the nature of the state-state relations and state-civil society relations in the ever-globalizing contemporary world. And second, the hope is that this research can serve to inform future work on related issues involving the state, civil society, US democracy assistance, and efforts to restrict the practice. In the ensuing chapters, I utilize the pieces of data that I have discussed in this chapter to address the research questions guiding this project, and, by the end, the aim is to arrive at conclusions that will develop existing social scientific theory and potentially inform future work on related issues.

Chapter 5: The National Endowment for Democracy in Venezuela, 2000-2004

Despite providing direct funding for its four core grantees – the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has also provided direct funding to a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for particular programs in the countries that it works. Since its inception though, controversy has surrounded the NED and the nature of its operations abroad. William Robinson (1996, 2006) and several other researchers have described the NED as an organization that seeks to carefully manage international civil society efforts and cultivate capitalist polyarchies in the countries it involves itself in. In order to do so, these researchers assert that the NED only provides support to those groups that endorse, or do not seriously contest, neoliberal economic policies, such as trade liberalization, privatization of formerly nationalized industries, and economic deregulation (Burron 2012; Golinger 2006; Petras 1999).

By contrast, neo-Tocquevillian scholars assert that promoting NGOs enhances democratic life within nation-states by generating political pluralism and providing a check against potential state abuse (Carothers 1999; Diamond 2009; Fung 2003; McFaul 2003; Mitchell 2009; Putnam 1993; Wiarda 2003). They assert that, in doing so, the US promotes US-style liberal democratic ideas. These actors fail to recognize that alternative conceptions of democracy exist, beyond US-style liberal democracy, and they fail to recognize that the US has delivered much funding and support to groups that have indeed supported anti-democratic and unconstitutional policies, such as the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President

Hugo Chávez, and ushered in a transitional government led by the former head of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Pedro Carmona.

In this chapter, I first lay out the neo-Marxist and neo-Tocquevillian's specific perspectives on the NED and its funding. Thereafter, I systematically document and discuss NED funding during the early years of the Chávez Administration. In Venezuela, the NED has assisted NGOs since the early 1990s. Since this time, the NED has supported an array of groups largely focused on civil and political rights, namely the reduction of executive power and state intervention into domestic activities. The group has also focused on organizations that reduce conflict and offer human rights training for law enforcement officers. In doing so, the NED shows a predisposition towards US-style liberal democratic, rather than radical democratic, features. These emphases diverge from what the Bolivarian government of former President Chávez championed during his tenure in office – the prioritization of the rights of socially and economically oppressed Venezuelans through measures that often ran counter to many liberal democratic features.

These findings illustrate that indeed NED funding is not entirely neutral, and that the US has provided some funding and support to groups and parties that have encouraged and supported anti-democratic behaviors. This includes some groups whose representatives supported the 2002 coup and, in the instance of one group that has continually received US support, even accepted a position with the transitional government's presidential cabinet. However, these findings neither show that this US support is solely concerned with private property rights nor the promotion of neoliberal economic policies, as the neo-Marxist perspective suggests. Instead, it shows that the NED remains invested in promoting US-style liberal democratic features, and that its decisions are not monopolized by a preoccupation with

promoting neoliberal capitalism. In addition, we find that that in some select instances the US has worked with groups that have, in turn, worked with the Chávez government and even commended some of its policies, which veers from what neo-Marxists would expect within contemporary Venezuela.

The NED and Sociological Theory

Throughout the mid-20th century, the US government covertly engaged in much of the work that the NED openly engages in today. David Lowe (2013), the NED's Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Relations, attests that through the CIA, the US sent funding, staff, and technical support to political parties and media in Europe in the post-WWII period, a practice that would eventually spread elsewhere in subsequent years. In Chile under former President Salvador Allende, for example, the CIA funded newspapers such as *El Mercurio* that criticized the Allende government, and they provided technical assistance and advising to political parties and military members that would eventually plot and orchestrate a coup d'état that deposed the president. The covert nature of this support and the critical attention that the CIA and its actions received, led to much debate in Washington over how the US might best support political parties and groups throughout the world without generating domestic and international resistance to its operations. Surprisingly, the US would look elsewhere in order to develop new policies to alleviate its image issues.

Lowe (2013) points out that the initial idea for the development of the NED was derived from the example of the German Stiftungen, which are German international organizations aligned with German political parties that network and assist ideologically similar parties throughout the world. In Washington, a bilateral group of Republicans and Democrats, as well as

individuals from the private sector and academia, joined together through the American Political Foundation and promoted the establishment of similar groups in the US in order to effectively promote democracy throughout the world in an overt and palatable manner that would not come under the same scrutiny as covert CIA programs. In response to these suggestions, the Reagan Administration established the NED in 1983 in order to openly support democratic movements with funding and technical assistance, and provide a political and ideological counterweight to the Soviet Union and its potential allure throughout the world. In doing so, the Reagan Administration also established the NED's four core grantees – the IRI, NDI, ACILS, and CIPE – as the global arms of their respective organizations – the US Republican Party, the US Democratic Party, the AFL-CIO, and the US Chambers of Commerce – that would receive funding from the NED for democracy-related purposes.

The Reagan Administration designed the NED as a non-governmental and independent organization, at the suggestion of the American Political Foundation, which would rely on, but remain autonomous from, the US government. This would exclude the NED from the slow pace of government bureaucracy and allow the NED the flexibility it needed to quickly and effectively provide support for democratic organizations. Scholars, however, continue to debate the extent to which the NED and its associated groups truly remain autonomous and separated from the US government. Robinson (1996: 93), for example, argues that although the NED describes itself as an independent and non-governmental organization, the NED “structurally and functionally ... operates as a specialized branch of the US government ... wholly funded by Congress.” In addition, Robinson, as well as other neo-Marxist scholars, points out that the NED and its associated groups must provide annual reports to US Congress on its activities. Yet although the NED and these groups only provide these reports on an annual basis, they argue that

they are ultimately subservient to the interests of US officials whom dictate the basic contours of US foreign policymaking.

What is more, Robinson and other neo-Marxist-oriented scholars assert that the NED and its associated groups exclusively assist NGOs and political parties that champion – or do not contest – neoliberal capitalist policies. Robinson (1996: 97) states that the objective of the NED and its associated groups is ultimately “to construct a functioning oligarchic model of power and a polyarchic system which links local elites to the transnational elite.” In this perspective, the NED and its grantees aim to generate conditions propitious to the spread of neoliberal capitalist policies, such as trade liberalization, privatization of industry, and economic deregulation. That is, these programs are “designed to lead to the creation of a society wide network of political, social, cultural, business, and civic organizations in the target country dependent on and responsive to US direction, or at least sympathetic to the concern of the transnational agenda” (Robinson 1996: 105). According to these theorists, US democracy promoting agencies can allegedly prop up neoliberal-oriented political parties and NGOs through their funding and support, and, in doing so, they can marginalize groups that promote popular and socialist/communist-oriented policies. Ultimately, all of this serves to enfranchise the transnational capitalist class that seeks access to cheap labor, inexpensive resources, and new markets, which, of course, are achieved through neoliberal economic policies.

NED representatives themselves and neo-Tocquevillian scholars provide a quite different perspective on the NED and its operations. While the NED indeed receives nearly all of its funding from US Congress, the organization asserts that it controls all of its appointments and that board members are removed if they are appointed to executive branch posts (Lowe 2013). And in keeping with the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the NED contends that it does not

provide funding to groups based on partisan calculations, but all together aims to enhance political pluralism and the democratic qualities of the countries in which it works, including allowing NGOs to provide a check against potential state abuses and multiple parties to coexist and enter into the public sphere. Several scholars also contend that the NED solely pursues democratic ends and does not preoccupy itself with concerns regarding economic ideology (Carothers 1999; Diamond 2008; McFaul 2009; Mitchell 2009). These scholars point out that the NED has assisted in a number of democratic transitions throughout the world since its inception, and it does not pursue policies of regime change.

Nevertheless, Larry Diamond (2009), for example, argues that the NED, alongside its core grantees, have played indelible roles in the democratic transitions in Poland and Chile in the late 20th century, as well as in Serbia and Ukraine in the early 21st century. Lincoln Mitchell (2009) also argues that the NED played an essential role in bolstering democratic forces in Georgia and keeping democratic hope alive during a period of increasing authoritarianism. He argues that while the NED and its associated groups did not actively plot the deposing of the anti-democratic Shevardnadze government, it provided critical infrastructural support for democratic groups that would eventually come to replace this government. All together, these scholars argue that the NED does not pursue any ulterior ideological agenda beyond support for democratic principles and democratic groups, and that it assuredly does not ultimately operate based on concerns with neoliberal economic policies. All together, they point out that the NED remains willing to work with any sort of political party or NGO so long as they remain committed to democratic principles.

NED Work in Venezuela

In this section, I describe and detail NED funding for Venezuelan NGOs throughout the early years of the Chávez Administration. During this period, NED funding largely centered on two distinct areas: funding for civil liberties issues, and funding for conflict and law enforcement reform. In the first area, the NED has provided much funding for groups that have actively contested and organized around pieces of legislation and policies pushed or enacted by the Chávez government. This has included, for example, the Land Law, which allowed the government to expropriate rural lands left idle; legislation on education that would allow the government more control over national curricula; and the involvement of the military in national government and its implementation of public policies, such as food distribution. This has also included funding to enhance the basic abilities of NGOs to persist and raise funding. While some of this funding indeed involves economic concerns such as private property rights and the international investment climate, the totality of NED funding does not exclusively involve the promotion of neoliberal policies. In fact, much of their work concerns US-style liberal democratic features of governance, such as decentralized governance, limiting state power, press freedom, human rights training for law enforcement officers, and private property rights.

While neo-Marxists might object that these policies indeed contribute to a neoliberal economic system, some of these policies, including limitations on state power, the devolution of power to local administrative offices, civil liberties, and human rights training for law enforcement officers, have also been pursued by governments that have not simultaneously pursued neoliberal economic policies, such as deregulation. And so, these policies are from exclusive to governments that promote neoliberal economic policies. Socialist governments have, for example, promoted the ideas of human rights and the devolution of power to local

organs. In fact, within the Soviet Union, the basic idea was to promote the soviets, or workers' councils, which existed on a local scale. Despite the way events unfolded though, we can recognize that these pursuits are not exclusive to neoliberal economic regimes, but, in the abstract sense, they transcend government models.

The NED's second area of focus concerns conflict and law enforcement reform. During these years, the NED allocated much funding and attention to reducing conflict and crime, and supporting groups that train Venezuelan law enforcement members. In particular, this has included working with NGOs that work with neighborhood groups on conflict mediation, groups that train justices of the peace and promote the justice of the peace system, and supporting groups that provide human rights training for police officers. And while some the programs dealing with civil liberties possess aspects that promote private property rights, this second area of focus is hardly oriented towards neoliberal economic ideas. While indeed capitalist societies require law enforcement and order, socialist-oriented societies also require law enforcement and order, and some of these countries have even maintained some of the recent world's harshest criminal justice systems, in places such as communist Albania, China, the Soviet Union, and North Korea.

While I do not engage in fine-grained theoretical analysis in this and the ensuing chapter, I provide a theoretical analysis in the Chapter 7. At the outset though, it is also important to acknowledge several of the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives' blindspots that will become apparent in the subsequent chapters. What is more, it is important to recognize, as I have discussed in previous chapters, that these blindspots have necessitated the development of a third perspective on US democracy assistance efforts in order to provide a more theoretically robust

portrait of these operations. There are three particular blindspots that will become apparent within this chapter and Chapter 6.

First, we will see that NED operations in Venezuela cannot be reduced to the promotion of neoliberal capitalist interests. But they are not unbiased. It is more accurate to portray US democracy promoting agencies as wielding a particular vision of how democracy should be accomplished. And where the US and Venezuela appear to have the most difference surrounds the idea of a large state that contravenes individual rights in order to promote the interests of the popular classes. As discussed in early chapters, the Chávez government has continually prioritized the rights of economic and social minorities in Venezuela. And indeed, at times, the Chávez government has enacted policies that threaten private property rights and have sought to centralize some powers in the executive branch. All of these affairs have seemingly pushed the US to actively pursue its democracy assistance programs in Venezuela and promote what I have termed US-style liberal democratic features of governance.

Second, we will ultimately see that US democracy assistance policies in contemporary Venezuela share a link with US foreign policymaking in the region since the early 19th century and the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. Since this time, US officials have exercised a form of regional paternalism and envisioned many Latin American leaders as uncivilized, lawless, and unfit to govern, should they veer from the political-economic vision that the US has encouraged within the hemisphere. This regional paternalism also clearly involves a racist and Orientalist understanding of Latin American leaders and the citizens that support them. For US officials, it is unacceptable that Latin American citizens would elect a leader that criticizes US foreign policy, adopts divergent political-economic policies from the US, and seeks to create a multi-polar international system wherein each country respects each other's national sovereignty..

Third, we will see that the US has supported an array of actors that have consistently sought to block *chavista* policies, such as education reform and land reform. In addition, we will see that the US has supported several groups that openly championed the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President Chávez and empowered the transitional government that took his place. In doing so, we will find that the US does not demonstrate an absolute commitment to democratic actors. By contrast, it shows a tendency to support groups that have engaged in and supported anti-democratic and unconstitutional behaviors. And even though the US might not have funded these groups to engage in these policies, it has continued to furnish them with assistance following their support for these anti-democratic policies. In addition, it has also supported NGOs that have openly aligned themselves with the opposition, including Súmate, which urged Venezuelan citizens to vote against former President Chávez in a recall referendum in 2004.

And fourth, we will see that several groups that have received US funding and technical support have, in the end, legitimized the Venezuelan government's rule, including groups that monitor elections and some of its social policies. In addition, we will see that some groups have even worked with the Venezuelan government on particular projects. And while this cooperation does not characterize the main thrust of US funding, it does indicate that US funding does not always have its intended effect of tarnishing the Venezuelan government, in the manner that many programs seemingly set out to do.

Taken together, these blindspots indicate that theorists must move beyond the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives, and build a theoretical perspective that more accurately portrays contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in places such as Venezuela and beyond. To do so, I have indeed developed a neo-Weberian perspective, and, in Chapter 7, I

will fully flesh out how this perspective can rectify these previous theoretical blindspots and provide a more encompassing portrait of US efforts abroad. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I detail NED programs in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration, as they center on the two sorts of policies that I have discussed above.

NED Policies: Civil Liberties-Focus

During the early years of the Chávez Administration, the NED centered much of its funding on groups that combated particular pieces of legislation and policies initiated by the Venezuelan government. At this time, the Chávez government was promoting a radical, direct, and participatory form of democracy. In many instances, former President Chávez placed the rights of the majority of socially and economically dispossessed Venezuelans over the rights of the country's social and economic elites. As discussed in earlier chapters, some of these policies included exerting greater control over the national oil industry and its managerial staff, using oil revenues to fund programs serving the social and economic majority such as higher education and medical missions, utilizing the military to carry out social programs and distribute food, nationalizing formerly privatized industries, and expropriating unused, rural landholdings from large landowners.

Unsurprisingly, these policies irritated many members of the Venezuelan middle- and upper-classes. In addition, many civil society groups formed in order to combat these policies, and some existing groups also sought to combat *chavista* policies. Indeed, many of these groups that sought to undermine former President Chávez public policies would receive funding and support from the US, under its democracy assistance programs. What is more, some groups that openly aligned with the opposition, and whose leaders would sign the Carmona Decree,

legitimizing the transitional government, and even, in the instance of one organization, accept a position with the transitional government, would receive US funding and support for their projects. This illustrates that the US, in fact, made a regular habit out of supporting groups that clearly aimed to undermine the Venezuelan government. In the sections below, I detail some of these funding efforts.

Under its auspices, the NED funded a number of groups to monitor country-wide changes that developed as a result of *chavista* policies. Some of these policies included land reform, education reform, and broader inclusion of military members into political life, the latter of which I discuss in a subsequent section that specifically deals with US support for law enforcement and conflict mediation. The NED, for instance, provided continual funding for Fundación Momento de la Gente (FMG), a civic group founded in 1999 focused on monitoring elections, policy, and legislation. In its program description, the NED reports that FMG “has figured prominently among Venezuelan civil society organizations and opposition political leaders, for its leadership and expertise on key democratic issues” (NED 2001a: 4). The NED thus takes no pains to distinguish FMG from the Venezuelan opposition. Instead, it readily admits that this group “has figured prominently” within the Venezuelan opposition on account of the group’s “leadership and expertise on key democratic issues.”

In its program description for its projects with FMG, the NED depicts former President Chávez as concentrating power and aggressively targeting his critics. “Chávez is the most powerful president in the democratic era of the country, with power largely centered on the executive and a Congress dominated by his party allies. Since his reelection under the new Constitution in July 2000, he has attacked key institutions which have been critics of his government, including Church, the media and most recently, the labor unions” (NED 2001a: 4).

In addition, the NED (2001a) reports that Chávez' criticism of representative democracy has alarmed Venezuelan citizens. Indeed, while the NED recognizes that Chávez was reelected, it still depicts him as a megalomaniac that "attacks" any societal group that disagrees with his public policies, such as the Catholic Church and the media. These criticisms mirror the criticisms that many US diplomats have leveled within the US embassy cables discussed in Chapter 3.

With its first NED agreement in 2001, the group received \$40,000 "to organize Venezuelan civil society groups to monitor the National Assembly and provide policy input on key pieces of legislation pertinent to civil liberties" (NED 2001a: 4). In doing so, FMG provided analysis on policy legislation, such as the Law on Municipal Governance, promoting decentralization efforts to reduce the power of the national government and bolster the power of local governments. For some time, under the Chávez Administration, the political opposition indeed directed much of its attention towards building anti-Chávez forces at the state and local level, and cultivating potential presidential candidates at these levels, including future presidential candidates Manuel Rosales, a former mayor of Maracaibo and governor of Zulia, and Henrique Capriles, who formerly served as a mayor of Baruta and currently serves as Governor of Miranda.

In 2002, the NED granted an additional \$64,000 to FMG, and, in its program description, openly critiqued the Chávez government on several grounds. These critiques covered a number of issues, including issues of governance, private property rights and investment, and the treatment of civil society groups. First, the NED criticized the passage of Chávez's "pet 'Bolivarian' constitution, [which] despite the concentration of power that it ceded to the executive, appears to have done little [to] help the government actually govern" (NED 2002a: 4). In this passage, the NED describes the Venezuelan Constitution as a lowly, "pet" accomplice to

former President Chávez' inability to govern the country. This contrasts with the perception that many civil society members actually assisted in the construction of a new Venezuelan Constitution and, thereafter, Venezuelan citizens voted on and successfully passed this document.

Second, the NED criticized the Venezuelan government's passage of 49 laws in 2001 by executive decree that "threaten to undermine the protection of private property and discourage international and domestic investment" (NED 2002a: 4). This emphasis on issues of private property rights illustrates the discrepancy that exists between US groups like the NED and the Chávez government concerning the importance they have placed on an absolute commitment to these rights. Former President Chávez might respond that indeed, in some instances, he has threatened private property rights and perhaps discouraged some foreign investment. However, *chavistas* recurrently argued that these moves were necessary give the current predicament that Venezuelan peasants found themselves in, that is, a landless and dispossessed state, while large rural landholders possessed so many tracts of land that they had not even the ability to maintain them all. And third, the NED asserted that Chávez attacked civil society groups as they "have emerged as an effective and constructive counterweight to the government ... and played an important role in defending important political rights, highlighting specific policy issues, and mobilizing popular opinion" (NED 2002a: 4). Based on these assessments, the NED funded FMG to continue to provide legislative analysis, as well as train municipal authorities in twenty municipalities on issues of budgeting, transparency, and citizen involvement in administration (NED 2002a: 5). Similar to its policy analyses, these measures were promoted in a general effort to push for more decentralization and municipality control over resources.

In 2003, the NED carried nearly the same critiques of the Chávez government as its earlier program descriptions. However, it actually applauded the Venezuelan National Assembly as “one of the only the institutions in which parties and civil society organizations across the political spectrum come together in a constructive dialogue” (NED 2003a: 4). It also applauded the efforts between opposition and pro-government legislators to amend and approve a new election law, an initiative that FMG had assisted with. And so, while the NED has largely carried critiques of the Venezuelan government in its program descriptions, it sporadically lauded some aspects of the Venezuelan political system, such as, in this instance, the National Assembly. In the 2003-04 funding cycle, the NED approved another \$64,000 grant to assist FMG with the development of three new legislative initiatives. During this time, FMG represented civil society on legislative commissions devising a new law on municipal governance, citizen participation in governance, and financing for political parties and voting regulations. FMG received funding to study these pieces of legislation, contract specialists when necessary, and hold public seminars to update the public and other NGOs on the development of the law.

Outside of its work with FMG and its general focus on decentralization efforts, the NED also focused efforts on the effects of the 2001 Land Law. During these early years, the NED funded Asociación Civil Acción Campesina (ACAC), “a social and political actor [established in 1976] that promotes sustainable agriculture in correspondence with other actors, privileging the participation of rural people and their organizations in the rural development of the country” (NED 2002b: 1). From September 2002 until November 2003, ACAC received \$35,000 from the NED to monitor land reforms that were taking place throughout the country after the Venezuelan government passed the Land Law in November 2001.

As the NED's program description for its ACAC funding states, the Land Law "gives the government authority to seize and redistribute private property that is not being put to productive use. The law, in effect, sanctions land invasions of private property which will then be recognized by the government ... the law is dangerously vague on how the land distribution program will be carried out and grants the government a great deal of discretion in selecting which private land is to be distributed" (NED 2002b: 2). With NED funding, ACAC's objectives were to provide alternative proposals to the recently passed law and to provide a new proposal for a law to the National Assembly that would replace it. In addition to this, the NED describes ACAC "as a source of information to policy makers, political parties and civil society on the implementation of the law and its effects" (NED 2002b: 3). While the new law did indeed allow the Venezuelan government the ability to expropriate landholdings from large landowners, the law hardly sanctioned arbitrary land invasions. The Venezuelan government continually negotiated with large landholders regarding what land it would, in fact, expropriate, and, in many instances, these expropriations involved the least tenable and least arable pieces of land that large landholders possessed (Enríquez and Newman 2015).

Using the funding, the ACAC held several discussions and meetings with activists, farmers, peasants, and educators to discuss the Land Law, and how it would affect rural communities, in order to generate a public information campaign. The ACAC developed an advisory team with several experts to develop a document publicizing information on land seizures, their legality, and the effects of land redistribution. The organization also trained several state-based representatives to analyze the situation in nine states throughout Venezuela and report back to its branch in Caracas on land conflicts. At the culmination of its meetings and

monitor reporting, ACAC drew up plans to contact local and national media and disseminate information on these issues.

The group's final document became titled "Agro-Food Security and Rural Development." Through this document, the ACAC "call[ed] for a legal instrument that gives priority to the farmers in the resolution of the agrarian problem, which we believe involves solving two major problems ... access of farmers to ownership of productive assets, including land ... [and] the legal security of farmers on full ownership of these assets" (ACAC 2002). In addition, the ACAC called for a new law that would generate a new framework for encouraging small and medium-level farmers, eliminate structural problems such as a price controls and access to foreign currency, establish "a coherent system of property rights (individual and collective)," and strengthen the role of local governments in executing a new lands law (ACAC 2002) Thus, the ultimate objectives of the ACAC were to enact a new land reform law, but one that included more clarification and established a more comprehensive framework for redistribution of land. In addition, the organization called on the government to tackle what it deemed to be the structural problems concerning agriculture and food security facing Venezuela – price controls and access to foreign currency.

In addition to rural land issues, the NED also provided funds for groups to contest Venezuelan government initiatives on education, including the Asociación Civil Asamblea de Educación (ACAE). In its program description for its funding for ACAE, the NED describes how the Chávez government had sought to advance new education plans under its Bolivarian Revolution. The report states that at

"issue is a plan by President Chávez to overhaul the nation's school curriculum by granting the central government powers of oversight by directly monitoring and

managing teachers, principals and material used in classes ... the government has sought to incorporate leftist teachings in school curriculum and supervise principals and teachers in the nation's schools ... newly written textbooks referred to the use of violence as an effective means to achieve rapid political and economic changes, portrayed Ché Guevara and other leftist leaders as heroes of modern history and suggested that Venezuelans must be taught to reject individualism and competition" (NED 2000a: 4).

The program description likens Bolivarian initiatives to "Soviet-sponsored citizen brigades ... [including] government plans to form neighborhood Bolivarian youth committees, revitalize a largely dormant pre-military training program for elementary school children, and promote intelligence gathering on the political party affiliation of neighbors through the use of polls and surveys" (NED 2000a: 5). In this excerpt and commentary on Venezuelan affairs, we gain much insight into what sorts of issues and policies the NED finds unfit for a democratic society. First, the group objects to youth organizations that promote Bolivarian values, and, in doing so, it likens these projects to Soviet-sponsored citizen brigades, rather than similar groups that exist within the US, such as the Young Democrats or Young Republicans. The Soviet Union, of course, operated as a one-party state that violently suppressed any form of dissent from its citizens. In contrast, the Chávez government had made no efforts to eradicate opposing political parties from the country and generate a one-party state. What is more, most political parties throughout Venezuela possess a lengthy history of developing political organizations for its youth members, including Acción Democrática, COPEI, and the more recently developed Primero Justicia. And so, far from a *chavista* development, Bolivarian youth organizations are rather consistent with Venezuelan political history.

This excerpt also finds it unfitting that a government would promote the rejection of individualism and competition. These two values, of course, have a strong position within US civil religion, which has championed risk-taking, the existence of an alleged meritocracy, and business pursuits. Thus, the promotion of collectivism and cooperation seemingly runs counter to US civil religion. In addition, the program description highlights the influence of the Cuban government on Venezuela and its school system, and laments the upcoming passage of the National Education Law that will allow for the establishment of Bolivarian-oriented schools. And last, the NED description illustrates an aversion to heroically depicting leftist individuals such as Ché Guevarra and others, who were critical of US imperialism. In doing so, the NED seems to indicate that both US citizens and Venezuelans should agree on what individuals should receive veneration and what individuals should receive scorn within elementary and secondary school teachings. In doing so, it fails to recognize that history is replete with subjective interpretation, and that many countries and their leaders may certainly disagree on whether individuals such as Ché Guevarra, George W. Bush, Christopher Columbus, or Simón Bolívar should be regarded as heroes, tyrants, or fall somewhere in between

In order to combat these new education plans and provide alternative proposals, teacher and parent groups headed by Leonardo Carvajal, the former director of the National Council of Education, a group that formerly advised the Ministry of Education throughout the 1990s, formed the ACAE in November 1999. The NED underscores the earlier successes of the ACAE, including holding rallies in a majority of states throughout the country to reject these proposals, developing their own alternatives to the reform law, and seeking to nullify government efforts “to revolutionize” the education system (NED 2000a: 5). In response, the NED (2000a) reports that former President Chávez “has aggressively attacked groups opposing his education plans,

regularly depicting them as unpatriotic and disloyal to the goals of the revolution ... and lashed out at parents who oppose the plan as selfish and individualistic.” Indeed, this depiction of Chávez “lashing out” at his opponents was also a recurrent image within the US embassy cables discussed in Chapter 3. As the Venezuelan government prepared to introduce legislation to develop new schools and universities, the NED provided \$55,000 to ACAE from 2000 to 2002 for a four-pronged strategy that the group had developed to combat these government objectives.

The first part of the strategy included monitoring the government’s education reform efforts. The group promised to survey parents, students, community members, and educators about their perception of the education system, as well as track the progress of reform efforts and their outcomes. The group would also link up with media outlets and publicize supposedly relevant and factual information concerning the realities of the reforms. This included the creation of a website, the development of several brochures on the reforms, and preparation of annual reports on the state of education reform in Venezuela. Second, the NED also funded the group to organize over a dozen public forums in over a dozen major cities throughout the country to discuss education reforms. The group planned to bring in representatives from the American Federation of Teachers to discuss the government’s reforms and conduct interviews with media outlets to publicize its views.

Third, ACAE planned to hold twenty working meetings with academics from several universities to draft alternatives to legislation allowing the government greater control over institutions of higher education, as well as several forums to discuss the draft legislation with civil society leaders, teachers, students, and citizens. Thereafter, the organization stated that it planned to garner signatures and present the legislation to the National Assembly. Finally, ACAE planned to work with 1200 individuals, including 600 students and 600 parents and

representatives, in order to train them as education leaders. The group planned sixty workshops across the country in order to work with these individuals on issues such as the role of education in democratic societies (NED 2002g: 7-8).

In October 2002, ACAE received an additional grant for \$57,000 for projects that would last until October 2003. Since its initial grant, the Venezuelan government had failed to pass its education reforms; however, the future of education reform remained in question. During this cycle, the NED funded ACAE for three objectives, including the collection and monitoring of policy changes at all levels of government and budget levels; convening 50 public forums involving academics, students, and teachers to discuss education reform in Venezuela; conducting a public information campaign by maintaining a website and working with the National Assembly on education bills; and finally, the group planned to continue training local leaders on education reform and the state of education in Venezuela. Overall, NED funding for ACAE aimed to combat policies pushed by the Chávez government, which included more national government control over educational institutions throughout the country. With its funding, the ACAE sought to undermine the advancement of these policies by training individuals throughout the country to contest these policies at the local level and pressure the Venezuelan legislature to reconsider its objectives.

Aside from receiving NED funding to combat the Venezuelan government's educational reform plans, Carvajal played an interesting role in the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President Chávez from power. Following Chávez' detention on a military base on an island off the coast of the country, the transitional government headed by the former head of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Pedro Carmona, dismissed Chávez' entire presidential cabinet, in addition to dissolving the legislature and the judiciary branches. In

their place, Carmona appointed a new presidential cabinet. Indeed, this new cabinet included Carvajal as the new government's Minister of Education. Carvajal agreed to the new minister position, and signed the Carmona Decree, which was a document that gave support to the transitional government. These measures clearly indicate that ACAE's leader fully supported Chávez' removal from power and the institutionalization of the transition government. What is more, Carvajal himself became part of the transitional government. And while the US could assuredly state that it had no knowledge that Carvajal intended to join a transition government that was constructed in the wake of an unconstitutional transition of power, the NED continued to fund the group following the coup events. As illustrated above, the NED provided funding to the group both before and after these events, and for projects would run at least until October 2003, that is, up until over a year after Carvajal joined the transitional government.

In addition to rural lands and education-based issues, the NED funded programs focused on monitoring social programs in Venezuela. From July 2002 to July 2003, the NED provided the Centro al Servicio de la Acción Popular (CESAP) with \$63,000 for a program titled Monitoring Social Programs. In its program description, the NED points out that extreme political polarization had come to characterize Venezuelan political life, as evidenced by the April 2002 coup. The NED, however, strongly laments how many individuals have "pointed to the socioeconomic and racial makeup of the interim government and the background of the protestors that took to the street to call for Chávez' return. The interpretation is unfortunate as it ignores the multi-class opposition to Chávez, and because it mistakenly lumps together the broad-based coalition that participated in the original protest with the interim government. This interpretation discredits the diversity and legitimacy of those opposing the anti-democratic government" (NED 2002c: 4). From this statement, we can clearly see that either the NED

believed that opposition to former President Chávez possessed a pronounced cross-class, cross-racial bend, or that they, at least, wanted to portray it this way. And while it is true that members from all classes and racial groups have both supported and opposed Chávez, there have been clear geographical, racial, and class patterns involving opposition and support for Chávez.

Indeed, *chavistas* have largely drawn support from the poor Venezuelan barrios, which primarily contain darker-skinned citizens in comparison with Venezuelans that live in, for example, Western Caracas. In fact, opposition members recurrently depicted former President Chávez and his supporters with racialized features, and they often presented him with darker skin than his own (Gottberg 2011). In addition, Western Caracas, which has long served as an anti-Chávez bastion and recurrently elected anti-Chávez leaders, has been one of the few places in Caracas where I, as a light brown-haired, white US citizen, would not receive curious looks from other individuals on the street. In fact, in this part of the city, it is not uncommon to hear individuals speaking English on the street. In contrast, in the western parts of Caracas where working-class individuals live, one is hard-pressed to hear English spoken on the street or find many white-skinned Venezuelans living and working. In these western parts of Caracas, citizens have historically supported *chavista* politicians. The point of all this, of course, is to demonstrate that racial and class dynamics indeed characterize Venezuelan political life, and that many of the individuals that had pushed for Chávez' return to power in 2002 resided in many of the barrios that populate the Western, and poorer, half of Caracas.

In its program for CESAP, the NED continues to state that a need for dialogue and reconciliation in the coup's aftermath existed. In addition, the NED states that the opposition and government needed to dialogue concerning social conditions in the country. Unfortunately though, the NED states that quality information concerning the country and its social conditions

are lacking. Funding for CESAP would attempt to provide accurate information and “monitor social expenditures, the impact of poverty-alleviation programs and social development and change in Venezuela. The project will monitor government budgets and programs, gather data through surveys, and monitor social development indicators to develop a national picture of the state of poverty and social programs in Venezuela” (NED 2002c: 5).

CESAP’s project consisted of several specific goals. First, the group collected information on social development, including expenditure and impact, by obtaining figures from two offices focused on social development issues such as nutrition, housing, and health. Second, CESAP surveyed households in five cities throughout the country to assess the impact of social programs. Third, with information garnered from the surveys and from the government, the group released a report on their findings with recommendations on how to strengthen social programs. While the group acknowledged and commended the government for bringing some social development issues to the forefront of national discussion and addressing a number of social development issues in the 1999 Constitution, the group also offered recommendations for the government to attend to issues of crime, unemployment, and education. Finally, CESAP conducted a campaign to disseminate its findings, by contracting with local newspapers, holding forums in several cities, and holding a national forum with government and opposition members to discuss the group’s findings.

The NED provided another \$65,000 to CESAP for a program again titled Monitoring Social Programs that would run from August 2003 until August 2004. Similar to its previous grant, CESAP planned to collect information on social development in seven states throughout Venezuela, including issues involving nutrition, housing, and health. And also similar to its previous grant, CESAP planned to generate and disseminate a report on social development in

Venezuela with recommendations to the National Assembly on how they might improve their social policies.

The NED also assisted NGOs with their networking within and beyond Venezuela. The Asociación Civil Consorcio Justicia (AC CJ) was founded in 1992 for “the promotion and strengthening of democracy and the democratization of the Venezuelan justice system” through citizen initiatives (AC CJ 2016). The NED funded the AC CJ with its first grant for projects between February 2001 and February 2002. As its general objective, the AC CJ was “to build up the capacity of civil society organizations in Venezuela to become active partners in the struggle against authoritarianism” (NED 2001c: 1). In this passage, we clearly find that by 2001 the NED had no qualms about referring to the Venezuelan government as an authoritarian institution. While the Venezuelan government was indeed far from perfect in all of its policymaking approaches, its most serious political moves during this period involved putting many of its policies, including the development of a new National Assembly and a new Venezuelan Constitution, to a nationwide, democratic vote. And so, the description of the Venezuelan government and its leaders as authoritarian indeed involves an external interpretation, rather than an objective reading of the facts, and it glosses over an entirely complex political situation in order to justify its funding

With NED funding, the AC CJ organized and hosted a conference with prominent NGOs in Venezuela, including Amnesty International-Venezuela, Red de Apoyo, and Una Ventana a la Libertad, and a conference with representatives from prominent organizations throughout the world, including representatives from the Inter-American Dialogue, the National Council of Mexican NGOs, and the Organization of American States (NED 2001c). The AC CJ sought to bring NGOs together so that they could establish strategies that would allow them to survive

under the Chávez Administration. In addition, the ACCJ sought to establish dialogue between Venezuelan NGO leaders and international leaders in order to share experiences and exchange recommendations concerning their interactions with governments abroad. The ACCJ reported that one of the main successes of these conferences was that several NGOs established funding relationships with an assortment of private companies, including CANTV and Statoil (NED 2001c).

From January 2002 – February 2003, the NED provided \$84,000 to the ACCJ for additional projects. In its program description, the NED (2003b) laments the tighter restrictions placed on citizen groups, as well as attacks and alleged surveillance on government critics. During this period, the NED funded the ACCJ to host a two-day conference involving all NED funding recipients, as well as academics, politicians, and business leaders in order to discuss how to defend political rights and build alliances. Since the ACCJ organized the meeting for April 2002, the meeting was postponed due to the coup. Instead, the ACCJ organized a public meeting on the role of truth commissions, and several meetings on conflict resolution and peaceful dialogue between the government and opposition. Under these projects, the ACCJ organized a workshop with the National Prosecutors' Office to investigate the killings that ensued during the coup, trained 200 members from the National Prosecutors' Office on Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods, and co-sponsored workshops on democracy and conflict resolution in the 23 de Enero neighborhood with the Ministry of the Interior. And so, while many NED recipients worked with groups that primarily criticized the Venezuelan government and worked to undermine its policies, some NED recipients, at some points in time, worked with national government offices, such as the ACCJ's work with members from the National Prosecutors'

Office and with the Ministry of the Interior in a notoriously left-leaning part of Caracas that had continually supported the Chávez government, the 23 de Enero neighborhood.

Following this tumultuous period, the NED provided a \$54,000 grant to ACCJ for a project titled Strengthening the Judicial System to run for a year beginning in April 2003. In its program description, the NED claims that Chávez had “only deepened and inflamed the polarization in Venezuela ... [with] revolutionary rhetoric, public disregard for democratic processes and institutions, and vitriolic attacks on his opponents” (NED2003b: 4). That is, the NED (2003b), which carried these same statements throughout several of its documents, largely blamed former President Chávez for political polarization in the country. What is more, the NED (2003b) depicts the root of the political problems facing Venezuela as involving Chávez’ anti-democratic behavior and his incivility towards his opponents. In addition, the NED claimed that former President Chávez had politicized the judicial system in Venezuela by stacking the courts with provisional judges that could be terminated by the government at any point (NED 2003b). This situation served as the justification for providing ACCJ with funding to “monitor the status of the judicial system and its operation and work with the Congress to improve legislation and laws” (NED 2003b). And while former President Chávez claimed to have appointed several additional judges to the court in order to allow the court system to deal with its insurmountable amount of cases, several international rights groups and opposition politicians asserted that Chávez appointed these members in order to tilt the court system in his favor. The claim, however, that Chávez alone deepened and inflamed political polarization throughout the country is far from accurate. While Chávez indeed referred to opposition politicians with names such as “la oligarquía rancia” and “los escuálidos,” that is, the rancid oligarchy and the squalid opposition, opposition politicians often developed their own obscene names for Chávez and

other *chavista* politicians; routinely and violently battled with *chavistas* in the street; refused, at times, to participate in particular elections; and, of course, supported a coup d'état that deposed Chávez. And so, the contention that only Chávez and his supporters fanned the flames of political polarization is far from accurate. Opposition politicians and supporters continually engaged in polarizing tactics alongside the *chavistas*, and, in doing so, both sides contributed to a polarized political environment.

ACCJ implemented two programs with NED funding for this project. First, they established an observatory to monitor a number of judicial issues including the nomination and approval of judges, the judicial budget, citizen perceptions and complaints, and judicial decisions. The group also produced quarterly reports concerning legislation involving the justice system and recommendations on how to improve it, and held several forums throughout the country with human rights activists and congressional members to discuss their findings. And second, ACCJ worked with community leaders to establish conflict mediation programs in several neighborhoods in the Libertador section of Caracas, that is, instead of encouraging citizens to work through Venezuela's inefficient court systems. And so, following former President Chávez' new appointments, ACCJ both monitored judicial proceedings, and sought alternative methods of conflict resolution that would bypass the Venezuelan court system all together.

In addition to working with Venezuelan NGOs primarily focused on domestic happenings, the NED also helped Venezuelan human rights groups link up with multilateral human rights institutions. For example, the NED awarded the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), which is headquartered in the US but contains a contingent in Venezuela, with \$84,000 for a project titled Human Rights Defense that would run from September 2003 until

October 2004. In its program description, the NED (2003b) laments the human rights situation in Venezuela, citing a lack of rule of law, lack of political will to keep Colombian FARC members out of the country, and, once again, extreme political polarization that has been stoked by the Chávez government. Due to this situation, the NED states that human rights groups need to play an important role in Venezuelan society, and that funding for CEJIL will allow them to work with local human rights groups and help them prepare and bring cases before the Inter-American human rights system, that is, a system which the Venezuelan government had historically criticized due to the alleged direction it received from the US government.

CEJIL's program in Venezuela consisted of three objectives. First, CEJIL employed a staff attorney to bring human rights cases before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, including requests for provisional measures to safeguard several human rights activists and journalists. The staff attorney also collaborated with local human rights organizations in order to collect information concerning the human rights situation in Venezuela. Second, CEJIL conducted three seminars for students, journalists, and human rights defenders on the Inter-American human rights system and the rights of journalists and human rights workers under this system. And finally, CEJIL sought to include Venezuelan human rights organizations in their meetings in the US and keep them informed concerning Inter-American proceedings and activities.

Finally, the NED funded several programs that promoted civil liberties, including freedom of the press issues, decentralization issues, and voting rights. First, from May 2002 until October 2003, the NED provided the Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad de Venezuela (IPYS) with \$25,000 for a project titled Professionalization of the Media. At the time, the IPYS, which is headquartered in Peru, did not yet possess a fully consolidated IPYS branch in Venezuela. In its

program report, the NED (2002d) asserts that the government had threatened freedom of expression in Venezuela. Its report notes that journalists are often concerned with their safety and that the National Assembly had begun discussions on a media content law that would allow the government to oversee the quality of all news outlets.

The IPYS used funding for an international forum and to launch an IPYS Venezuela network. In May 2002, the IPYS convoked an international forum that focused on issues related to the press in Venezuela, with topics including “the professionalization of the media, the role of the press in political crisis, self-censorship, and protection of journalists” (NED 2002d: 5). The forum involved individuals from countries throughout Latin America, including Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Peru, as well as journalist-activists from a range of international groups, including Reporters Without Borders and the Inter-American Press Society. Following the meeting, the IPYS distributed reports concerning recommendations and summaries of discussions from the forum. The IPYS also used funding for a follow-up meeting in Caracas with a network of journalist-activists in Venezuela so they could launch the newly developed IPYS contingent.

From April 2003 until April 2004, the NED provided funding to IPYS for a project titled Supporting Press Freedoms for nearly \$45,000. In its program report, the NED (2003c: 4) asserts that Venezuelan press groups were at the time ill-equipped to monitor press conditions throughout the entirety of the country, as they deteriorated under the former Chávez Administration. With the funding, IPYS trained and funded five regional monitors of press freedoms that would receive and investigate complaints on a daily basis. Funding also allowed regional monitors to meet on several occasions concerning freedom of the press issues throughout the country.

Second, from September 2000 until October 2001, the NED provided \$50,000 to Programa para el Desarrollo Legislativo (PRODEL), a group founded in 2000 to promote and defend Venezuelan decentralization efforts, for a project titled Regional Forum for Decentralization. In its program report, the NED (2000b: 4) questions whether President Chávez will “attempt to consolidate his plebiscitarian, direct democracy” and suggests that NED funding will serve to stall these attempts at consolidating a direct democracy. And so, we see that the NED clearly evidences an inclination towards representative democracy and a willingness to attempt to steer Venezuelan political society in this direction. In doing so, the NED demonstrates that it believes that it knows what Venezuelan citizens most need from their political institutions, despite the fact that Venezuelan citizens had routinely supported former President Chávez at the polls, and had voted to pass the new Venezuelan Constitution that championed the development of a participatory and direct, rather than solely a representative, democracy.

The NED’s report celebrates the decentralization of power in Venezuela, and states that local governments are charged with delivering state services and ultimately provide a check on executive power. The report also criticized the national government’s use of the military to provide social services under its Plan Bolívar 2000. In addition, PRODEL organized a forum for state legislators from all parties to discuss decentralization efforts in Venezuela, the rise of executive power, and budgetary issues. PRODEL also established a horizontal network of legislators throughout Venezuela that would monitor national legislation on issues of decentralization as they surrounded issues involving, for example, ports, taxes, and the environment.

And last, from September 2003 until October 2004, the NED provided Súmate with \$53,400 for a project titled Elections Education. In its program report, the NED, once again,

laments increased political polarization and acknowledges that a referendum was the way out of the then-current political crisis surrounding the country in the post-coup period. In doing so, the NED suggests that it knows what the Venezuelan political system best requires in order to move forward in a democratic manner. With its funding, the NED (2003d: 4) states that Súmate “will train voters throughout Venezuela on the voting process and encourage participation in the referendum voting process” with its funding.

This general program involved several objectives. First, Súmate planned to contact regional organizations throughout Latin America and review their elections-related material. Thereafter, it would design its own voter education related materials concerning the referendum process and procedures including voter registration requirements. Their media campaign would also include the production of television and radio spots encouraging Venezuelans to register to vote and ensure that they are included on voter registration lists. And second, Súmate established a presence in all states throughout the country and from there planned to train around 25,000 people in “how to disseminate information on the referendum, the legal and constitutional basis for the referendum, how to conduct a get-out-the-vote campaign for the entire community, [and] how to monitor the electoral process” (NED 2003d: 6).

Although the US funded Súmate for seemingly non-partisan endeavors such as providing Venezuelan citizens with information concerning the referendum process and assisting Venezuelans in their efforts to sign up to vote, the organization indeed stood at the center of opposition efforts to displace former President Chávez from power through a recall referendum. On top of providing Venezuelan citizens with information on the referendum process, Súmate openly encouraged Venezuelan citizens to vote to end former President Chávez’ presidential term within the 2004 presidential referendum. In addition, the group became the training ground

for several, high-profile anti-Chávez politicians, including Maria Corina Machado, who has become one of the most prominent, national politicians throughout the country and sought the opposition nomination for the 2012 presidential race, which she would eventually lose to Henrique Capriles, the Governor of Miranda.

Indeed, in personal interviews with the researcher, many NGO representatives lamented the fact that Súmate had sought international funding and even described itself as an NGO with no ties to any opposition group. For many NGO representatives, Súmate's suggestion that it is independent and nonpartisan has tarnished not only its own image, but also the reputation of a multiplicity of Venezuelan NGOs that make a much stronger case for nonpartisanship and independence, and have not directly work with the opposition or openly supported opposition campaigns. On several occasions, the Venezuelan government indeed directly targeted Súmate, including bringing court cases against several of its members, for, among other crimes, treason. Although the Venezuelan government never formally prosecuted its members for treason, many NGO representatives believe that the Venezuelan government has pursued legislation that damages a variety of NGOs, due to the activities of Súmate and few other groups that pose as NGOs, but, in reality, completely align with the opposition.

NED Funding: Conflict, Military, and Law Enforcement-Issues

In contrast with civil liberties issues, the NED has also prioritized issues dealing with conflict mediation, the military, and law enforcement. One particular NED focus under the Chávez Administration included the politicization of the Venezuelan military and military involvement in government and public affairs, such as government missions. In February 2001, the NED provided the Asociación Civil Compresión de Venezuela (ACCV), an NGO focused on

issues of civil-military relations and the defense of civil liberties, with \$57,820 for activities that would run for the next two years. In its program description, the NED (2001d: 1) alleges that the Venezuelan government has “worked to blur the boundaries between military and civilian lines of authority” by appointing military leaders to government posts, including some of Chávez’ conspirators in his 1992 coup, as well as using the military in the provision of public services and assistance with public works. The NED also notes that the 1999 Constitution has allowed the executive branch greater control over the military and the promotion of its officers. As a result of these changes, the NED argues that “the military and civil society need to stop and examine the repercussions of this trend, before the role of the military is irreversibly altered” (NED 2001d: 2).

The NED allocated funding for ACCV to accomplish several objectives during this period. First, ACCV used funding to organize six public forums on the issue of civil-military relations, with themes including “The Importance of Civil Leadership to Achieve a Military Balance” and “Trends of the Military Budget in Venezuela.” In these meetings, ACCV invited military members, academics, and congressional members to participate and lead discussions. In order to provide balance to these discussions, ACCV reported that members from several political persuasions spoke at their events. These members included a former Minister of Defense and Chávez critic, as well as a former Supreme Court magistrate that has supported Chávez, in addition to several other speakers.

Second, ACCV used funding to organize five panel-discussions involving civil-military themes, including “Democracy, Politics, and the Armed Forces” and “Visions Regarding the Role of the Armed Forces in Venezuela,” as well as four roundtable discussions on topics including “The Armed Forces and the Media” and “Venezuela Military Doctrine in the

Constitution.” In one roundtable, for example, in July 2002, ACCV hosted a former Venezuelan Vice-Admiral as well as an historian of the Venezuelan military to discuss the history and future of the Venezuelan military, which the group also arranged for the media to cover. Following the meeting, *El Nacional* conducted and published an interview with the historian concerning civil-military relations, where he criticized Chávez for heavily involving military members in the political life of the country.

In addition to its focus on the military, the NED also remained concerned over general issues of conflict throughout Venezuela. In its program description for its funding for the Asociacion Civil Accion para la Desarrollo (ACCEDES), the NED claims that rumors swirled concerning the Venezuelan government arming private militia groups, including the Bolivarian Circles. As a result, the NED (2003e: 1) reports that “middle and upper classes feel extremely insecure and fear for their lives and property.” Interestingly, the NED seems to lay the heart of the criminal problems facing Venezuela at the feet of the Venezuelan government. It seemingly suggests that the Venezuelan government has encouraged violence against middle- and upper-classes, including threats against not only their property, but also their lives. These suggestions, however, greatly diverge from the realities of a lengthy history of criminal issues facing contemporary Venezuela, which begin long before former President Chávez took power. Due to this situation though, the NED provided ACCEDES, a group they describe as an organization that promotes community justice and legal aid, with a \$10,000 grant for a project titled Local Civic Education that would run from April 2003 – April 2004.

With this funding, ACCEDES planned to conduct workshops with local leaders from neighborhood associations in seven different poor neighborhoods in Caracas. The NED (2003e: 1) reports that these workshops would focus on

“democratic values, the role of civil society and community organizations in democracy, how to negotiate and mediate local conflicts, the Bolivarian Constitution and the rights of Venezuelans, how to address the violation of political and human rights, and ways to replicate the workshop in the neighborhood associations.”

The group also planned to train 220 individuals in conflict mediation and distribute several bulletins concerning their training to other neighborhood associations throughout Caracas.

The NED initiated a similar program with the Asociación Civil Justicia Alternativa (ACJA). In its program description, the NED uses the same language from its program description for ACCEDDES, that is, blaming the Venezuelan government for encouraging violence against the middle- and upper-classes. And while ACCEDDES focused on conflict mediation in Caracas, the ACJA focused on conflicts throughout the country. The NED (2002e) states that it funded ACJA to assist with conflict mediation in a program that would run from September 2002 until October 2003 and cost \$10,000. The ACJA planned to conduct two workshops in Maracay, the capital of Aragua state, and two workshops in each of three communities elsewhere in Aragua state. In its workshops, the ACJA trained 15 new justices of the peace, citizens, and government members in justice of the peace law, how to mediate conflicts, and on democratic processes. The overall aim of the two workshops was to provide a local network of individuals committed to mediating local conflicts, and that would, similar to other NED funding programs, allow Venezuelan citizens to bypass the convoluted and often ineffective court system.

The NED again provided a nearly \$15,000 grant for the ACJA for a project titled Conflict Resolution at the Local Level that would run for a year beginning in October 2003. While its initial grant was for the creation of a local network focused on mediating conflicts, its new

project focused on human rights and policing. Under this project, the ACJA sought to hold five, two-day workshops in Aragua state that would train 500 individuals, including police officers, local officials, and justices of the peace, on human rights issues, conflict mediation, and the role of the police in the justice system and community. The ACJA also planned to use funding to develop proposals that would improve police-community relations and would approach local government leaders to implement their proposals.

In a final example involving conflict mediation, from October 2002 until October 2003, the NED provided \$11,000 to Fundación Justicia de Paz (FJP), a member of the Consorcio Justicia network, for a project titled Conflict Resolution at the Local Level. With NED funding, FJP worked in 32 communities in Monagas state to promote dialogue between disparate political actors by convoking several roundtable discussions moderated by local justices of the peace. During these roundtable discussions, FJP sought to bring together different actors and generate accords between them in order to reduce conflict on basic policy issues, including illicit consumption of alcohol and insecurity (NED 2002f). For projects ranging between October 2003 and October 2004, the NED funded FJP for a project of the same name for nearly \$12,000. FJP once again planned to work in 32 communities throughout Monagas state to reach accords between different political actors on general policy issues, such as issues of human rights and polarization. The group also planned to train 90 individuals in conflict resolution and mediation techniques (NED 2003f).

Last, the NED focused efforts on groups that worked with law enforcement members in Venezuela. In 2003, for example, the NED provided over \$40,000 to the Asociación Civil Liderazgo y Visión (ACLV) for a project titled Civic Education for Police that would run from September 2003 until October 2004. Indeed, similar to ACAE, ACLV also possesses an

interesting history in regards to the 2002 coup. During that period, ACLV director Oscar Garcia Mendoza published a letter in a local Venezuelan newspaper expressing his “unconditional support” for the coup and its leaders (CEPR 2004). With its US funding though, the ACLV project focused on training Metropolitan Police officers in Caracas, who were also widely viewed as anti-Chávez as many high-ranking officers supported coup efforts, in democracy and human rights. In its program statement, the NED (2003g) claims that police in Venezuela have become politicized and are also ill-equipped to manage escalating crime rates.

The ACLV planned a project involving three stages, including the training of educators in the police academy, teaching 25 courses in the police academy, and a final follow-up with program participants and the training of individuals that would continue their democracy and human rights training efforts in the police academy in the future. The ACLV planned to train four individuals to serve as facilitators of courses that would help approximately 750 members of the police force “develop concepts such as, constructing a shared vision of the country and its future; the importance of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict; the theory of citizenship as both a right and an obligation; and the role of the police in securing and promoting citizenship” (NED 2003g: 5). Thereafter, the four initial facilitators planned to train several members of the police force to conduct future meetings on democracy and human rights in the police force.

Conclusions

The NED continues to play a prominent role in the US democracy assistance community. In this chapter, I examined NED programs in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration. While researchers such as Robinson (1996), Burron (2012), and others have

castigated the NED and described it as an entity that has aimed to undermine progressive, sometimes socialist, governments by instigating government overthrows, we see that NED programs are actually a bit more mundane. However, it is indeed the case that some of the NED's recipients have played prominent roles within the opposition, which, in some instance, the NED openly recognizes, including providing support for the 2002 coup and the transitional government that temporarily replaced former President Chávez and his government. In addition, many of the groups that the NED has provided with funding and assistance have contested government policies. In some few instances though, some groups have worked with the government and commended some of its efforts, such as, at times CESAP, ACCJ, and FMG. These groups have commended some government institutions and some government policies, and, in the instance of ACCJ, the group worked with some national government offices on issues of conflict mediation.

Within NED documents though, we find a continued effort to paint former President Chávez as responsible for the socio-political problems confronting Venezuela. In doing so, NED officials describe Chávez as an undemocratic, uncivil, and authoritarian individual who “attacks” and “lashes out” at his critics. In addition, the NED has depicted the Chávez government as a flagrant violator of constitutional and human rights, promoting violence against middle- and upper-class citizens, instigating polarization, unable to properly govern Venezuelan society, and promoting policies that have no room within a modern democratic system. Indeed, these Orientalist criticisms of the Chávez government serve as the basic justification for the NED's involvement in contemporary Venezuela, and their necessity to help steer Venezuela in the appropriate, democratic direction. In their policy documents, the NED does not reflect on the fact that citizens had continually elected *chavistas*, supported and voted for a new Venezuelan

Constitution that endorses participatory and direct democracy, and that opposition politicians and supporters had also contributed to a polarized environment. Rather, NED documents venerate the political opposition. Indeed, in several instances, the NED even worked with NGOs that clearly aligned with the opposition and, in some instances, supported the transitional government, including ACLV, Súmate, and ACAC, whose director accepted a temporary position in the transitional government as the new Minister of Education. And so, the NED clearly evidences a bias towards supporting groups that have criticized and worked to undermine the Venezuelan government.

The US also inaccurately portrays the nature of the Venezuelan political climate by, for example, blaming former President Chávez for the politically polarized climate and encouraging violence against his fellow citizens. That is, the NED fails to recognize that the opposition has also contributed to political polarization and its members have also routinely scuffled with *chavistas*. And while the Venezuelan government and its supporters are hardly innocent of promoting inflammatory acts or generating any toxic sort of conditions, they are hardly, unilaterally responsible for all the political problems facing contemporary Venezuela.

In doing so, the NED demonstrates a clear pattern of paternalism that resonates with previous US policy throughout the Latin American region. While the Venezuelan government promoted a participatory and direct democracy, and Venezuelan citizens clearly supported these moves, the NED found these policies unbecoming for a contemporary democracy. And in order to combat these policies, the NED funded several groups that sought to reverse these policies. In addition, the NED continually reduced Bolivarian policies to a series of objectives that Chávez alone has sought to pursue. That is, the NED continued to belittle the government's democratic

pursuits, and failed to understand that Venezuelan citizens could indeed support endeavors pushed by the Chávez government.

All together, NED programs also evidence an inclination towards a US-style liberal democratic perspective that champions particular rights over others. Robinson (1996, 2006), among other neo-Marxist scholars, identifies this affinity, but he ultimately reduces it to transnational capitalist class interests. That is, Robinson (1996, 2006) ultimately argues that the US promotes democracy assistance programs and particular groups in an effort to bolster the abilities of a transnational capitalist class. Even more specifically, Robinson argues that this includes funding groups that promote neoliberal economic policies, such as trade liberalization, privatization, and economic deregulation. Undoubtedly, there are US state bureaucrats focused on the economic climate within particular countries and attempt to ensure that US corporations receive fair and perhaps even special treatment, including the economic attachés of US embassies throughout the world. Neo-Marxist analyses of US democracy assistance programs, however, entirely reduce these programs, and the NGOs that receive US assistance, to pawns in a quest to reap as much profit as possible from the developing world. We have seen, however, that this perspective diverges from the more mundane reality of what the US promotes on the ground, namely US-style liberal democratic features of governance that include, but are not reducible to, private property rights. And, in fact, in some few instances, we also find the NED working with groups that worked with and bolstered Venezuelan government efforts. As the Venezuelan government has criticized neoliberal economic policies and sought to move Venezuela in an entirely different direction, the neo-Marxist perspective would have much difficulty in making sense of these endeavors.

Chapter 6: The Work of the NED's Core Grantees in Venezuela

While the NED provides some of its own unique grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Venezuela, it also provides funding to four core grantees for democracy-related purposes: the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Each of these groups is respectively affiliated with the US Republican Party, the US Democratic Party, the AFL-CIO, and the US Chambers of Commerce and, at times, has also received funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and US Department of State. In this chapter, I detail the efforts of the NED's four core grantees in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration, and, in the following chapter, I provide a theoretical analysis of the NED and its grantees' work in Venezuela.

Neo-Marxist and neo-Tocquevillian scholars wield similar critiques and defenses regarding these organizations as they do concerning the NED, given the groups close connections with their parent organization. Neo-Marxist scholars assert that these groups ultimately aim to promote neoliberal capitalist policies, such as trade liberalization and privatization of industry. In doing so, these scholars argue that the NED's core grantees provide funding and support for political parties and NGOs that endorse, or do not threaten, these policies. Conversely, neo-Tocquevillian researchers understand these organizations as effectively working to promote a liberal democratic polity by assisting political parties and NGOs in their organizational pursuits. Neo-Tocquevillians assert that the US works with a number of political parties that advocate liberal democratic policies. They view them as providing assistance to a

range of groups in an effort to achieve political pluralism and provide a countervailing check against state abuse.

Each of these four groups has pursued a particular agenda concerning how they specifically promote democracy. Although the IRI has at times worked with pro-government political parties, its work has largely involved opposition political parties that have sought to displace the Chávez government. The group has provided an entry point for leaders from the US Republican Party and other foreign conservative parties to travel to Venezuela and lend advice and lead seminars on campaign issues. In addition, its director commended the 2002 coup that removed former President Chávez, before the NED director demanded that he rescind his statement of support. The NDI has also worked with opposition political parties, but it has more consistently involved pro-government groups. In addition, the group has also worked on issues involving elections monitoring, transparency issues, and citizen involvement in political life. Unlike the IRI, its work has focused less on assistance for campaign efforts. In fact, one of its most prominent projects has been to help establish a domestic elections monitoring group that has continually verified the success of the Chávez government at the ballot box.

Finally, the ACILS and CIPE have both respectively worked on issues concerning labor and private enterprise. The ACILS has exclusively worked with the CTV and assisted this union with elections and administrative matters. It has also developed workshops to try to organize the informal sector. The CTV, however, indeed supported the 2002 coup that deposed former President Chávez, as well as subsequent strike efforts that paralyzed the country. For its part, CIPE has almost exclusively worked with a domestic libertarian NGO, CEDICE, to promote capitalist policies, including the promotion of free trade, anti-protectionist policies, and respect for private property. In general, they have championed policies that run counter to President

Chávez' political-economic agenda. Indeed, CIPE remains the one US democracy promoting agency that has exclusively focused on promoting capitalist policies. What is more, similar to the CTV, CEDICE also supported the 2002 coup d'état efforts, and its director, in fact, signed the Carmona Decree, which endorsed the removal of former President Chávez and the transitional government that temporarily replaced him.

And so, both groups that the ACILS and CIPE have primarily worked with in Venezuela have historically supported the, at times anti-democratic, displacement of the Venezuelan government. This provides further demonstration that while the US has sought to offer “democracy assistance” to groups and parties abroad, the US often supplies assistance to groups that have promoted anti-democratic and unconstitutional measures. Of course, orchestrating coup d'états does not characterize these funding recipients' day-to-day operations, but it certainly forces researchers to consider the absolute commitment of the US democracy assistance community to foreign actors whose democratic credentials are, in some very important respects, questionable.

The International Republican Institute (IRI)

The International Republican Institute (IRI) is one of four core grantees of the NED, and has, at times, received additional funding from USAID and the US Department of State. Despite its direct affiliation with the US Republican Party, the IRI considers itself “a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide by helping political parties to become more issue-based and responsive, assisting citizens to participate in government planning, and working to increase the role of marginalized groups in the political process – including women and youth” (IRI 2016). Similar to the NED, the IRI was established

in 1983, and it has maintained programs in Venezuela since 1994, which it states have “supported the efforts of Venezuelan citizens to strengthen the country’s democratic institutions, with particular emphasis on increasing youth participation in the political system” (IRI 1998a: 20).

While the IRI has worked with some pro-government political parties at some points in time, it has primarily offered funding and technical support for an array of opposition parties in Venezuela. This support has come in several general forms. First, the IRI has brought several US Republican officials and other conservative officials from foreign countries into Venezuela to lead seminars and workshops on issues related to campaign efforts, including outreach, technology, and conflict resolution. And second, the IRI has provided party leaders with a range of tools to allow them to strengthen their parties and attract members. IRI officials, for example, have worked with Venezuelan party leaders on issues such as crafting campaign messages, attracting members, and utilizing technology.

What is also striking about the IRI is that it demonstrated complete support for the 2002 coup efforts that displaced former President Chávez and paved way for a transitional government led by the head of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Pedro Carmona. It was not until the NED director demanded that George Folsom, the IRI President, retract his statement and assume a more neutral position, that Folsom did. In this instance, we find clear indication that the IRI President opposed the Chávez government and was elated to see its departure. From the NED and its other associated groups, we do not find a similar outburst of support for the coup efforts. This is not to say that behind-the-scenes, individuals that worked for these organizations did not, at least, rhetorically support the coup, but, unlike the IRI, they were not

publicly outspoken in their support for the coup. In the sections below, I detail the IRI's work in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration.

The IRI at Work in Venezuela, 1998-2000

The IRI's work in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration begins with electoral monitoring for regional and national elections in late 1998. In November 1998, the IRI sent a nine-person delegation to Venezuela to monitor regional elections – for the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, and state legislatures. The IRI deployed their team to six Venezuelan states and analyzed both automated and manual vote counts. This program was funded by the NED, who “also supported the efforts of IRI and two Venezuelan civic groups to increase youth participation in the elections by organizing a series of candidate forums and conducting a ‘get out the vote’ campaign” (IRI 1998a: 1). On top of the electoral monitoring efforts, the IRI indeed also focused on youth politics, as it had elsewhere throughout the world. In Venezuela, this latter project involved the creation of media spots, including television and radio ads, designed to increase youth participation in the elections (IRI 1998a: 13). Shortly after, in December 1998, the Venezuelan National Electoral Council (CNE) provided the IRI with accreditation to monitor national elections. To do so, the IRI received funding from the US Department of State's Economic Support Fund, disbursed through USAID, for a team of 27 individuals, headed by former US Ambassador to Venezuela, Otto Reich, to visit the country. And so, we see here that a multiplicity of US democracy promoting agencies, including USAID, the NED, the IRI, and the Department of State, have, at times, joined together to work on similar projects, such as electoral monitoring, as they did in Venezuela during the late 20th century.

On both 1998 occasions, the IRI commended the Venezuelan electoral system, and, although it noted some room for improvement in its electoral reporting, they claimed that “none of these difficulties compromised the basic integrity of the vote” (IRI 1998a). At this point in time, the IRI’s recommendations centered on several technical aspects that might strengthen Venezuela’s electoral model – including allocating more resources for pollworker training, simplifying the ballot in order to eliminate spoiled balloting due to confusion, and considering presidential run-off elections (IRI 1998a). All together though, the IRI supported the Venezuelan results.

Following Chávez’ presidential victory, the IRI initiated plans to open a field office in Caracas in 1999, where they could broaden their efforts and begin political party training activities. At the time, their website stated that this training would “be developed in close cooperation with party representatives and particular effort [would] be made to identify and reach out to new and/or emerging party leaders” (IRI 1999). Similar to past policies, we can see that the IRI remained interested in the youth aspects of political party building and sought to work with emerging leaders within their camps. In 2000, the IRI established an office in Caracas and spent much of their time that year establishing contacts with political party leaders throughout the country, and, in doing so, they started to develop a plan on how they might work with these leaders on rejuvenating their parties. Thereafter, these plans would take off at the beginning of the following year.

2001

In 2001, the IRI received a \$340,000 grant from its parent organization, the NED, for a project entitled Strengthening Political Parties. The IRI (2001a) reported that the program’s goals

were threefold: to help develop internal, democratic structures for selecting party leaders; to enhance two-way communication with the electorate in order to better represent constituent concerns, especially from youth; and to help civil society groups and citizens to work with political parties and attend their events. The IRI (2001a: 1) also reported that

“[m]any unanswered questions remain, however, about the roles of various existing and newly created government institutions and the prospects for continued decentralization.

The coming months will be instrumental in determining Venezuela's path and its chances for success as it attempts to reform.”

In an interview, an IRI contractor affiliated with the Republican National Committee (RNC) opined that after the successful election of President George W. Bush in 2000, and the constitutional changes and increasingly harsher rhetoric from former President Chávez and other Venezuelan government leaders, IRI and RNC leaders seemingly thought they could alter the political landscape of countries that did not appear to have the same economic and security interests as the US. The contractor stated that the IRI hired him due to his family's historical affiliation with the US Republican Party, as well as their historical connection with Latin American politics and diplomacy.

The former contractor stated they brought him to Venezuela to assist with the IRI's Strengthening Political Parties program and its general party-building efforts. He claimed that IRI leaders believed that IRI staff could use the same “ground-swelling tactics” that activists used to get former President Bush elected in the US in 2000. The IRI contractor also stated that during this period he felt that the mission of the IRI was to unite the opposition so that they could develop a unified message and begin efforts to field one candidate against former President Chávez in the upcoming presidential elections. In blatant terms, the representative stated that he

felt their overall message for the opposition was: “get your shit together, so you can defeat Chávez.” The representative pointed out that this, however, was an exceedingly difficult task as the opposition was fragmented and not entirely receptive to fielding only one opposition candidate against Chávez. According to the contractor, the political opposition possessed a high degree of infighting, and he suggested that individuals were often little inclined to put their personalities aside in order to pursue one approach to defeat Chávez.

Under the IRI’s Strengthening Political Parties program, the group sent Rogelio Carbajal from Mexico’s National Action Party (PAN), a conservative Christian Democratic party whose leader – Vicente Fox – was recently elected president, to Venezuela to lead political party training sessions. In other words, the IRI brought in a representative from a conservative Mexican political party that had recently achieved electoral success. Carbajal met and worked with leaders from several parties that actively opposed the Chávez government, including Acción Democrática (AD), one of Venezuela’s longest running political parties that opposed the Chávez government, but had recently experienced diminishing support throughout the country; Proyecto Venezuela (PV), a centrist opposition political party that fielded Henrique Salas Römer against Chávez in the 1998 elections; and Venezuela Digna, which, at the time, contained Francisco Arias Cardenas, a former supporter of Chávez that would run against him in the 2000 presidential elections, but return to his side, interestingly enough, several years later and become UN ambassador as well as Zulia state governor under the PSUV.

Consistent with the IRI’s historical focus on youth politics, Carbajal focused on how party leaders might appeal to and attract youth voters, during his meetings with Venezuelan party leaders. He also discussed how to organize youth structures, bring in qualified youth staff, and hold youth party leader elections (IRI 2001a: 1-2). In addition to meeting with political party

leaders, the IRI also worked with local youth-oriented NGOs to organize training sessions involving Carbajal. In Caracas and Valencia, Carbajal met with university students and NGO members where participants discussed youth participation in social movements and political parties (IRI 2001a: 1-2).

Back in Washington, in February 2001, the IRI worked together with the NDI to host two events. First, the two groups hosted Eduardo Fernandez from Fundación Pensamiento y Acción, and also former secretary-general of the COPEI party and presidential candidate, to discuss the political situation in Venezuela. The IRI reports that Fernandez spoke before some 20 individuals from the media, think tanks, NGOs, and US and foreign governments. Although IRI reports do not provide specifics, Fernandez had been a routinely vociferous critic of the Chávez government and its policies at this time. Second, the two groups hosted two National Assembly representatives, Tarek William Saab from the Movimiento Quinta Republica (MVR), that is, former President Chávez' political party before it transformed into the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV), and Pedro Díaz Blum from PV, at the IRI's Washington offices to talk about a range of issues facing Venezuela. While Blum discussed the National Assembly and its current composition, the IRI reports that "Saab read a statement outlining Venezuela's foreign policy priorities, including the importance of cultivating a relationship of mutual respect with the United States" (IRI 2001a: 5).

In the following month, the IRI "organized a series of individual and collective training sessions with Venezuelan political parties, university students, and members of civil society," which included 110 participants and centered on political communication (IRI 2001a: 2-3). George Fondren, the former College Republican National Committee's field director and then-Executive Director of the Mississippi Republican Party, led these training sessions and

incorporated leaders and members from eight parties, including Saul Ortega from the MVR; the 1998 presidential candidate Henrique Salas Römer and his son Henrique Fernando Salas Feo from PV; and Julio Borges from Primero Justicia (PJ), a recently founded political party that primarily included and trained young politicians, including Henrique Capriles, then-Baruta mayor, future Miranda governor, and future presidential candidate in the 2012 and 2013 elections, and Leopoldo Lopez, the former Chacao mayor, who would start and lead his own party, Voluntad Popular, in 2008, and become imprisoned for his role in the 2014 protests against the Maduro government. Other parties also included AD, COPEI, Convergencia, and Venezuela Posible. While individual sessions involved political leaders from a range of parties, collective sessions involved national committee members, state party coordinators, and university students, including a “special session on inter-party dialogue and democracy” with party leaders from across the groups at the events (IRI 2001a: 3).

The IRI reports that before the training sessions, Fondren assessed each political party’s strengths and weaknesses. With the exception of PV, Fondren

“generally concluded that all the parties have a weak political infrastructure, no political plan, no message, internal tension, and a tendency to blame the ruling party MVR for their problems ... and that serious reform of the parties must be undertaken in order to reestablish themselves” (IRI 2001a: 3).

In order to illustrate how parties could reestablish and reinvigorate themselves, Fondren used the example of the Republican Party’s 1992 presidential loss, during which time Fondren worked with the College Republicans, revealing that the GOP was out of touch with the populace. He claimed that the Republican Party underwent some serious reform in order to rebuild its political infrastructure and develop new messages that would resonate with US citizens.

Fondren underscored campaign communications and tapping into emotional issues and “basic human values” that Venezuelan citizens subscribe to, so they can convince voters that they too care about these issues (IRI 2001a: 3). Fondren also argued that these values could only be uncovered through extensive research into Venezuelan society. In addition, he discussed how to debate opponents and establish debate terms, how to deal with the media, and how to advertise their political campaign properly.

During these meetings, the IRI also organized a roundtable discussion solely for opposition leaders. This involved leaders from AD, COPEI, Convergencia, Fundación Pensamiento y Acción, and PJ, and centered on working out personal rivalries in order to create “a common vision for the country” (IRI 2001a: 4). The roundtable modeled itself after various sectors within the Dominican Republic that had recently sought to establish an agreement for a common economic, cultural, and social vision. Similarly, IRI leaders believed that it would serve the Venezuelan opposition well if they could also work out their rivalries and put forward a common solution to the dilemmas facing the country. The IRI (2001a: 4) reports that many of these leaders heavily criticized former President Chávez for generating the problems facing the country; however, others argued that the opposition was also partially responsible for some of the problems. IRI representatives emphasized that the purpose of the roundtable was not to target former President Chávez, “but to create a framework allowing the parties to work together and discuss future challenges” (IRI 2001a: 4-5). Representatives also pointed out that they can provide technical assistance to the opposition, but “the parties themselves must take certain initiatives for such efforts to be truly effective” (IRI 2001a: 5).

The IRI reports that much of the last quarter of 2001 “was dedicated to making fresh contact with various political parties, building on IRI’s relationships with them, assessing their

situation and needs, and setting up training workshops” (IRI 2001b: 1). In October, the IRI brought Francisco Arias Cárdenas, a political party leader and former presidential candidate from Unión para el Progreso, to Washington DC to speak before members of the international community, where he discussed “the shortcomings of President Chávez’s administration and the desperate need for change in Venezuela” (IRI 2001b: 2). Back in Venezuela, IRI members met with members from Unión para el Progreso, including Arias, who requested training in grassroots mobilization and media relations. IRI representatives also met with Caracas Mayor Alfred Pena, an opposition mayor and potential presidential candidate, and his staff, and offered guidance on how Pena might develop a political party. The IRI ultimately agreed to assist Pena with his plans for party development as long as his party was “based on ideology, not personality” (IRI 2001b: 2).

The IRI continued to develop its relations with other opposition groups during these months. In November, IRI staff met with leaders from COPEI, AD, and PJ. With COPEI, IRI discussed conducting a training seminar that could assist in reunifying its membership in light of increased fragmentation. Similar to AD, COPEI remained one Venezuela’s longest running parties, but since the 1980s it had suffered from perceptions of ossification, corruption, and obsolescence. With AD, IRI discussed media relations and “proposed holding a youth summit in Washington D.C. for young party leaders” (IRI 2001b: 3). And with PJ, the IRI discussed training new party members and developing technology in order to reach out to potential supporters.

In December 2001, the IRI brought Darryl Howard, the Executive Director of the Oregon Republican Party, to Venezuela to lead several workshops and offer his advice to several Venezuelan political parties. Members from PJ, AD, COPEI, Unión para el Progreso, and

supporters of Mayor Pena attended the workshops, which focused on “grassroots development, political party structure, and political negotiation” (IRI 2001b: 3-5). Howard also attended a new member training seminar for young PJ party leaders. While there, Howard provided participants with College Republican recruiting materials and demonstrated how the Oregon Republican Party used a computer program to help identify potential GOP supporters. And with supporters of Mayor Pena, Howard discussed how to develop a political party structure and a platform based on how the Oregon Republican Party develops ideas from its members and supporters, that is, by reaching out to them and understanding their concerns.

Howard also met with leaders from Unión para el Progreso to discuss how to develop party support, assign tasks to party members, establish demographic chapters, and raise funds for the party. With COPEI members, Howard emphasized party unity and the development of a single platform, given increased fragmentation within the COPEI ranks. And with AD, Howard spoke to young party leaders about reaching out to other groups in order to maintain strong support networks.

Later in December, the IRI organized meetings between opposition party leaders and Mike Collins, the former Republican Party Press Secretary (IRI 2001b: 6). Collins met with youth members from PJ and supporters of Mayor Pena to discuss developing messages and images for their party; he met with leaders from Unión para el Progreso, including Francisco Arias Cardenas, to discuss how to better attract press attention by holding weekly conferences in the streets in order to be seen with the people; and he spoke with journalists at an event hosted by the libertarian NGO CEDICE, which continually received funding from CIPE and will be discussed later in this chapter, to discuss how to report on political events and conduct relations with political parties (IRI 2001b). On his final two days in Venezuela, Collins met with leaders

from COPEI and AD, that is, Venezuela's longest-running political parties. He suggested that COPEI find a new, young spokesperson to combat their elitist and outdated image. And with AD, Collins spoke with young leaders about how to recruit individuals in universities and elsewhere to rejoin the party, as many had left for Chávez' MVR.

2002

In March 2002, the NED awarded the IRI with another \$340,000 for their Strengthening Political Parties program (IRI 2002a: 1). This program would run until May 2002 and involve workshops for political party delegates throughout the country in areas such as negotiation training, political communications, and campaign strategies. During this time though, problems between the government and the opposition had become more pronounced, and, during April 2002, a collection of dissident actors, including military members and business leaders alongside private media, removed former President Chávez from power in a coup d'état. The IRI reports that the organization remained in contact with political party and civil society leaders in order to stay informed about ongoing political problems and the nature of the coup efforts. For example, an IRI representative attended regular meetings with Consorcio Justicia, an NGO receiving funding from NED, in preparation for an upcoming NED-sponsored conference on the political situation facing Venezuela.

Under this new program, IRI representatives decided to prioritize and establish intensive long-term plans with opposition parties AD, PJ, and PV, and maintain dialogue with COPEI and Unión para el Progreso. To strengthen relations, IRI representatives met weekly with members from AD, PJ, and PV. In its meetings with AD, the two groups discussed training in the area of internal structure and reforming internal by-laws. The IRI also planned a visit for AD leaders to

meet with US political leaders in Washington. With PV, the two groups discussed focusing on the issue of decentralization and developing plans to help PV achieve an impact outside of its traditional stronghold in Carabobo state. And with PJ, which the IRI described as “the most significant new political party in Venezuela,” the group planned to help the new political party with future support in the areas of decentralization, grassroots training, outreach, and political communications (IRI 2002a: 3). During these years, these three organizations indeed became the primary political parties that the IRI would work with and provide guidance to on a regular basis. As we have seen, this largely included workshops and training seminars with IRI leaders, but it also included sponsoring visitors such as leaders from the US Republican Party to provide advice to these parties.

On April 11, 2002, Venezuelans were, of course, jolted by the temporary coup d’état that removed former President Chávez from power. This was indeed the most significant instance of wide-scale violence that Venezuelans had witnessed since the 1989 *caracazo* and subsequent coups d’état in 1992, one of which was, in fact, led by former President Chávez. Following Chávez’ removal and military detention on April 12, then-IRI President George Folsom released a statement titled “IRI President Folsom Praises Venezuelan Civil Society’s Defense of Democracy.” In his statement, Folsom commended Venezuelan citizens’ efforts following what he called “systematic repression by the Government of Hugo Chávez” (OIG 2002: 31). Folsom applauded the

“the bravery of civil society leaders - members of the media, the Church, the nation’s educators and school administrators, political party leaders, labor unions, and the business sector - who have put their very lives on the line in their struggle to restore genuine democracy to their country” (OIG 2002: 31).

IRI's parent organization, the NED, however, was not pleased with this public affirmation of the coup (OIG 2002: 32). After NED President Carl Gershman criticized Folsom's response, Folsom released a second statement on May 6. In his statement, Folsom appears most concerned with the behavior of interim government leaders that took over following the coup efforts. Folsom argued that the IRI felt compelled to release a statement on behalf of "calls from Venezuelans asking for international support to rebuild the country's fractured political system and restore elected democracy" (OIG 2002: 33). In addition, he wrote that his statement was

"not an endorsement of extra-constitutional measures to forcibly remove an elected President, and IRI never contemplated the notion that the will of the Venezuelan people would be circumvented by extra-constitutional measures, such as the closure of the National Assembly and the Supreme Court" (OIG 2002: 33).

In the IRI's second quarterly report in 2002, it states that the IRI issued their initial statement, because of "its close relationship with the victims of the violence," which included a PJ member who was shot in the head but recovered (IRI 2002b: 1). The report also states that it remains important to recognize that the IRI issued their initial statement before the National Assembly was dissolved, and had called on the transitional government and legislative branch to hold elections as soon as possible (IRI 2002b: 1). And so, while the IRI did not endorse the measures by which former President Chávez was removed and the ways in which the transitional government proceeded, it did not entirely object to former President Chávez' departure from the presidential office.

From April 22-25, the IRI sent their regional director and their program officer to look into the recent coup events and how the IRI might assist groups in the future. The two-party delegation first met with Aurelio Concheso, the president of CEDICE, a libertarian think tank

that received continual financing from CIPE as I will discuss below, who told the group that the coup was spontaneous and Venezuelan political party members played no part in the events (IRI 2002b). Concheso also stated that the coup efforts began with a spontaneous uprising that was then betrayed by interim President Pedro Carmona and those around him that hijacked the coup efforts for their own benefit (IRI 2002b).

The two individuals also met with several political leaders, including former Caracas mayor Antonio Ledezma, then-leader of a newly developed opposition political party named Alianza Bravo Pueblo, who stated that he would like to work with the IRI in the future, and Eduardo Fernandez, former COPEI leader and close friend of Carmona, who said that he was surprised by Carmona's decision to dissolve the National Assembly (IRI 2002b). In addition, the delegation met with PJ and AD leaders to discuss their future plans in Venezuela (IRI 2002b). AD leaders argued that they should push ahead with a referendum on Chávez, and PJ leaders discussed long-term plans to enhance their party's stature. Finally, the two met with leaders of the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce, who agreed that the opposition lacks a leader and that the opposition had ultimately foiled an attempt to unseat former President Chávez, and representatives from *El Nacional* and Globovisión who stated that the media could play an instrumental role in pushing the opposition to put forth one candidate to challenge Chávez in the ensuing years (IRI 2002b).

In the coup's aftermath, the IRI reports that it began to assist several political parties in developing negotiation techniques (IRI 2002b). These exercises were led by Dr. Elsa Cardozo, a professor from the Central University of Venezuela, who held a two-day workshop for AD members in May 2002. The IRI (2002b: 2-3) reports that the purpose of the training was to show AD members how to develop win-win situations when negotiating with members from other

parties. IRI members also met with AD members to discuss how they could decentralize their party structure in order to appeal to voters, and they provided them with US Republican Party materials to assist them in this endeavor.

In the post-coup period, the IRI also continued to work closely with PJ. IRI members met with PJ Deputy Carlos Ocariz and a Venezuelan communications specialist to assist the party in developing better contact between Venezuelan citizens and political parties. IRI members sought to push PJ to promote citizen communication with newly developed congressional staffs that could pass concerns to deputies, governors, and other high-ranking politicians, rather than having citizens attempt to directly address their governors. IRI members also met with PJ leaders including their Secretary General to discuss how they could expand their party's base. In their quarterly report, the IRI commends PJ for their media exposure and talented spokespersons. At this point in time though, IRI members continued to emphasize that they ultimately "lack a product" as well as definite solutions to the country's problems, which PJ members also agreed with (IRI 2002b: 4).

In late 2002, the IRI contended that its ability to help strengthen political parties had been largely hindered (IRI 2002c). Instead of dealing with internal issues, opposition groups had mostly engaged in a verbal struggle with the Chávez government. Because of this, the IRI refocused its efforts on identifying young party leaders that they could work with and training party leaders in negotiation techniques in order to foster an atmosphere of dialogue amid the political polarization and conflict. The IRI again contracted with Dr. Elsa Cardozo to work with COPEI on negotiation training (IRI 2002c: 3). In addition, the IRI recognized that COPEI understood that it would require new lifeblood in the party in order to remain relevant within Venezuela, as COPEI had been unable to relinquish its perceived obsolescence. The IRI also

held similar training sessions with PJ. The organization reports that it began a new relationship with youth leader Oswaldo Perozo, who ran PJ's Justicia y Democracia recruitment and training arm of the party, and placed renewed emphasis on reinvigorating the party with young members (IRI 2002c: 3). And similarly, IRI representatives met with AD youth leader Alexandra Belandia to discuss the importance of bringing youth back into the party, and overcoming its image as an outdated organization (IRI 2002c: 3).

During this period, while the IRI mostly met with opposition members, IRI officials also met with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Roy Chaderton in the IRI's Washington DC headquarters, where they report that Chaderton complained of the domestic media's treatment of former President Chávez (IRI 2002d). And in the final months of 2002, the IRI also worked with the Instituto Zuliano de Estudios Políticos, Económicos y Sociales (IZEPES), a government-run political academy whose mission is to train public servants, in order to work with "local political party leaders on negotiation techniques in Maracaibo, Zulia state" (IRI 2002d: 2). The IRI worked with delegations from nine political parties, including MVR, COPEI, AD, MAS, PJ, and PV (IRI 2002d: 2). The IRI reports that seven of the delegates were affiliated with the Chávez government, and that government members worked with opposition members during their negotiation training on developing dialogue between the two groups. This is indeed one of the few instances where we find MVR members participating in events sponsored by the IRI and attended by a multiplicity of opposition parties.

2003

In its first 2003 quarterly report, the IRI (2003a) stated that it continued to view political party building as the long-term solution to the political crisis facing Venezuela. In January, in

keeping with this perspective, the group conducted three training workshops in Caracas for members from various political parties, including the MVR as well as AD, COPEI, PJ, and the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), with an IRI representative from Guatemala and a member of the Colombian Conservative Party. These workshops focused on “communicating constructively with constituencies in crisis environments, strategic analysis methods, coordinating effective organizational structures, and political party experiences in Central America and Colombia” during those countries' respective crises (IRI 2003a: 2). Due to extreme polarization though, the IRI held two days of sessions for opposition party members, and one day of sessions for pro-government members. And while the IRI reported that more than 35 members from opposition parties attended the sessions, only four members from PCV and one MVR member and future Venezuelan diplomat in the US, Calixto Ortega, attended the sessions designated for pro-government individuals (IRI 2003a: 2-3). And so, while there is some semblance of participation among pro-government parties, this involvement is quite marginal to the many instances of involvement from a range of opposition parties, including AD, COPEI, PV, and PJ.

In March, the IRI brought their political party training workshops to Anzoátegui state and worked with members from AD, COPEI, PV, and MAS with a focus on external communication and conflict resolution (IRI 2003a: 2). The report states that IRI leaders emphasized the need to find common ground between opposing political parties. Despite participants placing blame on the Chávez government for political polarization and domestic conflict, the report states that IRI leaders avoided the tendency to place blame and emphasized finding common ground with their political counterparts.

Back in Caracas that same month, IRI leaders held separate training sessions in the headquarters of COPEI, PV, PJ, and AD. With COPEI, the IRI reports that it discussed strategic analysis of how COPEI could consolidate its base and strengthen its position as a political party (IRI 2003a: 3). At PJ headquarters, the IRI reports that it worked on simple tasks with youth leaders, such as defining what a political party is and what the importance of political parties are in a democracy (IRI 2003a: 4). With PV, IRI leaders discussed the importance of internal democratic measures such as internal elections, which it reports that these suggestions were met with defensive statements (IRI 2003a: 4). And with AD, the IRI leaders worked with a contingent of youth leaders, discussing the importance of political parties and particular ideologies. IRI reports that AD members were frustrated by a lack of discussion on the political problems between the government and opposition, but states that IRI members told them “that this is not IRI’s role, but instead to provide them a broader perspective on the long term sustainability of parties in any political circumstance” (IRI 2003a: 5). In several instances, we indeed find some indication that opposition leaders want to continually bash the Chávez government, without developing any sort of constructive political plans of their own. At least in their documentation, IRI representatives continually assert that they have refrained from this sort of Chávez-bashing in order to push opposition parties to generate more productive changes to their electoral approaches, and find ways that they might focus on long-term solutions to socio-political problems facing the country.

In the following month, the IRI co-hosted a public forum with NDI that featured Calixto Ortega (MVR) and Pedro Diaz Blum (PV) in Washington DC. The IRI (2003b) reports that both members expressed the need to reconcile their political differences and move past politically polarizing obstacles. The aim of the forum was also to illustrate how moderate elements exist

within both pro-government and opposition groups, and that many members aspired to work together to solve the political problems facing the country.

For the coming period, NED President Gershman signed off on an extended \$116,000 grant for the IRI's Strengthening Political Parties program that would run until January 2004. The program would focus on regions beyond the capital city, including Zulia, Carabobo, and Anzoategui, and its core objectives were to strengthen communication between regional parties and their counterparts in Caracas, in addition to its recurrent focus on bringing young individuals into political parties. The grant describes this program as "encourage[ing] a more decentralized organizational structure ... to allow for more inclusive recruitment, stronger bi-directional communication, more constituency-reflective platform development, and broader and more innovative party reform" (IRI 2003b: 4). The IRI program also sought to encourage the participation of working class members, students, women, and youth, in order to combat these parties' elitist images (IRI 2003b: 5).

Under this grant, the IRI held a training seminar attended by 77 deputies from seven political parties throughout the country. Although the IRI report notes that the MVR was invited, only opposition members attended the seminar. The training featured two guests, including Sergio Cedeño, secretary general of the Reformist Party in the Dominican Republic, and Jarryd Gonzales, the California Republican National Committee political director. Cedeño discussed designing and developing campaign strategies, and Gonzalez presented campaign management techniques that were used during the 2000 US national elections, including door-to-door efforts, fundraising, and final election-day strategies.

The new IRI program also sought to bridge the gap between political parties and universities, as well as political parties and youth. The IRI program recognized that many

Venezuelan political parties were losing support due to their ossified perception:

“[r]econstructing a political party system that was not long ago repudiated by many voters is difficult without the addition of new blood” (IRI 2003b: 5). In keeping with this perspective, the IRI sought to link up with local universities for training seminars, and, in doing so, attract university students to their training sessions and into these political parties.

Finally, in 2003, IRI staff worked again with IZEPES to train politicians on effective external political communications. This training session was run by US-based communications specialist Steven Elena, who once received a political communication award from the Anti-Chávez Political Coalition of Venezuela for his work on Venezuela. The IRI reports that Elena trained both pro-government and opposition politicians in how to craft political messages, construct press releases, and other forms of political communication.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was founded in 1983 at the same time the Reagan Administration founded the NED. Despite its historical affiliation with the US Democratic Party, the NDI describes itself in similar terms as the IRI, that is, as “a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government” (NDI 2016). The group possesses more than 60 field offices throughout the world, and has received funding primarily from the NED, but also USAID and the US Department of State (NDI 2016).

The group states that it maintains several objectives for its work in other countries. First, the NDI states that it is focused on involving citizens in political life and providing them with

tools to hold elected officials accountable (NDI 2016). Second, the NDI has aimed to utilize technology to advance democracy, including ways to track legislation and help political parties effectively reach constituents (NDI 2016). Third, the NDI has sought to work directly with government leaders to address constituent needs and improve their performance. Fourth, the NDI has monitored elections and assisted domestic organizations in their own electoral monitoring projects. Fifth, the group has sought to strengthen political parties in a variety of ways, “from internal democratic procedures and candidate selection to polling, platform development and public outreach” (NDI 2016). And finally, the NDI has pushed for more involvement of women in politics.

During the early years of the Chávez Administration, the NDI both worked with political parties and assisted with the establishment of a nonpartisan, domestic electoral monitoring group, Ojo Electoral. Similar to the IRI, the NDI primarily worked with opposition political parties, but it made a more consistent effort to work with and include the MVR. For instance, the NDI conducted research with government supporters, and it also provided research on political parties to MVR members. In addition, its efforts have aimed more towards particular issues such as transparency and citizen engagement than they have with more straightforward campaign and outreach strategies, such as linking opposition parties up with ideological counterparts from the US and elsewhere. The IRI, on the other hand, has worked much more on these latter issues involving political party building. Unlike the IRI as well, the NDI and its leadership did not directly voice support for the 2002 coup efforts that deposed former President Chávez. Finally, the NDI placed much emphasis on assisting in the development of a credible, domestic electoral monitoring group that would receive accreditation from the CNE. In the end, this group received

accreditation, and continued to validate the electoral victories of the Chávez government and its supporters through 2004 and beyond.

The NDI at Work in Venezuela, 2001-2004

In 2001, the NDI opened an office in Caracas and began “to implement a project that hope[d] to promote and facilitate the re-engagement of Venezuelan citizens in state-level politics” (NDI 2002a: 1). The rationale behind NDI’s mission included alleged lost “faith in the democratic process,” as reflected by the “political rise of former coup leader Hugo Chávez and the demise of traditional political parties” (NDI 2002a: 1). Indeed, this is a striking interpretation of contemporary Venezuelan political life, as the rise of former President Chávez led many formerly disenchanted Venezuelans to come out to the polls. In addition, former President Chávez energized many segments of the Venezuelan population that had been formerly neglected by Venezuelan politicians and generally experienced alienation at the polls, including the poor.

The NDI titled its initial project Re-Engaging Citizens in Local-Level Politics, and, in its program description, the NDI stated that “the long-term stability of democracy in Venezuela is under threat [due to] the increasing concentration of executive power, the rise of political violence, and dropping oil prices” (NDI 2002a: 2). In addition, the NDI lamented the inability of new political parties and movements to provide successful alternatives to President Chávez’ Bolivarian vision. The NDI states that to “help salvage democracy, an effective political party system must be rebuilt” (NDI 2002a: 2). For the NDI, the rise of Hugo Chávez entirely represented a political-economic problem that required rectification. In order to contend with these issues, the NDI proposed implementing programs where political parties would work with

NGOs to re-energize citizens and help to bring new members into their parties, an objective similar to much of the IRI's work in Venezuela.

Under its first program, the NDI initiated projects with mayors in two municipalities, Baruta and Naguanagua, at the behest of its sub-grant partner Fundación Momento de la Gente (FMG), a group that also received financing from the NED. The NDI signed agreements with Mayor Henrique Capriles (Primero Justicia) in Baruta and Mayor Julio Castillo (Proyecto Venezuela) in Naguanagua. All together, this plan shows how many of the US democracy promoting agencies, and even some of their recipients such as the FMG, have overlapped in terms of what actors they have cooperated with. In the instance of both Capriles and Castillo, we find that both the IRI and NDI worked with these parties as well as Capriles, in particular. NDI's immediate plan in the two municipalities was to increase transparency and citizen participation in local government. In its program report, the NDI (2002a: 3-4) claims that due to their work in Baruta, the local government would begin conducting its first public hearings regarding zoning laws and other local issues. NDI also stated that it planned to help Naguanagua with similar efforts in the future to host public hearings.

In 2002, similar to the IRI, the NDI established a program titled Political Party Strengthening. The NDI (2002b: 1) writes in its program report that Venezuelan political parties have witnessed considerable disapproval and diminishing public confidence. The NDI (2002b: 1) argues that the only way that traditional political parties in Venezuela can move forward is by understanding why disillusionment continues. In its program description, the NDI (2002b) laments the lack of attention to internal issues within political parties and their public appeal. Under this program, the NDI conducted focus group research in order to provide Venezuelan political parties with public perceptions of their organizations. Thereafter, the NDI expected that

their research “would then be used to guide party leaders in the modernization and renewal of their organizations” (NDI 2002b: 2).

In administering their research, NDI hired an Argentine organization to carry out ten focus group interviews involving an equal number of *chavistas* and non-*chavistas*. The group also conducted 50 interviews with leading journalists and academics concerning the state of political parties in Venezuela. Following the collection of data, NDI met with the research group in Washington, and then made plans to present the group’s research findings to Venezuelan political party leaders. The research group found that polarized political sentiments indeed existed; political parties exacerbated the polarized socio-political climate rather than assuaging it; and a sense of fear and apprehension due to societal tension as well as a desire for social order also existed among Venezuelan citizens (NDI 2002b: 3-6).

Their findings, however, showed that *chavistas* and non-*chavistas* differed in terms of what sorts of social order they would prefer. Generally, while opposition supporters demanded that order be based around freedom of speech, property rights, and other civil and political rights issues, government supporters prioritized social and economic rights, such as their inclusion into citizenship affairs and the enforcement of social justice issues (NDI 2002b). Despite these divisions between government supporters and the opposition, the research group reported that Venezuelans agreed on a basic belief in democracy as a legitimate form of government. However, these two groups, again, differed on their view concerning democracy, with government supporters emphasizing participatory democracy and opposition members endorsing a more limited political democracy involving rule of law and pluralism. Finally, many supporters and opposition members viewed a presidential referendum on former President Chávez as a way out of the polarizing crisis and a path forward.

The research group presented their findings to members from each of the national parties, including both government and opposition groups, such as PJ, AD, and COPEI. In addition, the presentations involved suggestions from Genaro Arriagada, former Chilean ambassador to the US and a former Chilean minister, who held consultations with opposition party leaders and potential opposition presidential candidates. During these consultations, Arriagada pointed out that polarization actually helps the government, as it makes the opposition appear petty and unconcerned with moving the country forward in a productive manner (NDI 2002b: 7). He also underscored the importance of building party structures and trying to reach *chavistas* rather than ostracizing them. Similar to IRI activities that link Venezuelan political parties up with esteemed international politicians, the NDI also sought to connect political parties with prominent politicians from abroad.

In 2003, NDI contracted with FMG for \$116,000 on a program that would run from January 2003 until October 2004, and would continue NDI efforts towards strengthening and renewing Venezuelan political parties (NDI 2003: 4). Under this program, NDI planned to work in six municipalities in four states throughout Venezuela. These six programs included working with opposition parties in Caracas and the state of Carabobo, as well as with President Chávez' party in the state of Anzoategui. FMG planned to continue working in these municipalities and to implement a program of political party growth and renewal.

First, FMG planned to continue its transparency and anti-corruption programs by assisting municipalities in holding public hearings, establishing offices for citizen participation, and developing websites so that citizens could request basic information (NDI 2003: 6-7). And second, the group planned to conduct baseline assessments of each party in order to assess how they might help Venezuelan political parties renew and rebuild their party structure. Thereafter,

the group planned to tailor their efforts towards each party, including AD, COPEI, MAS, PJ, PV, and MVR (NDI 2003: 8).

In 2003, USAID provided the NDI with \$770,000 “to support the establishment of a domestic electoral observation organization that [would be] widely perceived as credible and impartial by a majority of Venezuelans” (CableGate 1/19/2005). Ojo Electoral, which the US Embassy described as “a consortium of individuals and groups affiliated with both the government and the opposition,” became the group that NDI would work with (CableGate 1/19/2005). The group established a board composed of members that spanned the political spectrum, including, for example, a former *chavista* minister, Carlos Genatios, as well as two columnists from the opposition-leaning newspaper *El Nacional*. Ojo Electoral, however, limited NDI’s assistance to the group due to concerns that might arise regarding their credibility. That is, the group feared that too much assistance from a US group might make the group appear biased in their approach to Venezuelan politics. Instead of direct financial funding for office equipment, the group only decided to receive consultation and training on electoral monitoring from the NDI.

The Venezuelan National Electoral Council (CNE) accredited Ojo Electoral to first observe the August 2004 recall referendum on former President Chávez. During this election, the group deployed 110 observers and provided a quick count of the electoral results that favored Chávez (Lean 2012: 100). Following this, the CNE provided Ojo Electoral with credentials to monitor the October 2004 regional elections and worked with them on verifying the final results. The CNE allowed over 400 Ojo Electoral observers to participate in conjunction with the NDI in seven states throughout the country (CableGate 1/19/2005). Observers qualitatively monitored

polling stations and polling practices, and, again, audited the results and provided a quick count of them, verifying the success of pro-government parties in the regional elections.

While many IRI and NDI programs indeed primarily involved the Venezuelan opposition and even sought to undermine government efforts, we find quite a different outcome in the instance of Ojo Electoral. In this instance, we find that the NDI helped to establish an organization that would verify electoral results that bolstered the legitimacy of the Venezuelan government. And so, in some instances, if we take the premise that US democracy promoting agencies have indeed sought to undermine the Venezuelan government, their efforts have not always had the intended effect. By contrast, some of these efforts have had the ironic effect of actually strengthening the Venezuelan government, its democratic credentials, and its claims to legitimacy.

The American Center for International Labor Solidarity

The AFL-CIO founded the Free Trade Union Initiative (FTUI) in 1978 in order to assist ideologically allied labor movements abroad. In 1983, with the development of the NED, the Reagan Administration nominated the FTUI as one of the NED's core grantees and dramatically increased its funding levels. Throughout the 1980s, the FTUI funded and provided assistance to a range of labor movements throughout the world. In 1997, however, the FTUI was reorganized as the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) with continued intentions to assist labor movements abroad.

The ACILS (2016) describes itself as “a non-profit international worker rights organization that assists workers around the world who are struggling to achieve safe and healthy workplaces, family-supporting wages, social protections and a voice on the job.” Similar to the

NDI and IRI, the ACILS states that it works in approximately 60 countries with over 400 labor unions to promote worker rights. In Venezuela, the organization has specifically worked with the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV). During the early years of the Chávez Administration, this work primarily included assistance with internal elections and organizing informal sector workers. The CTV, however, recurrently opposed the Venezuelan government, and its leadership offered strong support to the 2002 coup efforts that deposed former President Chávez, as well as subsequent strikes that paralyzed the country.

The ACILS at Work in Venezuela, 2000-2002

The ACILS continually funded and worked with the CTV, the largest workers' union in Venezuela, representing laborers in a number of sectors, throughout the early years of the Chávez Administration. The union was founded by AD leaders in 1940s during the struggles to transition towards a democratic system and continued to remain affiliated with AD, as well as COPEI, leading into the 21st century. Because of this affiliation, Chávez lambasted the union during his 1998 campaign for the presidency, and, unsurprisingly, relations between the two groups declined following his election. Indeed, the CTV came to align itself with the country's political opposition. During the early years of the Chávez government, Carlos Ortega, a fierce critic of the Venezuelan government, headed the CTV and took a leading role in opposition marches that culminated in the April 2002 coup and subsequent strikes that sought to destabilize the government. While ACILS programs for the group did not entail funding for these endeavors, they did involve assistance with internal elections, and attempts to organize formerly unorganized areas of labor, namely the informal sector. And so, while we cannot claim that the ACILS funded the CTV in order to destabilize the Venezuelan government, we can certainly

point out that the US funded a key element of the Venezuelan opposition that continually critiqued the Venezuelan government.

In 2000, the ACILS assisted the CTV in its plans to hold upcoming elections for various positions within the organization (ACILS 2000). The primary objectives included increasing awareness and participation in the upcoming elections, and monitoring the elections with both national and international observers, in order to alleviate any concerns that the elections were tampered with (ACILS 2000: 1). In July 2000, the ACILS held seven three-day courses across Venezuela with regional CTV federations in order to increase awareness about the elections and its general process, and how to participate in them.

Following the elections, the ACILS assisted the CTV with developing and hosting a national conference in March 2002 alongside the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (Fedecámaras) and the Catholic Church to discuss national development plans and attempt to initiate a dialogue with the government. To do so, ACILS hosted meetings between Miranda Governor Enrique Mendoza, who was affiliated with COPEI, and Fedecámaras, and also brought a labor-business coalition consultant from the Center for Labor and Community Research based in Chicago. In addition, ACILS organized regional meetings to prepare regional union members for this conference. In the end, the groups developed a ten-point initiative for dialogue. As a result, ACILS (2000: 2) reported that this “joint action further established the CTV and Fedecámaras as the flagship organizations leading the growing opposition to the Chávez government.”

Following the 2002 coup, the ACILS began assisting mid-level union leaders to understand how internal democracy works and what the role of trade union leaders should be in a democracy. In its report, the ACILS (2002) states that mid-level union leaders were generally

caught off-guard by the April 2002 coup, despite the CTV leader's support for the events, and they were unsure how to respond to the escalating series of events that characterized the coup and its aftermath. ACILS (2002) reports that its programs evidenced success when in July 2002 the CTV President attempted to call a general strike, but regional federations demanded an internal, democratic consideration of the issue. And so, while ACILS assistance has appeared to assist an organization that sought to unseat former President Chávez, there is also some indication that ACILS funding has helped the organization become a more internally democratic organization as well.

ACILS (2002) also supported the CTV in developing a plan for and organizing informal sector workers. Throughout Venezuela, the informal sector remains an area in which many Venezuelans earn their income, that is, through endeavors such as selling bootlegged DVDs and CDs, providing services such as shoe shining, and selling food that they have prepared by hand. ACILS first held seminars with a team of CTV representatives and informal sector worker representatives to discuss strategies for organizing informal sector workers (ACILS 2002: 11-12). The group held a three-day course lead by a local sociologist and lawyer, and it involved informal worker leaders as well as several police officers, concerning legal requirements, ordinances, and redress for problems. The group also focused on how these informal workers' groups can organize members and how to successfully conduct meetings and affairs within their organizations. All together, the ACILS assisted CTV members with networking with informal sector workers, informing these informal sectors workers about how they can legalize their work, and informing these workers about how they can organize their members to more effectively address their demands.

The Center for International Private Enterprise

Alongside the NED, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) was founded in 1983 as the international arm of the US Chambers of Commerce. The group's objectives remain governed by "the idea that economic freedom and political freedom are intertwined and that progress and development comes through a combination of political and economic liberalization" (CIPE 2016). In addition, the group contends that

"countries need to build market-oriented and democratic institutions simultaneously, as they are essentially two sides of the same coin. Without a functioning market system, democracies will remain weak. Likewise, without a democratic process, economic reforms are unlikely to succeed" (CIPE 2016).

And in keeping with this perspective, CIPE has provided funding and assistance to business groups and NGOs that promote private enterprise and market-based economic systems.

In Venezuela, CIPE has worked with primarily with el Centro de Divulgación del Conocimiento Económico para la Libertad (CEDICE), but also el Centro Empresarial de Conciliación y Arbitraje (CEDCA). CIPE has funded CEDICE for a range of projects that have generally championed the promotion of private property rights. CEDICE representatives have, for example, criticized the Land Law, increased executive power, and price controls. With CEDCA, CIPE has worked with this group to promote alternative dispute resolution methods, which involve private mediation for businesses instead of working through the court system.

CIPE indeed remains the one US democracy-promoting agency preoccupied with economic aims. Through CIPE, the US had promoted several capitalist policies, such as economic liberalization and free markets. CIPE, however, comprises one organization within "the democracy bureaucracy," and so, although it does indeed promote free market policies, it is

an overstatement to suggest that the entirety of “the democracy bureaucracy” aims to enhance the policies of a transnational capitalist class. In addition, there is no indication that CIPE and the groups that it funds in Venezuela policies have sought to enfranchise a transnational capitalist class any more than they have sought to enfranchise Venezuelan-operated businesses. And so, ultimately, we cannot assert that transnational capitalist class interests necessarily direct CIPE’s affairs in Venezuela, so much as ideological interests in the development of a capitalist society, which primarily involves a free market. In the view of CIPE, free-market societies should enhance the well-being of all societal inhabitants by providing them access to an array of goods and services, that is, free market societies are expected to benefit all individuals, not exclusively the transnational capitalist class.

CIPE at Work in Venezuela, 2000-2003

Since 2000, CIPE has partnered with CEDICE, a Venezuelan NGO whose stated mission is to “disseminate, train, investigate and defend the principles of the free market and individual liberty, to construct a society of free and responsible people” (CEDICE 2016). CEDICE sells books and pamphlets through its office and website from authors such as Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and other free market proponents in order to generate revenue, but much of its funding is derived from foreign donors. Over the years, CIPE has provided CEDICE with a number of grants for a range of projects focused on promoting neoliberal economic policies. In this section, I detail CIPE’s funding for CEDICE, as well as CEDCA, beginning in 2000, and leading into 2004.

From October 2000 until November 2001, CIPE provided CEDICE with nearly \$80,000 for a project titled *Recasting Liberty: Constitutional Reforms Part II* (CIPE 2001). In CIPE’s

final quarterly report for CEDICE in 2001, the group states that CEDICE's aim has been to shift "the debate away from populist rhetoric and toward concrete reforms that will encourage individual initiative, private enterprise and participatory democracy" (CIPE 2001: 58).

Interestingly, CIPE deploys the same language of "participatory democracy" as the Venezuelan government, but instead of policies involving nationalization and redistribution of wealth, CIPE talks about "individual initiative" and "private enterprise," that is, two classic mainstays of libertarian, conservative, and capitalist thought. Indeed, in an attempt to shift the debate "toward concrete reforms," CEDICE organized several national and regional forums on particular pieces of legislation, namely those related to labor (Organic Labor Act), the tax code (Organic Tax Codes), social security, and unused rural lands, and included legislators, foreign experts, business persons, and NGO representatives during its discussions.

During these forums, CEDICE advocated for a number of reforms in line with its political-economic ideology. Some of its proposed changes to the tax code, for example, included intensifying penalties against tax evaders and against individuals that assist with tax crimes, and developing clear tax rules to alleviate any ambiguity concerning taxation (CIPE 2001: 60). Regarding rural land holdings, CEDICE called for "full respect for private property" and rejected the government's mission to expropriate rural lands from large landholders (CIPE 2001: 60). For example, CEDICE sponsored a forum with the National Federation of Cattlemen Association to discuss relevant legislation, and, in the forum, leaders emphasized the importance of private property rights in the face of government attempts to expropriate properties. CEDICE also sought to meet with and educate legislators "on the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, the market, and legal security as the basis for preparing sound reforms," including

now-President Nicolás Maduro, who was then-head of the National Assembly's Social Security Commission (CIPE 2001: 59).

During 2000-01, CEDICE continued to generate bulletins for legislators and the media, detailing their positions on particular legislative issues. These bulletins possessed titles in keeping with its views on particular pieces of legislation, including "Land Ownership Bill: A Trustworthiness Problem," which criticized the Land Law, and "A Serious Tax Problem," laying out its view on tax reform (CIPE 2001). CEDICE also mobilized its resident experts to provide analysis to local media in the promotion of their views. These analyses included articles in national media outlets, including *El Universal* and *El Nacional*, condemning the Land Law, urging pension reforms similar to those established in Chile in the 1980s, and criticizing former President Chávez' general style of governing.

From September 2002 until September 2003, CIPE provided CEDICE with over \$50,000 for a project titled Building Consensus on a National Agenda. CEDICE planned to host several meetings with business leaders from Fedecámaras, labor leaders from CTV, church leaders, and civil society leaders to devise a policy paper describing their recommendations for the country, and thereafter prepared to disseminate their findings through several media outlets. In addition, CEDICE also planned to host ten workshops throughout the country in order to share its findings and recommendations on the Venezuelan economy, and it planned to have several individuals that helped to devise their policy document lobby the Venezuelan legislature on its behalf. The organization linked up with Fedecámaras to host six of these workshops on their policy document throughout several regional states and included around 100 participants in each workshop (CIPE 2002a: 47).

Experts from CEDICE ultimately prepared three documents written by three university professors focused on the political-economic aspects of the country and developing recommendations for change. These included “Reconstruction of the Republic of Venezuela” by Emeterio Gómez, “A Programmatic Agenda of National Reconstruction” by Maxim Ross, and “Bases for a Pact to Rescue the Republic” by Thaelman Urgelles. In his report, Gómez, a university professor of economics, applauded general liberal democratic ideas, including the deepening of democracy, an economic policy that reduces poverty and marginality, and the creation of rule of law (CIPE 2002a). Specifically though, he advocated limiting government intervention into the control of resources, criticized protectionism and financial policies such as price controls, and promoted private enterprise as well as free markets in lieu of these policies. Gómez also recommended that macroeconomic stability policies promoted under the Washington Consensus should not be abandoned in favor of populist policies, but that they should be strengthened and more attention should be paid to reducing poverty and inequality (CIPE 2002a). Similarly, Ross, also an economics professor, promoted the ideas of decentralization, individual liberty, rule of law, and the elimination of poverty in his analysis (CIPE 2002a). The guiding thread through all the documents included the reduction of state involvement in the economy and the promotion of private enterprise as a way to eliminate poverty and inequality in Venezuela. In all instances, these scholars criticized government involvement in the economy, and asserted that free-market policies would best serve Venezuelan citizens.

CEDICE’s policy document and its plans were monitored by the Democratic Coordinator (CD), an umbrella organization composed of CTV, Fedecámaras, and a multiplicity of NGOs and political parties opposed to the Venezuelan government. In 2004, the CD released a 117-

page booklet as a plan for a transitional government, should former President Chávez have lost his 2004 referendum election, titled *Consenso Pais*, that is, a title quite similar to the Building Consensus on a National Agenda project financed by CIPE in 2003. After the CD unveiled its plan in 2004, Chávez himself castigated the plan as financed by the US government and read from FOIA documents that the US had helped to develop the document and push for a new Venezuelan government.

From 2002-03, CIPE also provided CEDICE with over \$73,000 for a project titled *Reducing the Informal Sector in Venezuela*. In its program description, CIPE declares that due to former President Chávez’

“harmful attempt to control Venezuelan civil society institutions through the imposition of economic laws that hamper financial and social development. It is therefore imperative to seek consensus among civil society groups that will help build an alternative vision for Venezuela that will be characterized by greater democratic participation and input”

(CIPE 2002b: 70).

Since the informal sector composes a great deal of the Venezuelan economy, CIPE asserted that informal workers must be involved in moving the country forward on a democratic path. In order to reach informal workers, CEDICE proposed to host 10 regional workshops in the regional states of Lara, Carabobo, Aragua, and Zulia, with 25-30 informal entrepreneurs and to present them with their policy document. CEDICE also planned to measure the extent of informality in Venezuela and then disseminate information on how informal entrepreneurs can formalize their businesses, removing them from the informal sector. Thereafter, CEDICE planned to organize several national and regional workshops in order to generate a public debate on issues of informal work in Venezuela with policy experts and civil society leaders. And finally, CEDICE

planned to host several meetings with members from the Venezuelan National Assembly's Commission on Economic and Social Development to discuss their perspective on the informal sector.

In a final illustration of CIPE's funding for Venezuelan civil society groups during this period, CIPE provided support for CEDCA. In 1999, the Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VenAmCham) created CEDCA "to provide credible, neutral, effective, expeditious and reasonably priced conciliation and arbitration services to the business community" (CIPE 2002c). From July 2002 until July 2003, CIPE also provided CEDCA with over \$50,000 for a project titled Enhancing Democracy through Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods. In its program description, CIPE describes Venezuela as lacking rule of law, asserting that the "absence of a well functioning judicial system to resolve commercial disputes consistently, fairly and swiftly has adversely affected the private sector's ability to reduce poverty and contribute to democratic, market-oriented reforms" (CIPE 2002c: 50). Instead of courts, CIPE points out that many businesses were using Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods to resolve conflicts and that they were including ADR clauses in their contracts. CEDCA planned to generate public awareness about ADR methods by publicizing information concerning them in various media outlets, including interviews and op-ed pieces. They also planned to host three public conferences in Caracas on ADR involving experts from across the Western Hemisphere in order to introduce the basic ideas of ADR. CEDCA also offered training, certification, and several workshops for ADR facilitators during this period as well.

Conclusion

During the early years of the Chávez Administration, the NED, and at times USAID, has furnished the IRI, NDI, ACILS, and CIPE with continual funding for projects in Venezuela. As illustrated above, the IRI has largely worked with opposition parties on cultivating their public image, communications, and other types of campaign and political party training. They have also served as a conduit for bringing US Republican Party and other similar ideological leaders from abroad into the country to lead workshops and seminars for political party leaders. They have mostly worked with the political opposition, but at times their projects have involved government supporters. And when it came to 2002 coup d'état, the IRI President readily lent support to the coup participants, before retracting his statements at the behest of the NED's director. For its part, the NDI has also worked with political parties on issues such as transparency, but it also focused on developing and assisting a domestic elections monitoring group, Ojo Electoral. This organization continually acknowledged that the Venezuelan government had indeed succeeded at the ballot box. Nonetheless, the NDI continued to work with many opposition leaders, such as Henrique Capriles, and perceived the Venezuelan political system in disarray, largely because Venezuelan citizens continually elected former President Chávez. For many Venezuelan citizens, however, Chávez provided them with the first opportunity to vote for a presidential candidate they had actually developed a meaningful relationship with.

On their end, the ACILS and CIPE have each respectively worked with labor and business groups. While ACILS has exclusively partnered with the CTV and sought to assist this union with elections and organizing informal sector workers, CIPE has operated as the one US democracy promoting agency that has explicitly championed capitalist policies. In doing so, it

has almost exclusively worked with CEDICE, a libertarian think tank that consistently promoted free-market capitalist policies and criticized the Venezuelan government. And while clear differences exist between the CTV and CEDICE, both of these two groups endorsed efforts to unseat Chávez, and CEDICE's director even formally consecrated their support for the transitional government by signing the Carmona Decree. And so, in terms of ACILS and CIPE funding, we find a clear trend towards supporting groups that have sought to undermine the Venezuelan government through anti-democratic measures. In the following chapter, I provide a theoretical analysis of the NED and its grantees' operations in Venezuela, followed by an in-depth discussion of legislation pursued by the Venezuelan government that would target foreign funding political parties and NGOs.

Chapter 7: Making Theoretical Sense of US Democracy Assistance Efforts in Venezuela

In the previous two chapters, I have detailed the efforts of the NED and its associated groups in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez Administration. In those chapters, I described the programs and the groups with which the NED and its associated entities worked with during this period. In this chapter, I revisit the three theoretical perspectives laid out in Chapter 3, including the neo-Tocquevillian, the neo-Marxist, and neo-Weberian perspectives. In doing so, I analyze how these three theoretical perspectives help us to make sense of US democracy assistance efforts abroad. Ultimately, I find that the neo-Tocquevillian and the neo-Marxist perspectives both fail to enable a full understanding of US democracy assistance efforts. The neo-Weberian perspective, however, rectifies the blindspots that both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives contain, and, in doing so, this third perspective provides a more theoretically robust understanding of contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in places such as Venezuela and arguably beyond.

On their own, the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives cannot account for the multiplicity of programs and types of political parties and NGOs funded by the US democracy assistance community. These perspectives also cannot account for the conceptual underpinnings that underlie these programs, and the paternalistic approach that the US exhibits towards Venezuela, that is, without ultimately reducing these dynamics to an economic logic that necessarily benefits transnational corporations. Indeed, racist and Orientalist depictions specifically manifest themselves in the language that US officials use to describe former President Chávez and the Venezuelan political landscape within both embassy cables and US policy documents, and they serve as the justification for paternalist policies.

For its part, the neo-Tocquevillian perspective recognizes that the US might primarily fund opposition groups due to their alleged US-style liberal democratic leanings. This perspective thus fails to recognize that democracy involves a multiplicity of meanings beyond liberal democracy and, more specifically, the US own version of liberal democracy. What is more, during the early years of the Chávez Administration, the US even worked with Venezuelan actors that took part in the 2002 coup d'état that violently aimed to destabilize and displace the Venezuelan government. And while it is possible that the US might not have realized that a coup was in formation, several US democracy promoting groups continued to fund some of these actors even following the coup efforts.

It is, of course, important to recognize that there was much confusion during the coup period and that many individuals believed that former President Chávez had delivered orders to violently repress protesters. Only in the days following these events were these accusations disproven. However, many of the groups that the US continued to support following the coup period, continued to openly push for the ouster of former President Chávez, albeit in democratic fashion, and the US continued to support these groups and these political parties during this time. And so while US officials might assert that they have funded opposition actors due to their democratic credentials, we find that in several instances these democratic credentials are, in some instances, dubious, as several of these groups that have received funding had previously pursued anti-democratic and unconstitutional efforts to unseat the Chávez government. In addition, the US continued to fund groups that were deeply engaged in highly partisan endeavors. As a result, US funding appears more partisan than democratically principled.

The neo-Tocquevillian perspective also does not recognize that multiple visions of democracy exist. By neglecting to do so, neo-Tocquevillian scholars demonstrate that they are

indeed quite unreflective in terms of their conceptual understanding of democracy. In Venezuela, the US democracy assistance community has primarily emphasized liberal democratic features of governance, including civil and political rights. As discussed throughout this work, there exist multiple understandings of how democracies should operate, and the programs and policies that the US promotes do not exhaust the full spectrum of all of these divergent conceptualizations of democratic governance. Indeed, the Venezuelan government has not entirely dismissed many of these liberal democratic features of governance. However, in contrast with the US and its emphasis on liberal democracy, Venezuelan government leaders have, despite their emphasis on participatory democracy and providing political power to the oppressed Venezuelan majority, most importantly sought to develop a strong centralized state that can assist with the redistribution of wealth and resources to their citizens.

Unlike the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the neo-Marxist perspective recognizes that clear differences might exist between the US and other countries' understandings of democracy. This perspective, however, reduces US democracy assistance to an economic logic that envisions the US as ultimately interested in the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. And while there are some economic elements involved with some of the programs that the US promotes, the totality of US democracy assistance efforts are not reducible to the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. Instead, many of these US efforts have involved promoting strictly political projects that have encouraged, as mentioned above, rule of law, conflict mediation, civil liberties, and decentralization efforts, that is, civil and political rights.

Finally, in terms of the neo-Marxist perspective, we also find that on select occasions that the US funded and worked with groups, such as the electoral observation group Ojo Electoral, that ultimately bolstered the Venezuelan government's democratic credentials and its claim to

legitimacy. The US also funded several other civil society organizations that worked with the Venezuelan government on select projects. In addition, the NDI and the IRI, on particular occasions, met and worked with the Venezuelan government on several projects, and, in some instances, invited Venezuelan government leaders to Washington to publicly speak on behalf of the government. And so, as a result of all of these dynamics, the neo-Marxist perspective is equally unsatisfying in its attempts to make sense of US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela.

Instead of these two perspectives, I find that the neo-Weberian perspective helps us make the most sense of US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela. Similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective helps to illuminate how the US has sought to bring its own vision of liberal democracy to Venezuela. As discussed in depth below, we see that the US promotes particular liberal democratic features, including, for example, rule of law, civil liberties, conflict mediation, and decentralization efforts. And while private property rights indeed feature into US programs, they in no way command all of the US democracy assistance community's attention and funding. In fact, only one US democracy promoting agency, CIPE, has remained focused on promoting capitalist policies. And even in these instances, it is not clear that the groups that it promotes necessarily promote transnational capitalist class interests over the interests of its domestic business community.

What is more though, the neo-Weberian perspective helps us understand why the US has continually worked with opposition-oriented NGOs and political parties during the early years of the Chávez Administration, even when they have engaged in anti-democratic behavior themselves. This perspective can help us to connect these sorts of partisan US democracy assistance programs to a history of US paternalism specifically within the Western Hemisphere,

wherein US officials have depicted foreign leaders that enact policies that diverge from the US political-economic vision for the hemisphere as uncivil, erratic, and unable to properly govern their societies.

Indeed, the US possesses a lengthy history of depicting Latin American leaders and their citizens as political subjects that require tutelage in order to learn how to select leaders and effectively govern their population. In many of the NED and its associated groups' policy documents, we clearly find Orientalist portraits of the Chávez government and the policies it pursued. What is more, these US groups fail to recognize that Venezuelan citizens recurrently elected former President Chávez at the polls and supported many of the policies that he pursued, including the development of a new Venezuelan Constitution and the redistribution of resources. While the neo-Marxist scholars might recognize the existence of Orientalist, racist, and paternalist US policies, it ultimately reduces them to the promotion of transnational capitalist class interests. By contrast, the neo-Weberian perspective can account for the ultimately historical and ideological nature of these US measures and inclinations without asserting that they necessarily function in the interests of the transnational capitalist class – or any particular capitalist class. It thus recognizes that ideological motivations direct US foreign policy, and lead the US to attempt to correct the alleged errors of foreign leaders should they veer from the US political-economic vision.

US Democracy Assistance in Contemporary Venezuela and the Neo-Tocquevillian Perspective

Neo-Tocquevillian scholars have generally depicted US democracy assistance programs as operating in the general interest of democracy writ large. In doing so, they do not seriously attempt to criticize US democracy assistance programs and the conceptual politics that underlie

them. In other words, these scholars uncritically accept the benefits of US democracy assistance programs. In addition, they do not recognize the multiple meanings that the concept of democracy itself possesses and how the general concept of democracy remains contested.

The Venezuelan government and the US have encountered a number of problems between them, and many of these issues have developed out of conflict concerning how governments should do democratic politics. Indeed, in Venezuela, the Chávez government prioritized the rights of economic and social majorities, and sought to use state institutions to empower these groups. At times, although the Venezuelan government did not entirely eschew all liberal democratic features, the Chávez government pursued policies that contravened the liberal democratic emphasis on limiting state power. For instance, the Venezuelan government expropriated unused rural landholdings from large rural landholders, pushed for more executive control over the military and its usage, and sought to alter national curriculum and introduce Bolivarian-oriented schools for young children. In addition, the Venezuelan government established a number of social missions that aimed to combat illiteracy, provide medical access, offer educational opportunities, provide adequate housing, and subsidize food and other basic products.

Instead of working with the Venezuelan government though, the majority of the US democracy assistance programs that were discussed did not involve much participation from the Venezuelan government. Rather, most of the programs that were examined involved opponents of the Chávez government, including opposition political parties and opposition-oriented NGOs. For example, the IRI established strong relations with several opposition parties, such as Primero Justicia, Proyecto Venezuela, and Acción Democrática. These parties continually opposed the Chávez government, and sought ways to remove *chavistas* from power. In addition, the NDI also

largely worked with opposition political parties, including establishing a specific relationship with former Mayor of Baruta, current Governor of Miranda, and former 2012 and 2013 opposition presidential candidate, Henrique Capriles. At times, some NDI and IRI programs involved members from pro-government parties, but these individuals' participation was considerably dwarfed by the participation of opposition politicians and their supporters.

Through their programs, the IRI and, to a lesser extent, the NDI also worked to enhance the capabilities of mostly opposition political parties. In order to do so, they largely focused their energy on two sorts of efforts. These efforts included leading their own seminars on developing various political capabilities, and sponsoring foreign politicians and strategists to lead seminars and offer guidance to opposition political party leaders. All together, these efforts included providing guidance on how these political parties could enhance their political platforms, attract more party members, and develop more effective communication strategies. Although IRI reports contend that their representatives were at pains not to place continual blame on the Chávez government for all socio-political problems facing the country, their representatives indeed furnished opposition political party leaders with continual advice on how they could more effectively operate under the country's given conditions, that is, under a political system dominated by former President Chávez and his supporters.

Beyond political parties, the NED worked with a variety of NGOs that often aligned themselves against the Venezuelan government. In fact, some of these groups openly defined themselves as indeed part of the opposition, including Súmate, a group from which several opposition leaders, including Maria Corina Machado, a former opposition presidential candidate, would emerge. In addition, the group would also promote a recall referendum against former President Chávez, an obvious partisan position, and seek to oust him from office before his

electoral term had expired. Elsewhere, the NED routinely promoted NGOs that contested legislation pushed or enacted by the Chávez government. For example, the NED promoted groups that contested legislation concerning the Land Law, changes to educational curriculum, and the involvement from the military in political life. All together, it is clear that US democracy-promoting groups active in Venezuela more consistently, and even primarily, worked with the Venezuelan opposition. In other words, there is indeed a strong bias in terms of their funding towards groups that oppose the Venezuelan government, and we thus cannot construe US democracy assistance efforts as nonpartisan.

The NED and its associated groups' funding in Venezuela also possesses a proclivity for only particular democracy-related programs. This has included funding for groups that champion what I have termed US-style liberal democratic features of governance, such as civil liberties, decentralization, limiting state influence, rule of law, and the development of a flourishing civil society. In doing so, the US, as well as neo-Tocquevillian scholars, uncritically accept liberal democracy as the proper way to democratically manage societies, and US officials thus fail to respect the fact that diverging opinions exist concerning how democratic politics are accomplished. Clear differences exist between the US and Venezuelan government concerning what elements matter most for a democratic system to take root. For the US, this involves civil and political rights, such as civil liberties and decentralization efforts. Within Venezuela, however, the Chávez, and now Maduro, government has become much more inclined to focus on economic and social rights, including social missions and the redistribution of wealth, alongside the development of a strong centralized state that has at least rhetorically supported the future development of a communal state.

In the end, neo-Tocquevillian scholars might object that the US has supported opposition political parties and opposition-aligned NGOs, because these parties and these NGOs were, and remain, the country's true champions of liberal democratic policies, and, by contrast, Chávez and his supporters pursued anti-democratic and unconstitutional policies. There are several dynamics involving contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela though that complicate these claims. The first complication includes the fact that the Chávez government routinely received electoral support from the Venezuelan populace, and, second, that many of the parties and NGOs that received US funding actually engaged in anti-democratic and unconstitutional behaviors themselves at particular points in time. And while the US might not have supported these groups to engage in this anti-democratic behavior or even realized that they were, in fact, planning to partake in anti-democratic and unconstitutional behaviors, the US, in many instances, continued to support many of these groups even after they had engaged in these anti-democratic and unconstitutional behaviors, such as providing support for the 2002 coup d'état that temporarily deposed former President Chávez and the transitional government that displaced him.

First, these claims sideline and discount the democratic aspirations of the majority of Venezuelan citizens. Venezuelan citizens continually exhibited their support for former President Chávez and many of the changes that his government instituted in myriad moments. Most notably, Venezuelan citizens elected and then recurrently re-elected former President Chávez until his death in 2013. Indeed, during the early years of the Chávez Administration, Chávez won each election that he had participated in. This includes both elections wherein his presidency was on the line – including a recall referendum in 2004; elections that involved the passage of particular policies, such as a new Venezuelan Constitution; and elections for legislative and other

regional government members. In fact, with the exception of one constitutional referendum election in 2007, former President Chávez did not lose any elections during his tenure in office. This, of course, is all to illustrate that Venezuelan citizens recurrently demonstrated their support for Chávez and the Venezuelan government.

Second, while the US might contend that it has supported the Venezuelan opposition on account of its democratic credentials, the NED and some of its associated groups continued to provide assistance to several groups that supported the coup d'état that removed Chávez from power and ushered in a transitional government headed by Pedro Carmona, a Venezuelan business leader. The NED, for example, provided support for the Asociación Civil Asamblea de Educación (ACAE) in order to contest education policies pursued by the Venezuelan government. During the 2002 coup, however, the director of the group, Leonardo Carvajal, accepted a position as the Minister of Education in the transitional government. Indeed, on top of ACAE, the NED also provided assistance to several other organizations, whose leaders supported the transitional government. In addition, both CIPE and ACILS annually supported CEDICE and the CTV, that is, two groups that voiced support for the transitional government and advocated for the coup that brought down the Venezuelan government. And, finally, in the instance of the IRI, their director, George Folsom, issued a statement that commended those individuals and groups that removed former President Chávez from power. And while Folsom eventually retracted his statement, he never objected to the coup efforts themselves, but rather the behavior of the transitional government during former President Chávez' absence. All together then, we see that the NED and its associated groups assuredly did not possess an absolute commitment to supporting only those organizations that pursued democratic and

constitutional policies. Rather, it continued to support groups that had engaged in anti-democratic and unconstitutional policies within Venezuela.

Of course, the coup period was a confusing time in which many citizens believed that former President Chávez had directed the military and police forces to fire upon protestors, and that the coup d'état was an unplanned affair that developed in response to Chávez' behavior. It would emerge later that Chávez did not give these orders and that the coup was, in fact, planned. Indeed, some of these actors, including CTV and Fedecámaras, were involved in the planning of the demonstrations that would lead to the coup. In addition, many of these groups supported the unconstitutional transfer of power to Pedro Carmona, the leader of the business group, Fedecámaras, and, in one instance, one NGO leader even accepted a position in Carmona's cabinet. While many individuals would turn against Carmona following his dissolution of the legislature and the judiciary, and the suspension of the Venezuelan Constitution, many of the groups that the US supported, both NGOs and political parties, continued to push for the removal of President Chávez. Indeed, while these groups are legally permitted to push for the removal of elected leaders, this is clearly a partisan position. Once again, US officials might retort that legally removing former President Chávez would ultimately cultivate a US-style liberal democracy, and that is what US funding is ultimately about. However, this, again, reveals how neo-Tocquevillian scholars do not respect the fact the fact that multiple understandings of democracy persist, and the US version of liberal democracy remains one variant among several understandings.

US Democracy Assistance in Contemporary Venezuela and the Neo-Marxist Perspective

In Chapter 2, we encountered the theoretical particularities surrounding the neo-Marxist perspective. We saw that William Robinson (1996, 2006), among several other neo-Marxist theorists, argued that the US utilizes its democracy assistance programs in order to bolster groups that champion, or at least do not seriously threaten, neoliberal economic policies. In doing so, this would allegedly allow the US greater and easier access to cheap labor, cheap resources, and new markets, and, in addition, it would enfranchise the interests of a transnational capitalist class, many of whose members indeed operate out of the US, in addition to other countries. From this perspective, while US democracy-promoting agencies might endorse the general and vague ideas of democracy and human rights, neo-Marxists emphatically claim that it is merely an ideological ruse designed to disguise its true interests in the cultivation of polyarchic political systems that are headed by political parties and NGOs that are aligned with the US and transnational corporations in their support for neoliberal economic policies. In other words, US officials possess no genuine interest in promoting democracy and human rights, but rather aim to enfranchise the transnational capitalist class by promoting neoliberal economic policies.

In order for the neo-Marxist perspective to help us make the most sense of the Venezuelan case, we would have to find evidence that US funding has primarily flowed to those groups that promote neoliberal economic policies or at least pave way for neoliberal economic policies. In terms of NGOs, this is clearly not the case, as a majority of groups that receive funding, receive it for a range of political projects that have, at times, included economic issues, but have mostly centered on issues such as rule of law, general civil liberties, decentralization, combating several *chavista* public policies, and conflict mediation. It is true, however, that some groups have received funding for issues that deal with private property rights and to contest

government expropriation of rural landholdings. The NED, for instance, provided funding for the Asociación Civil Acción Campesina to contest the government's 2001 Land Law, which allowed the Venezuelan government to expropriate unused rural lands held by large landholders. This is clearly an issue of a strong national state violating private property rights. However, this program is one of several that focuses on a range of civil liberties and law enforcement issues. Therefore, we cannot claim that the NED and its associated groups primarily provide funding and assistance to groups that aim to cultivate respect for private property rights and to exclusively challenge the Venezuelan government on these sorts of property issues.

Within the associated groups that the NED funds, only one group truly promotes capitalist economic policies: CIPE. Through its programs, the US indeed supports capitalist economic policies. CIPE, however, exists as one group among four that promotes a range of policies within Venezuela, including ACILS, which has cooperated with labor and informal workers throughout the country, and the IRI and NDI, which cooperate with political parties. Nonetheless, CIPE engages in a number of programs and has linked up with several Venezuelan groups that have pushed for as little government intervention into the local economy as possible.

CIPE recurrently funded CEDICE, the most prominent libertarian organization in Venezuela, in order to host regional and national forums where they promoted private industry, decentralization efforts, and respect for private property. In particular, the organizations took aim at the Land Law, which allowed the Venezuelan government the ability to expropriate unused holdings of large land owners, in addition to several other policies. The group also criticized the government's use of price controls, centralization of executive power, and poor taxation measures. Most notably, CIPE also funded CEDICE to construct several proposals for a new economic vision for the country that were put together by leading academics in support of

capitalist-oriented, free market policies. Even despite these efforts, we cannot necessarily claim though that these policies benefit the transnational capitalist class over and above the Venezuelan capitalist class. Indeed, CIPE's funding for CEDICE seemingly would assist both Venezuelan capitalists and transnational capitalists, whom would welcome the opportunity to invest in Venezuela. The claim of neo-Marxists such as William Robinson and Leslie Sklair, however, is that the US aims to enhance transnational capitalist class interests above all other interests, including the interests of domestic capitalists. It is not clear though that CEDICE maintains these same, specific interests in the transnational capitalist class.

In totality, CIPE indeed operates as the exclusively capitalist-promoting, free market arm of the US democracy assistance community. Its foremost aim is to promote free market capitalism and private property rights. However, while the US promotes these issues through CIPE and while these issues have a place in liberal democratic theory, the promotion of private property rights does not encompass the entirety of US democracy assistance efforts during the early years of the Chávez Administration. CIPE remains one entity out of four that are associated with the NED. It is certainly accurate to point out that the US funds some groups that promote some neoliberal economic policies, such as international investment opportunities. It would be inaccurate though to suggest that this funding comprises the overarching aim of the US democracy assistance community in contemporary Venezuela. For neo-Marxists, this is allegedly the case, and support for democracy and human rights is mere window dressing for the actual aim of supporting transnational capitalist class interests. From a neo-Weberian perspective however, ideal interests and culture also matter, and we cannot necessarily reduce these interests to an economic logic as neo-Marxists have done so. In the next section, I, indeed, discuss the

importance of these factors and the utility of the neo-Weberian perspective in making sense of US democracy assistance efforts abroad.

Neo-Marxists might object that although the US does not primarily fund groups that explicitly promote neoliberal economic interests, it funds groups that promote US-style liberal democracy, which contains an economic dimension. Indeed, liberal democracy does contain an economic dimension, but it does not necessarily function in the interests of transnational capitalists. This is certainly a possibility, but it would take several intellectual leaps to convincingly argue that supporting human rights groups, supporting groups that promote conflict mediation, and supporting groups that promote the rule of law necessarily functions in the interests of a transnational capitalist class. And since supporting these groups does not necessarily promote the interests of a transnational capitalist class, the neo-Marxist perspective provides us with no alternative understanding of why the US supports many of the political projects and many of the groups that the US, in fact, ends up promoting.

In addition, in some instances, the US has actually worked with the Venezuelan government and, in few instances, the US supported groups that lent some support to the democratic credentials of the Venezuelan government and depicted it as a government that received the support of the Venezuelan populace. Indeed, during the early years of the Chávez Administration, US democracy assistance efforts primarily enfranchised opposition political parties and opposition NGOs. However, the IRI and NDI, for instance, sponsored some *chavista* government members to visit Washington DC and offer their own perspective on the political climate in Venezuela, including Roy Chaderton, Tarek William Saab, and Calixto Ortega. In the latter instance, the US sponsored Ortega to come to Washington in order to illustrate that moderate elements existed within the Venezuelan government that were open to dialogue with

the opposition. In addition, on several occasions, the IRI and the NDI included pro-government members in their seminars, and sought to, at least, maintain a dialogue with some members from the Venezuelan government. Indeed, from the perspective of the IRI and the NDI, the Venezuelan government had refused to participate in most of their democracy assistance programs, and thus they were to blame for the slanted nature of Venezuelan participation in their programs.

Specifically, the US worked with and supported several groups that lent support to the Venezuelan government's democratic credentials. First, the NDI provided technical assistance and guidance to Ojo Electoral, an electoral observation group that contained an ideologically eclectic set of members and, on several occasions, validated the electoral victories of former President Chávez and his supporters. Second, the NED worked with the Centro al Servicio de la Acción Popular, which although it offered several suggestions for how the Venezuelan government could address issues such as crime and unemployment, commended the government for its focus on a range of social issues and their incorporation within the new Venezuelan Constitution. And in a third and final example, the US also worked with the Asociación Civil Consorcio Justicia. In the aftermath of the 2002 coup d'état and the violence that ensued, this group worked with the national government to investigate some of the deaths that took place, and it also promoted conflict mediation efforts in the 23 de Enero neighborhood of Caracas, a notoriously left-leaning area of the city, alongside the Ministry of the Interior. In addition to the IRI and the NDI's work with several government leaders, all of these efforts in their entirety indicate that the US democracy assistance community has not been completely averse to working with groups that have ultimately bolstered the Venezuelan government and its democratic credentials. Theoretically, these findings give further indication that we must move beyond the

neo-Marxist perspective, as well as the neo-Tocquevillian perspective in order to provide the most robust theoretical understanding of US democracy assistance efforts abroad that we can provide.

Finally, if we take the claim seriously that the US sought to destabilize the Venezuelan government and they sought to destabilize the government in order to promote transnational capitalist class interests, then we could not truly make sense of why the US would work with and promote groups that commended and worked with the Venezuelan government. Either we would have to conclude that US officials cannot control the nature of the groups they intend to promote, or we would have to conclude they are willing to work with the Venezuelan government on particular issues that the US finds suitable to its ideological interests in promoting US-style liberal democratic features of governance. In either case, we would have to submit that the neo-Marxist perspective cannot account for these situations, and, thus, the totality of US democracy assistance programs. And we would subsequently have to broaden our theoretical perspectives beyond neo-Marxism

US Democracy Assistance in Contemporary Venezuela and the Neo-Weberian Perspective

In the above sections, we have found that both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives contain several theoretical and empirical blindspots when it comes to analyzing US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela. In order to rectify these blindspots, I developed a neo-Weberian perspective at the outset of this study. And in this section, I illustrate how the neo-Weberian perspective rectifies the blindspots that both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives possess, and allows us to more accurately understand the nature of US democracy assistance efforts during the early years of the Chávez Administration. In doing so,

the hope is also that the insights that the neo-Weberian perspective offers in terms of the Venezuelan case, can extend beyond this case and into the broader world.

In Chapter 2, I laid out several dimensions involved with a neo-Weberian perspective on US democracy assistance efforts. In that chapter, and similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, I argued that US officials maintain their own specific set of interests in US-style liberal democratic features of governance. This primarily includes the development of a state that minimally intervenes into the affairs of its citizens, and the enshrinement of the rights of the individual. Indeed, for those that espouse a US-style liberal democratic form of governance, the state should provide order, enforce contracts, and offer minimal public services. Beyond these efforts, US-style liberal democrats believe the state should allow citizens to take control of their lives without state interference.

In Chapter 2, I also linked US democracy assistance programs with a history of US foreign policy efforts that have undermined leftist governments throughout Latin America and treated many other Latin American leaders as political subjects that required tutelage and a political education in order to properly learn how to govern their subjects. Assuredly, former President Chávez rejected much of what the US government had promoted within and beyond the hemisphere, including free trade and neoliberal capitalism; counternarcotics operations that, according to Chávez, violated countries' claims to national sovereignty; and the Global War on Terror. And indeed, when Latin American leaders have historically rejected the US political-economic vision for the hemisphere and beyond, many have incurred the wrath of the US Empire, which at times, especially during the Cold War, has included support for violent regime change. While a 2002 coup d'état transpired in Venezuela that was led by dissident military members and business leaders with help from the private media, among other individuals, US

government members asserted that they played no role in these events. And while the US had supported some individuals and groups that were involved with the coup and the transitional government, US officials claimed that they possessed no knowledge that these individuals were planning to violently undermine the Chávez government, and they routinely attempted to communicate this with Venezuelan leaders both in public and behind closed doors (CableGate 08/05/2004). Some individuals have, of course, argued otherwise, that is, they have asserted that the US indeed recognized that a coup was in formation, and they strategically supplied several groups with additional funding in the months and weeks leading up to April 2002 (Golinger 2005, Robinson 2006).

Regardless of whether or not US leaders had prior knowledge that the Venezuelan conspirators were planning to overthrow the Chávez government or if they provided them with support to, indeed, attempt to destabilize the Venezuelan government, we certainly find that the programs that the US established and supported throughout Venezuela show a clear propensity, as neo-Tocquevillians would recognize, towards US-style liberal democratic forms of governance, and for political parties and many NGOs that criticized the Chávez government and aligned with the opposition. For example, although the IRI and NDI have, at times, worked with and involved *chavista* government members in their programs, they have directed the bulk of their activities towards political parties that have recurrently challenged the Venezuelan government, including, for example, Primero Justicia, Proyecto Venezuela, COPEI, and Acción Democrática. In fact, these political parties, among several additional opposition parties that the IRI and NDI established relations and regularly worked with, continue to mount challenges against the Venezuelan government and seek to displace the *chavistas* from power. And indeed, all evidence points to the fact that these US democracy promoting groups have continued to

work with these parties in order to build up their political capacities long after the years that I have examined in this particular research project.

During the period that I have examined, these US democracy promoting groups have largely focused on increasing political pluralism and providing political parties with technical skills, that is, instead of simply providing them with campaign funding for whatever purpose these parties would deem suitable. These sorts of endeavors have included showing party leaders how to boost their popularity throughout the country, how to amplify their public image, how to build up their youth bases, and how to effectively interact with journalists and citizens. In addition, these efforts included linking opposition party leaders up with their ideological counterparts from the US and beyond, including US Republican Party leaders from states such as California, Colorado, Mississippi, and Oregon. These activities also included linking leaders up with conservative politicians from Latin American countries such as Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. And so, while some critics have asserted that the US simply throws money at opposition groups, the nature of the support is a bit more technical than simply funneling money into the pockets of opposition politicians.

In the civil sphere, the NED has worked with a number of organizations that have generally focused their efforts around two particular areas: civil liberties, and conflict mediation and law enforcement. These two areas clearly demonstrate how US democracy assistance groups have specifically elected to push for civil and political rights throughout their programs, and how they have not primarily pursued policies that would allegedly enfranchise the transnational, or any other particular, capitalist class. Indeed, while neoliberal capitalism requires law enforcement and order, socialist/communist-oriented societies also require law enforcement and order. And, in fact, many socialist/communist countries, at least in name, have enforced some of

the harshest forms of order in recent history, such as communist Albania, North Korea, and the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, while the Venezuelan government has not entirely eschewed civil and political rights, its main aim has surrounded social and economic rights. In doing so, the Venezuelan government has elected to prioritize the rights of the historically oppressed majority of the Venezuelan population. By contrast, US democracy assistance programs have centered much less on these sorts of rights, and instead championed individual liberties, conflict mediation, rule of law, and freedom from the state, that is, US-style liberal democratic policies.

Specifically, throughout the early years of the Chávez Administration, the NED focused its efforts on supporting groups that criticized the Venezuelan government for assuming more power throughout Venezuelan society. The NED, for instance, supported a peasant group that criticized the Venezuelan government's expropriation of rural landholdings, as well as a group focused on education that sought to temper the government's moves to alter national curriculum. In addition, the NED assisted groups that claimed that the Venezuelan government had generally targeted the abilities of NGOs. In doing so, the NED funded forums, such as one operated by the Asociación Civil Consorcio Justicia (ACCIJ), that allowed domestic NGOs to initiate funding relationships with national and international businesses in order to persist. And while US democracy assistance organizations have generally claimed to support democratically oriented groups, the US, as mentioned above, has continually financed groups that took part in the anti-democratic and unconstitutional 2002 coup, and, subsequently, demonstrated support for the transitional government headed by Venezuelan business leader Pedro Carmona. Therefore, in many respects, the US has appeared to support groups and parties within Venezuela, regardless of their democratic credentials, that have, as a common denominator, opposed the Chávez government. The US, as also demonstrated above, has in only select few instances worked with

the Chávez Administration and its members, and supported groups that have ultimately bolstered the Venezuelan government's claims to democratic legitimacy.

The NED has also focused many of its efforts on law enforcement and conflict mediation. At times, some of these programs indeed involved the government, such as when the NED funded the ACCJ to work with state organizations to investigate deaths that transpired during the 2002 coup d'état. The NED, however, also funded groups that criticized the Venezuelan government's use of the military, including the Asociación Civil Compresión de Venezuela, which funded several forums and workshops concerning this issue. In addition, the NED funded several groups that worked in neighborhoods in Caracas and beyond in order to reduce violence and mediate conflict. And finally, the NED funded the Asociación Civil Liderazgo y Visión to provide law enforcement officers with human rights training and initiate a legacy of human rights training within the Metropolitan Police unit.

The neo-Weberian perspective can assist researchers in linking these US democracy assistance efforts with a lengthy history of regional paternalism that, while recognized by neo-Marxist scholars, is not reducible to transnational capitalist class interests. Indeed, as we have seen, the US has supported a multiplicity of groups that, regardless of their democratic nature, have, at root, criticized and, in some instances, sought to destabilize the Chávez Administration. US officials have only in very few instances worked with *chavistas*, and when US officials have discussed the Chávez government they have largely done so in a racist and Orientalist manner. And indeed, these racist and Orientalist viewpoints have served as the basis and justification for US paternalism within the country. US officials have depicted the Venezuelan government as lawless, uncivilized, and ultimately unfit to properly govern the Venezuelan population, and they

have depicted former President Chávez as a megalomaniac that “lashes out” at critics, engages in uncivil behavior, and promotes “outlandish” policies.

Throughout the previous two chapters, we have encountered several instances where the NED and its associated groups have denigrated the Venezuelan government and its supporters within its program descriptions. For example, the NED has continually painted former President Chávez as an authoritarian leader that has illustrated disregard for democracy and democratic institutions. In addition, the group has characterized him as megalomaniacal leader that “lashes out” at his opponents and subjects them to “vitriolic attacks.” All together, he is portrayed as undemocratic, uncivil, and power-hungry. In addition, the NED has referred to the Venezuelan Constitution that Venezuelan citizens had voted on in a referendum election as former President Chávez’s “pet Bolivarian Constitution.” The NED has also asserted that the new Constitution hardly affected Chávez’ ability to govern and thus insinuated that its passage was generally useless for the Venezuelan populace.

In other documents, the NED drew analogies between Cuban and Soviet policies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Venezuelan government policies. In other words, the NED clearly sought to portray the Venezuelan government as a dictatorship-in-development, and, by contrast, portrayed the organizations that it supported, and by extension itself, as organizations that truly aimed to cultivate genuine democracy within the country. In another example, the NDI took former President Chávez’ electoral success to suggest that Venezuelan citizens had lost “faith in the democratic process.” Of course, an alternative interpretation might be that many Venezuelan citizens were finally urged to politically participate as they felt connected with an outsider candidate, that is, former President Chávez, who seemingly spoke the same language as they did and represented some of their views that had long went unrepresented.

Overall, this pattern of portraying Latin American leaders and their supporters as unintelligent, unaware of their true interests, and, in the instance of Chávez, as authoritarian and unable to properly govern the Venezuelan populace, coheres with a pattern of racist and Orientalist depictions of foreign leaders throughout the last 200 years in the region. These understandings of Venezuelan leaders closely cohere with the Orientalist and racist depictions we find within US embassy cables, which I discussed in Chapter 3, and depicted former President Chávez as mentally unstable, delusional, uncivil, and megalomaniacal. US diplomats recurrently described Chávez as “lashing out,” “hot-headed,” pushing “bizarre” policies, “semi-coherent,” “untethered,” “chest-thumping,” and “hysterical.” These depictions have clear racial undertones in their presentation of Chávez as overemotional, beastly, and immature. And they demonstrate a clear sense of Orientalism in their depiction of Chávez as an un-modern and backwards individual.

Of course, US officials might, once again, object that former President Chávez ruled in an undemocratic and unconstitutional manner. However, as illustrated several times throughout this project, former President Chávez routinely garnered electoral support from the Venezuelan populace and pursued an alternative democratic path than the path of US-style liberal democracy. It is certainly possible to criticize former President Chávez for other sorts of undesirable methods of governance, such as illiberalism; however, it would be disingenuous for US officials to characterize the former president as obtaining support in an undemocratic manner and passing many of his policies in an undemocratic manner. In addition, as also illustrated several times throughout this project, the US indeed supported groups that engaged in anti-democratic and unconstitutional policies themselves. And while it might not have realized that some of the groups that it had supported, such as the CTV, would support the 2002 coup d'état and the

transitional government that took Chávez' place, the US continued to support these and other groups following these anti-democratic and unconstitutional events, seemingly undeterred by these events within the country.

The totality of the NED and its associated groups' efforts illustrates a strong penchant for US-style liberal democratic features of governance and exercising a form of regional paternalism that suggests that Venezuelan citizens and Venezuelan leaders do not understand how to elect leaders and, in the instance of former President Chávez and other *chavista* leaders, how to properly govern Venezuelan society. The desire to show Venezuelans how to properly do democratic politics, how to properly develop political parties, and how to properly respect civil and political rights flows out of the Orientalist and racist understandings of the Venezuelan government. These desires to correct Venezuelan society and show them how to do democratic politics compose US state interests imbued within US democracy assistance programs. Subsequently, we cannot reduce these programs and the interests imbued within them to the promotion of transnational capitalist class interests. From a neo-Weberian perspective, we can take US ideological interests in US-style liberal democratic features of governance seriously, and also understand how these US attempts correspond with a history of regional paternalism that flows out of US officials' Orientalist and racist understandings of foreign leaders, especially when these leaders enact policies that diverge from the US political-economic vision. In contrast with the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives, these are the advances of utilizing a neo-Weberian perspective to understand contemporary US democracy assistance practices in Venezuela and beyond

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed how the theoretical perspectives outlined at the outset of this research project might help us make sense of, or fail to help us fully make sense of, US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela and beyond. Both the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives contain several blindspots that require much theoretical rectification in order to make the most sense of these US efforts. I have thus developed a third theoretical perspective, a neo-Weberian perspective, in order to help us theoretically make sense of US democracy assistance efforts in the contemporary world. Similar to the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, the neo-Weberian perspective recognizes how the US promotes a US-style liberal democratic form of government, and it takes the importance of these ideological conceptions seriously without reducing them to an economic logic, as neo-Marxist researchers have done so. In addition, this perspective also recognizes, in contrast with the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, that the US has not always supported actors that remain committed to democratic principles. As I have demonstrated, several US funding recipients indeed supported the 2002 coup efforts and the transitional government that temporarily displaced former President Chávez, and they continued to engage in efforts to unseat him, such as recalling him.

Finally, and most importantly, the neo-Weberian perspectives allows us to connect the US efforts in Venezuela with a history of regional paternalism that envisions Latin American leaders in a racist and Orientalist manner, that is, as lawless, uncivilized, erratic, and unable to properly govern their societies. Indeed, these Orientalist and racist depictions serve to justify US efforts to direct Venezuelan society in a more democratic manner that US officials see as fitting. By examining US policy documents, this interpretation of the Chávez government during its early years is clearly evident. These views are also evidenced by US diplomats, including several

US ambassadors, as we saw within a multiplicity of US embassy cables in Chapter 3. In the ensuing chapter, I discuss the Venezuelan government's efforts to crack down on US democracy assistance efforts, including the general abilities of political parties and NGOs to receive funding and assistance from abroad.

Chapter 8: The Venezuelan Government and anti-NGO Legislation

Until the end of World War II, Westphalian state sovereignty, that is, “the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures,” undergirded the set of norms characterizing existing international arrangements (Krasner 1999: 20). In the aftermath of the war, however, state officials recognized a need to establish multilateral organizations that could monitor and protect the rights of citizens throughout the world. In doing so, they created the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The world has also witnessed a recent explosion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that monitor democracy and human rights. These groups often network with other NGOs and sometimes connect directly to multilateral institutions. On one hand, world cultural theorists argue that NGOs act as conveyor belts for fostering a consensual world culture based on liberal democracy and human rights (Boli and Thomas 1997; Meyer et al 1997). On the other hand, neo-Marxists argue that while some NGOs perform socially beneficial roles, European and North American donors exclusively flood political NGOs that criticize anti-imperial governments and promote neoliberal policies with financing and resources, which European and North American donors term democracy assistance (Burron 2012; Robinson 1996).⁷ Neo-Marxists argue that this assistance is delivered in a partisan manner and to groups that champion economic policies most conducive to US and European interests.

In recent years, several governments have begun to crack down on democracy assistance for political NGOs by creating strict registration requirements, subjecting groups to random audits, and prohibiting many NGOs from receiving foreign funding (Carothers 2006; Gershman and Allen 2005). Thomas Carothers (2006: 55) has termed this new phenomenon “the backlash

⁷ While it is true that some neoliberal-oriented NGOs have received funding from European and US state organizations, there is continuing debate concerning whether or not these sorts of groups constitute the core of US and European funding efforts.

against democracy promotion,” stating that after “two decades of the steady expansion of democracy-building programs around the world, a growing number of governments are starting to crack down on such activities.” Carothers, among others, has shown that this crackdown begins with China and Russia in the early 2000s in the wake of the Color Revolutions (Carothers 2006; Gershman and Allen 2006). Government leaders in China and Russia, and increasingly elsewhere, including Belarus, Bolivia, India, and Venezuela, among other places, have echoed the claim that political NGOs aim to destabilize their governments.⁸ In Egypt, the government blacklisted several US-based NGOs and prohibited some local NGOs from receiving foreign funding. In February 2012, the government arrested 43 NGO workers, including 16 US citizens. In May 2013, Bolivia expelled the US Agency for International Development (USAID) from the country for allegedly promoting coup d’état efforts by funding political NGOs. And in Venezuela, the National Assembly (AN) debated a radical piece of legislation prohibiting all NGOs from receiving direct foreign funding in 2006. While this legislation was stalled, it passed a less radical piece of legislation in 2010 prohibiting foreign funding for political NGOs.

To examine this phenomenon, I draw on US diplomatic cables, newspaper articles, and interviews with representatives from Venezuelan NGOs and donors that fund them to explain the Venezuelan government’s passage of legislation prohibiting political NGOs from receiving foreign funding. While the government criticized NGOs for receiving foreign funding in 2002 after a coup that several NGOs vocally supported temporarily removed President Hugo Chávez from office, legislators did not propose a law banning direct foreign funding until 2006 with the Law on International Cooperation (LIC). Although the AN did not pass the LIC, it passed the

⁸ Christensen and Weinstein (2013: 80) have investigated what they also see as this new phenomenon, and they estimate that out of 98 countries surveyed, “51 either prohibit (12) or restrict (39) foreign funding of civil society.”

Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination (LDPS) in 2010, a less radical law that prohibits foreign funding for political NGOs.

This chapter examines why the Venezuelan government passed legislation prohibiting political NGOs from receiving foreign funding in 2010. From the perspective of several political sociological theories, the passage of this legislation is not entirely puzzling, since *chavistas*, or supporters of the Chávez Administration, dominated the AN and criticized foreign funding for NGOs for nearly a decade. However, what is puzzling is that a near decade elapsed before the government passed legislation that took aim at any NGOs. Historically, political sociological theories, including pluralist and neo-Marxist theory, have focused on domestic factors and looked to the composition of government, namely the legislature, to understand legislation. However, *chavistas* had dominated the AN since 2000. This indicates that forces outside of the legislature convinced the government, at least for a time, to reconsider this law and that international factors played a significant role in the eventual passage of anti-NGO legislation.

Prominent theories of globalization and international relations also fail to fully explain the timing of this legislation, including realist and world cultural theory. Realist theorists presume that government leaders are rational actors that aim to maximize their security interests and preserve their rule. If we take the Venezuelan government's claim that the US government intended to destabilize the Chávez government seriously, then we would have expected legislation much earlier – perhaps in the aftermath of the 2002 coup that temporarily removed President Chávez from power, as several NGOs supported it. On the world cultural end, theorists argue that the more connected governments are through intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) with the world, the more they will align their behavior with a world culture that embraces human rights and liberal democracy, and the NGOs that promote

them. Venezuela, however, has remained connected with the world through a multiplicity of IGOs and INGOs,⁹ and yet we find behavior to the contrary: limiting NGO operations.

In order to explain this phenomenon, I utilize and extend global fields theory to examine the Venezuelan government's redirection in international and domestic government relations that would eventually generate the political opportunity for the government to pass this controversial law. In earlier years, the government remained keyed into a global subfield involving the US and Western European governments, and, to a lesser extent, domestic NGOs, who suggested that the government to reconsider such legislation. By 2010, however, the government had redirected its attention to a different global subfield and prioritized relations with several authoritarian governments and anti-imperial governments that had already passed similar legislation or were considering passage. During this period, China and Russia, in particular, would replace the US and Western Europe as Venezuela's major military and political-economic partners. The Venezuelan government would increasingly trade with and receive political-economic and military aid from these countries as well as meet with and establish cooperative agreements with their leaders. More than any other countries, China and Russia would buoy the Venezuela in the wake of deteriorating relations with the US and Western Europe. Within this new subfield, such legislation would not be considered transgressive, but increasingly normative.

The Case

While scholars have noted the tendency on the part of dictatorial governments to target NGOs, Venezuela, despite all its flaws, continues to hold regular, competitive elections that

⁹ Since President Chávez took power in 1999, Venezuela has witnessed a general upsurge of membership in IGOs and the presence of INGOs. For example, the *Yearbook of International Organizations* reports the following number of IGO memberships in the following years: in 1995, 266; in 2000, 274; in 2005, 625; and in 2010, 639. They also report the following number of INGOs in the following years: in 1995, 1795; in 2000, 2014; in 2005, 2870; and in 2010, 2962.

involve multiple, opposing parties. In contrast with countries such as China and Russia, Venezuelan elections have been routinely regarded as free and fair, by groups as diverse as the European Commission, the Carter Center, and non-partisan domestic electoral observation groups. In addition, despite widespread polarization and an often hostile relationship between the government and its critics, NGOs and private media continue to exist and continue to routinely criticize the government. The government, however, is not without its critics that point out that it has at times jailed opposition leaders for allegedly false charges, targeted particular media outlets, and used state resources for electoral campaigns. Venezuela thus represents a case where we find a semi-democratic government¹⁰ enacting legislation targeting NGOs, an increasingly popular strategy deployed by other semi-democratic governments throughout the world.

In June 2006, the AN proposed and passed the Law on International Cooperation (LIC) in a first discussion. This law would create a national fund, where all cooperating groups, including cooperating states, multilateral organizations, INGOs, NGOs, and other private organizations, would need to direct their funding for Venezuelan development projects broadly conceived (Chapter II, Article XI). The national executive would then distribute funds to NGOs, in addition to state agencies, willing to cooperate with national goals and projects established by the national executive (Chapter II, XIV). In doing so, neither donors nor NGOs would possess discretion over how funds would be allocated. The law would thus prohibit NGOs from receiving direct funding from foreign sources. Since all Venezuelan laws require two assembly discussions, AN members initially placed the legislation on a fast track for conversion by establishing an August 15, 2006,

¹⁰ There is a multiplicity of political science terms used to describe democratic governments that possess authoritarian tendencies, including competitive authoritarianism, hybrid regimes, and illiberal governments, among others. In order to keep the discussion straight-forward, however, my aim here is to plainly describe the political situation in Venezuela.

deadline for its second discussion; however, the AN failed to consider the proposal by this time (CableGate 8/23/2006).

In December 2010, the AN successfully passed a less-comprehensive piece of legislation, the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination (LDPS), after two quick discussions. Unlike the LIC, which would pertain to all NGOs, the LDPS focuses on citizens that aspire for political office; political organizations and political parties; and political NGOs, which includes “groups that promote, defend, spread or inform citizens ... about the full exercise of their political rights” (Art. I). The LDPS restricts these organizations and persons from receiving funds and support from foreign organizations and persons, and it establishes a fine of twice the amount of funding received as a penalty (Art. VII). The law also allows the government to disqualify the heads of political organizations from political participation for a period between five and eight years for receiving foreign funding (Art. IX, X).

Between Political Sociology, Globalization, and International Relations

Existent political sociological theories have looked to the composition of government as well as the populace to explain legislation. Pluralist theorists, for example, have posited that no one group continually dominates political life (Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963). In their view, power is fragmented and diffused throughout government branches and state institutions. At different periods, interest groups and social movements can lobby these branches and institutions, and, depending on the political climate and composition of these units, potentially achieve their will.

Many social movement and interest group theorists implicitly subscribe to the pluralist idea that groups can permeate the government, depending on political opportunities and their organizational strength (Burstein and Hirsh 2007; Kitschelt 1986; McAdam 1982). Herbert

Kitschelt (1986), for example, argues that throughout the 1970s while some governments were open to influence from anti-nuclear power groups, namely the US and Sweden, other governments did not consult with interest groups on public policy and were not open to influence from them, including France and West Germany. In the US, Kitschelt argues that anti-nuclear power groups captured the attention of government representatives throughout a range of institutions and drew the attention of congressional representatives after they collected enough signatures to enact a referendum vote on the use of nuclear power. Kitschelt (1986) and others thus work from the presumption that governments may potentially respond to group demands.

Neo-Marxists, however, have diverged from these conclusions in their analyses of the legislation process. Although some neo-Marxists have disagreed on the mechanisms through which capitalists influence the behavior of national governments, they reach the same conclusion that “capitalist interests” direct legislation. Ralph Miliband (1969), for one, argued that most legislators come from an upper-class background and are socialized into a capitalist-oriented worldview that prioritizes business interests over working class concerns. Empirically then, he argued that legislators consider business interests above all else when voting. Other neo-Marxists have contended that business groups and business leaders wield a disproportionate amount of influence over the legislation formation process (Domhoff 1996; Hertel-Fernandez 2014).

These two research traditions, however, do not move an analysis of the legislation formation process in contemporary Venezuela very far. *Chavistas* have dominated state institutions and all branches of government since 2000. Since this time, neither organized interest groups that possess the capacity to influence legislation nor a business community that wields considerable influence over government policy has much existed. Instead, *chavistas* have dominated political life and seldom faced any obstacles to passing legislation. Their decision to

shelve the LIC illustrates a rare instance that we find obstacles. Since *chavistas* have dominated political life, we need to consider what impediments exist beyond the domestic environment.

Theories of international relations and globalization direct attention to supranational influence on state behavior. Two prominent international relations theories include realism and world cultural theory. Realist theorists view the international system as an anarchic system, where states are primarily interested in maintaining their security and coercive material capabilities (Morgenthau 1950; Mearsheimer and Walt 2008). Realists presume that leaders are rational actors that aim to preserve their rule and their country's security and economic might. We might understand Venezuela's eventual passage of the LDPS as in its security interests. Without substantial reformulation though, realism cannot explain the timing of its passage. We would expect Venezuela to have passed legislation at an earlier date, for example, following the failed coup.

In contrast to realism, world cultural theorists emphasize consensus and focus on global scripts to explain state behavior. They view nation-states as "more or less exogenously constructed entities [and] the many individuals both inside and outside the state who engage in state formation and policy formation [as] enactors of scripts rather more than they are self-directed actors" (Meyer et al 1997: 151). They argue that governments become socialized into the world culture the more embedded they are within IGOs and INGOs. Empirically, world cultural theorists argue that IGOs and INGOs spread scripts and norms. They argue that the promotion of human rights and liberal democracy have become central features of our world culture, and, through these groups, these ideas constitute and envelope the interests of the world.

Boli and Thomas (1997), for example, argue that INGOs, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Labor Organization, successfully catalyzed

change surrounding, for example, the rules of war and the political status of women. In another example, Mathias (2013) argues that national governments passed legislation ending capital punishment as their ties with international human rights institutions and human rights INGOs increased. He argues that these ties allowed for the penetration of world cultural norms rejecting capital punishment that eventually became translated into legislation. Similarly, Cole (2012) has argued that governments' increased propensity to ratify human rights treaties illustrates that a global civil religion is developing that is premised upon human rights. In Venezuela, however, we see a government that defied these norms, by limiting the abilities of some NGOs, even as the government has remained heavily connected with IGOs and INGOs. The legislation thus illustrates that in some places world cultural norms do not dictate government behavior.

The Global Field and its Subfields

Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1993) used the conceptual apparatus of the field in order to understand an array of social phenomena. Bourdieu argued that the social world contained relatively autonomous social spaces, or fields, in which social actors compete for various forms of capital, including economic, social, and cultural capital, as well as a fourth form of capital, symbolic capital, or legitimacy. He argued that social actors maintain positions within fields that correspond with their possession of particular forms of capital, and the possession of these forms of capital make particular moves possible for some and not others.

Although Bourdieu and those influenced by him have used the field approach to understand social phenomena within strictly national contexts, Julian Go (2008) has broadened Bourdieu's scope of analysis into the global arena in order to explain why the UK established a formal form of empire and the US established an informal form of empire during their

hegemonic periods. Go (2008) shows how using field theory allows one to account for both material and cultural considerations when examining state behavior. In doing so, he examines the political-administrative structure of the world polity and then-globally dominant discourses on colonialism and liberation, in order to underscore how the US empire, as opposed to the British empire during its hegemonic period, could not establish a formal colonial empire at the end of World War II, due to the presence of consolidated state structures and a legitimated discourse of anti-colonial nationalism. During this time, the US had to contend with the economic power of the USSR and could not risk losing potential allies by transgressing the symbolically legitimated discourse of anti-colonial nationalism that permeated the globe during the mid-20th century.

Likewise, utilizing a global fields approach to understand contemporary Venezuelan government behavior is more useful than existing international relations and globalization theories for a number of reasons. First, a global fields approach allows the researcher to examine a number of relations through which individuals or entities may exert their influence within a particular field of power (Martin 2003). That is, a global fields approach does not give immediate primacy to any one facet of social life – the economy, military capacity, or alleged norms – but rather it allows the researcher to examine a host of mutually influential phenomena.

Second, a global fields approach permits the researcher to examine the interconnection between both objective field positions and subjective field dispositions, that is, between location in the field and behavior. In doing so, it takes account of both economic and security concerns as well as cultural concerns, including norms and appropriate logics of action. In terms of international relations, this approach helps researchers examine the objective configuration of economic and military power throughout the world as well as the network of social relations between countries. It can help us understand how particular relations between countries can

allow government leaders to take particular actions and not others, given the resources that powerful countries can provide weaker countries. Finally, similar to world cultural theory, a global fields approach emphasizes the influence of outside actors on government behavior. Unlike world cultural theory, however, a global fields approach can help us better understand conflict over the implementation of laws that contest alleged world cultural norms.

What the global fields approach lacks, however, is a full understanding of networks and relations between allied countries, as opposed to atomized countries all competing against each other for capital. Instead of considering the global field as involving individualized countries or a world culture, several researchers have emphasized the importance of “transboundary politics” and the existence of multiple global scripts and networks (Beckfield 2010a, 2010b; Castells 2009; Sassen 2006). Instead of one global script concerning how governments should perform, this perspective recognizes the plurality of scripts and the importance of global networks.

Jason Beckfield (2010b: 145) conceptualizes globalization “as a multidimensional process of network formation (among states, individuals, organizations, and others) across the national boundaries.” This conceptualization of globalization as involving networks, instead of one world culture with all actors more or less “plugged in” depending on the presence of IGOs and INGOs, foregrounds the possibility of conflict over policy scripts. And, while global fields theory also foregrounds conflict, this conceptualization involving the importance of networks within the field allows for the consideration of competing networks with their own forms of capital and norms rather than solely atomized countries existing within the global field.

Likewise, my analysis extends Go’s work by emphasizing the importance of global subfields that exist within the overarching global field. Instead of considering the existence of particular capital within the entire global field, I argue that different global subfields possess

different forms of position-takings. In this study, I show that the Venezuelan government redirected its attention away from a global subfield primarily involving the US and Western Europe, and their associated perspectives, and incrementally focused on a global subfield involving authoritarian governments, including China and Russia, but also Belarus, Iran and other regional, anti-imperial allies.¹¹ Within this global subfield, I argue that targeting NGOs, while transgressive within the purview of the US and Western Europe, had become normative within the subfield involving China, Russia, and other allies.

Corrales and Romero (2013: 170) argue that Venezuela has incrementally cultivated relations with countries such as China and Russia to promote an identity built upon “radical anti-Americanism, or at least, an image of courageously standing up to US objectives.” Smilde and Gill (2013) have also asserted that Venezuela “has promoted a Third World-ist ideology that encourages the development of a multi-polar world and an ‘anti-imperial’ axis of countries.” In doing so, Venezuela has prioritized relations with countries that challenge US hegemony, and it has sought to reduce its dependence on the US and Europe by garnering support from a network of authoritarian and anti-imperial governments, namely China and Russia, that is, perhaps the only countries able to assist Venezuela with significant support beyond the US and Europe.

Over time, as discussed below, China and Russia have increasingly engaged in trade with Venezuela, loaned the government money, provided military support and training, and diplomatically met with their leaders. Representatives from the US and Western European groups that provided funding to Venezuelan NGOs eventually developed a sense that their relations with the government were no longer welcome, and NGO representatives assert that

¹¹ Although space constraints preclude a full consideration of world-systems theory, world-systems theorists might view these semi-peripheral Venezuelan allies as those countries that Venezuela would naturally gravitate towards as a semi-peripheral country itself. However, one might object that Venezuelan history and the disposition of the Venezuelan opposition illustrate that the Venezuelan government’s behavior, in many ways, is subject to the leaders that control it. Before Chávez, for example, the US remained Venezuela’s primary ally.

dialogue with the government would end following the 2006 presidential election. All together, this demonstrates the government's commitment to redirecting its foreign and domestic relations outside US and Western European influence, and towards a newfound subfield of allies.

Venezuela and Global Subfields

In this section, I examine the shifting course of Venezuela's international relations as well as its relations with its domestic NGO community. I underscore the network of social relations and the global subfield that Venezuela cultivated over time. I show that while Venezuela began establishing strong relations with authoritarian and anti-imperial countries during the early years of its government, it remained heavily keyed into relations with the US and Europe as well as the United Nations, the European Union, and the European Commission. When the first, more radical law came up for discussion in 2006, government members met with and listened to the concerns of these actors and its domestic NGO community, eventually shelving the law. When the less radical LDPS came up for discussion in 2010 and the US and European countries evidenced concerns, Venezuela was no longer concerned with their views. By this point, it consolidated its immersion into a new global subfield and cemented relations with authoritarian and anti-imperial governments, namely China and Russia, among several others, as well as focusing on the construction of domestic community councils and communes.

Redirecting Venezuelan Foreign Relations

When President Chávez passed away on March 5, 2013, media outlets emphasized the contentious relations and ideological competition that existed between the US and Venezuela. Although these depictions of Chávez as a fierce critic of US imperialism are accurate, they

betray the trajectory of foreign relations between 1999, when Chávez took office, and 2013. In 1999, Chávez came to power on a platform calling for a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution to include all sectors of society and promote participatory democracy. Shortly after election, Venezuela held a successful referendum for the convocation for a constituent assembly, which replaced their former legislative body and consolidated it into a new National Assembly. The AN then constructed a new constitution, which citizens approved in December 1999.

Although upon Chávez' death the media highlighted the hostile relationship between the US and Venezuela, relations were not always conflicted. Upon taking office, Chávez pledged to respect foreign investments, allow continued foreign investment, and reduce the size of an expansive state – three continual priorities of US foreign policy. In June 1999, he visited the US to attract investment, meeting with executives from JP Morgan, Citigroup, and the New York Stock Exchange, as well as President Clinton (*Wall Street Journal* 6/08/1999). In October 1999, he also traveled throughout Asia to encourage investment. In China, Chávez lauded its “mode of economic development as a potential model for his homeland and urged Chinese entrepreneurs to invest [there]” (GPA 10/12/1999). Chávez also visited leaders and business persons in South Korea, Malaysia, and Japan, among other countries. And in July 2000, he traveled to Germany's Hanover Exposition to secure European investment from investors throughout the continent.

In earlier years, Chávez also strengthened relations with OPEC nations.¹² In August 2000, he visited Nigeria, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, among others, and became the first head of state to meet with Saddam Hussein. The US condemned the visit and attempted to dissuade

¹² Space constraints preclude a full discussion of the role of oil in Venezuela's behavior. Suffice it is to say that oil has played a prominent role in its foreign policy since the early 20th century. The history of Venezuelan foreign relations, however, illustrates that the Venezuelan government has had some of its strongest and most tenuous relations with the same countries, depending on the ideology of the Venezuelan government in power and despite the continued importance of oil. For example, the US was Venezuela's most important ally until the Chávez government. In addition, Venezuelan relations with oil producers such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia are much less politically, economically, and militarily important than relations with countries such as China, Russia, and Bolivia. Thus, oil is one of several factors that shapes foreign policy and is largely dwarfed by political ideology.

him from the visit; however, Venezuela emphasized its sovereignty, and Jose Vicente Rangel, Venezuela's Foreign Minister, responded that "‘Nobody can influence our decision ... [Chávez is] going to arrive [in Iraq], whether it be on a skateboard or a camel’" (BBC 08/08/2000). Rangel noted that the trip "is not an ideological or political visit ... [but] a visit that corresponds to our country's petroleum policy and OPEC's petroleum policy" (AP 08/08/2000). Despite working relations with the US, this demonstrated that Chávez would not shy away from struggle with the US.

Chávez continued to travel throughout Europe in 2001, including visits to Italy and England, to continue promoting investment. During this time, he also traveled throughout Central and South America and promoted regional integration. However, by the end of 2001, Chávez began to place some limits on foreign investment and private enterprise with the Organic Hydrocarbons Law and the Land Law. The former reversed efforts to open the oil industry up to foreign investment and allowed the executive branch greater control over it. The law continued to allow joint-ventures, but mandated that PDVSA, the government owned oil industry, would possess, at minimum, a 51-percent share. The Land Law permitted the government to expropriate idle lands from large landholders in order to breakup land concentration and put unused territories to use (Ellner 2008: 113-14; Wilpert 2007: 254). Both laws irritated large rural landholders and private urban business persons as well as stoking suspicion among investors that the government might not ultimately respect their investments, illustrating the growing legitimacy of state intervention into the economy to the detriment of free market capitalism.

Dismay with government policies in some pockets of Venezuela resulted in a coup on April 11, 2002, led by dissident military officers, angered PDVSA employees, and anti-Chávez politicians and citizens. During the coup, military officers detained Chávez, while Pedro

Carmona, the president of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, was sworn in as president. In the meantime, several NGO representatives, among other individuals, signed a document titled The Carmona Decree, which provided written support for the legitimacy of the transitional government. Although private media groups broadcasted that Chávez had resigned his post, Chávez' family disseminated a message from him denying this. In response, thousands of his supporters swarmed the Miraflores Palace and demanded his return. After the Presidential Guard regained control of it, Chávez was flown back to Caracas and returned to the presidency.

Individuals continue to dispute many of the events surrounding the April 2002 coup, including the role of the US government (Clement 2007; Golinger 2006). Golinger (2006) argues that the US government provided aid for the coup by channeling funds to the political parties and NGOs that supported it in the weeks and months prior. While it is true that some US government agencies provided support for some of the coup participants and supporters, US government leaders have denied knowledge that these groups were planning a coup. In July 2002, the Office of the Inspector General produced a review of US policy towards Venezuela, finding that

“[the National Endowment for Democracy], the Department [of State], and [the Department of Defense] provided training, institution building, and other support under programs totaling about \$3.3 million to Venezuelan organizations and individuals, some of whom are understood to have been involved in the events of April 12–14 ...

However, we found no evidence that this support, or those contacts, directly contributed, or were intended to contribute, to the events of that weekend” (OIG 2002: 19).

In its wake, Chávez asserted that the US government instigated the coup. More than anything else, this became the government's justification for incrementally drifting further away from a subfield involving the US and Western Europe and towards a new subfield governed by

ideas of multi-polarity and counteracting the former countries' global legitimacy. Yet, even despite these accusations, the Venezuelan government still continued to conduct high-level meetings with their US counterparts. In addition, the Venezuelan government continued to cooperate with the US government, including sending law enforcement and judicial members to the US for training sessions. And most importantly, the US remained Venezuela's largest oil consumer and trading partner. Although the Venezuelan government would have seemingly preferred to diversify its trading clientele, no country could purchase petroleum quantities or provide the support required to offset dependence on the US at this time. Preferable or not, Venezuela realized that it could not afford to entirely sacrifice relations with the US.

During these early years, the Venezuelan government remained keyed into a subfield involving the US and Western Europe, by prioritizing economic and social relations with the European Commission (EC), the agency of the European Union (EU) that coordinates international development assistance, as well as the EU and its member-states. The EC developed two programs with Venezuela for the 2001-2006 period: one aimed at preventing natural disasters and one promoting economic diversification by providing support for fisheries. The EC also developed relations with several political NGOs. This included funding several groups to monitor the 2004 recall referendum, the 2005 parliamentary elections, and the 2006 presidential elections. Chávez also continued to seek relations with not only the EU, but also several EU countries. In November 2004, he sought to repair relations with the Spanish government after it recognized the Carmona government in April 2002 and allegedly assisted some of the plotters (RNE Madrid 11/22/2004). And, in October 2005, Chávez traveled to France to meet with Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and several investors to discuss foreign investment into Venezuelan oil (BBC 10/20/2005).

Although Chávez continued to court foreign investment, at the World Social Forum in January 2005, he evidenced desire to chart a new course and publicly endorsed socialism for the first time stating, “There is no solution within capitalism, one must transcend capitalism. Nor is it about statism or state capitalism, which would be the same perversion of the Soviet Union, which was the cause of its fall. We must reclaim socialism as a thesis, as a project and a path, but a new socialism” (Wilpert 2007: 238). Not long after, he began to cultivate intensive relations with countries that opposed the US as well as the EU, demonstrating the diminishing legitimacy these governments possessed within Venezuela. Although Chávez briefly visited Vladimir Putin in earlier years, these visits were cast as strategic relations between governments with energy sources. That is, they were not cast as an ideological alliance developed in opposition to the US and Europe. By 2006, Chávez indeed embraced Putin as a harbinger of a new multi-polar global order struggling to combat US and European influence and solidify a new global subfield. In Russia, Chávez met with Putin and visited several arms factory from where he would purchase weapons to update the military. These initial purchases included over \$1 billion in helicopters, fighter jets, and AK-103 rifles, a move that US leaders asked Russia to reconsider (Smilde and Gill 2013). Chávez also initiated intense relations with Belarus and Iran. While in Belarus, Chávez proclaimed that it embodied a “model of a social state, which [Venezuela is] also starting to build” (ITAR-TASS 07/23/2006). And in Iran, he and Ahmadinejad emphasized enhanced economic relations and urged the world to support Iran’s nuclear program (IRNA 7/30/2006).

In August 2006, Chávez would make a special six-day visit to China to initiate several cooperative arrangements. While there, Chávez asserted that relations between China and Venezuela would produce a “great wall” against US hegemony and help to create a new multi-polar global order that would counteract its influence (*The Guardian* 8/25/2006). Among the

deals made during this trip, China pledged to construct 20,000 houses in Venezuela, increase oil imports to 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2009 and 1 million by 2016, establish joint oil ventures with the Venezuelan government, and develop Venezuela's railway and farm irrigation systems. These agreements were the beginning of China's now-intensive involvement in buoying the Venezuelan government and its economy, extending over \$50 billion in loans since this time.

With these newly redirected relations developing that were being built upon the ideas of multi-polarity and balancing the US and Western Europe, it was during this time that the AN made a move to ban all NGO direct access to foreign funding. In June 2006, the month before Chávez initiated visits and embraced leaders in Russia, China, Iran, and Belarus, the AN proposed and successfully passed the LIC in a first discussion. What is more, during this period, these countries were also considering similar pieces of legislation, evidencing how these political maneuvers were becoming normative within this newly solidifying subfield (Carothers 2006; Gershman and Allen 2006). Rumors that Venezuela was preparing this legislation, however, allowed the international community to quickly respond to it. One month before the LIC's first discussion, US diplomat Kevin Whitaker cabled 19 US embassies throughout Europe and Latin America, stating that "[t]he Embassy has been working with civil society, other diplomatic missions and interested groups to bring domestic and international pressure on [Venezuela] to postpone or modify the legislation" (CableGate 06/05/2006). In order to engage with the Venezuelan government on this issue, the "Canadian Embassy organized a meeting ... attended by representatives of the World Bank, UNDP, and UNHCR, Sinergia, Foro Por la Vida and Paz Activia, as well as the diplomatic missions of Canada, United Kingdom, United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and the European Union" to decide on a strategy to combat the LIC (CableGate 06/05/2006).

In the days before and after the LIC was proposed and passed in a first discussion, a number of governments, including Canada, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK, supplied demarchés to the AN voicing opposition to the law and attempting to utilize what leverage remained (CableGate 06/16/2006a; CableGate 06/16/2006b). Whitaker suggested that it “would be a good time to push the issue with sympathetic governments, taking care ... not make it appear as a [US government]-led effort” due to its diminishing influence and indeed the Canadian, Finnish, and UK embassies led the effort to persuade Venezuela from passing the LIC in a second discussion (CableGate 06/16/2006c; CableGate 08/23/2006). The EU and the UNDP additionally registered their opposition to the law, conveying that it would threaten their own assistance to Venezuela, which a Dutch diplomat suggested had alarmed Saul Ortega, the AN member heading the LIC efforts (CableGate 06/16/06b). During interviews with the author, two EC international cooperation officers stated that the international community made it clear to Venezuelan government members during their meetings that the communal donation pot that the LIC would establish was not something that embassies and donors would provide funding for, and all funding – to both the Venezuelan government and NGOs – could be terminated.

In the end, Ortega told the Finnish ambassador that they did not pass the legislation due to appeals from the international community, illustrating the government’s “keen desire to preserve the appearance of democracy, and their sensitivity when it comes to criticism, particularly from abroad” (CableGate 08/23/2006). Yet, despite the Venezuelan government’s interest in maintaining a democratic reputation, Ortega told the Finnish ambassador that the law would be re-conceptualized and reconsidered in 2007 (CableGate 08/23/2006). Nonetheless, the

legislative setback shows that Venezuela had not yet been fully integrated into a new subfield and its relations with the US and, even more so, Western Europe remained moderately strong.

In September 2006, Chávez visited the UN and provided his most internationally memorable speech. Upon taking the podium, Chávez crossed himself and stated that the area smelled of sulfur from its recent visit from US President George W. Bush. Standing before the global community, Chávez denounced US aggression in the Middle East and its promotion of capitalist policies, and asserted that the world must embrace socialism lest it destroy itself. Three months later, he won reelection in Venezuela with nearly 63% of the vote, and in the post-2006 electoral period, Chávez intensified his aims to push the socialist revolution forward. In 2007, the government held a referendum on a package of laws and constitutional amendments, which included, among other changes, an end to presidential term limits. Initially, Venezuelans narrowly rejected this package; however, the government secured victory in a second referendum in 2009. All the while, *chavistas* continued to dominate all branches of government and merged several pro-Chávez parties, creating the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV).

In the post-electoral period, Chávez consolidated relations with anti-US, anti-Western European governments and became fully integrated into a newfound subfield built upon multipolarity and a rejection of free market capitalism. And while Venezuela had yet to pass any anti-NGO legislation, Venezuela's authoritarian allies had enacted and were now enforcing legislation that regulated NGO activity.¹³ In Russia, for example, the government enacted legislation in April 2006 mandating that NGOs register with the government and disclose all their funding and public activity in advance, and, in Belarus, the government also mandated that NGOs register activities with the national government (Gershman and Allen 2005). Although

¹³ In recent years, following Venezuela, a number of countries outside this network have pursued similar policies, including Hungary, India, and Sri Lanka. Future work might consider the rise of additional subfields beyond the subfield focused on within this chapter.

Venezuela did not pass legislation and remained keyed into relations with European and North American influence, the passage of restrictive legislation in other countries illustrated the possibility of doing so and that a burgeoning norm of restricting NGO activity was developing within this global subfield of countries looking to curb US influence throughout the world.

In the post-electoral period, Chávez made plans to continue to update the military by having some Venezuelan military personnel train with the Russian military and purchasing more equipment from them (NYT 9/8/2008; NYT 11/27/2008). On a second visit to Russia in under three weeks, the Russian government loaned Chávez \$1 billion to purchase weapons, bringing Venezuelan total purchases over the previous years to over \$5 billion (NYT 9/27/2008). The most recent purchases included army tanks, assault rifles, and submarines, among other artillery. And from 2000 to 2007, general trade with Russia increased from \$55 million to \$1.1 billion, with increases in the areas of paper, fertilizer, metals, aircraft, and vehicles, as Putin and Chávez continued to embrace one another as fellow allies in the struggle to counterbalance the US.

And while Russia became Venezuela's primary military partner, China would become Venezuela's most important economic partner. By 2010, trade between Venezuela and China rose 45-fold to \$9.6 billion up from \$218 million in 2000. On top of this trade, China has provided Venezuela with over \$50 billion in loans since 2005, and, in 2007, provided \$4 billion for the Venezuelan National Development Fund. In light of deteriorating relations with the US and Europe, the Chinese government has kept, and continues to keep, Venezuela economically afloat. These increased relations have been paralleled with increased esteem for China among the Venezuelan populace, with 71 percent of the population evidencing a favorable opinion of the country as compared with 53 percent regarding the US (Smilde and Gill 2013).

Venezuelan relations with Belarus also continued to intensify in this post-electoral period. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko visited Chávez for the first time in 2007 and again in 2010 and 2012, establishing several agreements. Although Venezuelan-Belarusian relations have largely centered on energy and trade, Chávez and Lukashenko also emphasized a shared struggle. In December 2007 in Venezuela, Lukashenko illustrated his own concern with creating a multi-polar world and, in barely coded language, reducing US influence, stating that Venezuela and Belarus “pursue an independent foreign political course and a socially oriented domestic political course, seek building a multi-polar world, [and we] need joint efforts to counteract pressure from the outside” (ITAR-TASS 12/9/2007).

While in early periods, Venezuela existed as the sole far left government in the region, with the exception of Cuba. Several leftist political leaders, however, began to come to power within Latin America that provided Venezuela with regional support for its political-economic policies and its struggle with the US and Western Europe. In January 2006, Evo Morales took office in Bolivia, and, in January 2007, Rafael Correa did in Ecuador. Both leaders came to power on an anti-neoliberal platform that admonished past policies and challenged the US. The Bolivian government, for example, expelled its US ambassador in 2008 for alleged plots to destabilize the government and in later years expelled USAID for the same allegations, and the Ecuadorean government expelled a US ambassador in 2011 over events revealed by WikiLeaks and has provided Julian Assange with diplomatic asylum within the Ecuadorean Embassy in London. In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista revolutionary, won the presidential election, assuming office in January 2007, and vociferously supported President Chávez and the promotion of twenty-first century socialism. And when the US decided to suspend \$64 million in

economic aid to Nicaragua over electoral concerns in 2009, President Chávez provided Nicaragua with \$50 million to nearly replace it.

While the Venezuelan government intensified relations with Russia, China, and other allies, relations with the US continued to deteriorate. Oil exports to the US declined from levels above 1.5 million bpd in 2005 to levels below 1 million bpd beginning in 2009, culminating with 668,000 bpd at the beginning of 2015. US-Venezuelan relations have also become politically strained, evidenced by the fact that since July 2010 the two countries have not exchanged ambassadors. In addition, the US Treasury sanctioned several Venezuelan government officials due to their alleged ties with Colombian rebels in 2008 – and again in 2011. These relations have strained even further, into the present with the Obama Administration recently publishing an executive order in March 2015 calling Venezuela a national security threat.

Although in Venezuela the AN had not yet reignited the LIC in the post-electoral period, the possibility remained. The Finnish, Belgian, and Canadian ambassadors sought to continually leverage what clout remained and request that Venezuela to halt attempts to pass restrictive legislation. However, similar to US influence, European influence had begun to fade. Two representatives from the EC stated that by 2010 the influence of the EU had perceivably waned. Not only were EC projects with Venezuela subject to end in 2013, but government officials had begun to appear less interested in cooperation with Europe. Although one official sensed interest from the Venezuelan government until 2007 “to bring more prestige and technological advance to [the government’s] line of work,” interest began to wane thereafter and

“over time it must have become clear, even to the last technocrat, that putting yourself into discussions on cooperation with the EU is maybe not as suspicious as asking for cooperation from the US but only just a little bit less so ... if you were politically minded

then obviously it was clear you would not propose cooperation with an entity that was at least doubtful in terms of its loyalty to Chávez ... You would be much better off proposing a new cooperation with China or Belarus.”

That is, within its new subfield, relations with the EU were no longer perceived as legitimate.

During 2009, the government kept restrictive legislation off the AN agenda. In 2010, however, following a considerable showing from the opposition during the September legislative elections, the Venezuelan government ramped up its efforts to pass several pieces of legislation before the new Congress would convene in the new year. During this election, the opposition nearly received the same percentage of the popular vote (47%) as the PSUV (48%). As a result, the opposition would receive around 40% of legislative seats, and would mean that the PSUV would no longer command a supermajority within the legislature.

In the wake of these elections, Venezuelan government leaders initiated a new push for anti-NGO legislation, among a push for other legislative measures that sought to consolidate the communal state, including the Organic Law of Popular and Public Planning, and the Organic Law of Communes. On November 23, 2010, the Venezuelan government held a short conference to discuss defending national sovereignty against US imperialism and its funding for domestic NGOs. During the conference, former President Chávez, Roy Daza, and Eva Golinger each spoke at length about the need to combat US imperialism and introduce a law to restrict foreign financing for political NGOs. Thereafter, several government members raised the issue of the LIC and began efforts to put this piece of legislation on AN agenda for their upcoming legislative session.

However, in 2010, the AN did not pass the LIC, but instead successfully passed the LDPS in two discussions in just over a week. Interestingly, this piece of legislation did not

emanate from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the LIC did, but came from the Permanent Commission of Defense and Security. This suggests that perhaps some of the members from the initial commission that devised the LIC still remained potentially hesitant to pass legislation that took aim at all NGOs. Indeed, several institutions that had initially criticized the LIC in 2006, criticized the LIC in 2010, following former President Chávez' vociferous support for a law that would target foreign funding for political parties and NGOs. This included Amnesty International, the Organization of the American States, and Foro por la Vida, a coalition of Venezuelan human rights organizations. It is thus conceivable that these actors pushed the members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to, once again, reconsider the passage of this piece of legislation.

While these international and domestic organizations took aim the LIC and sought to stall its passage, *chavista* legislators on the Permanent Commission of Defense and Security drafted the LDPS, and circumscribed this piece of legislation to prohibit political NGOs and political parties from receiving foreign funding. It also prohibited these groups from inviting foreign individuals into the country that offend Venezuelan institutions and threaten Venezuelan national sovereignty, however vaguely conceived. During this time, US and EU leaders suggest that Venezuelan government members seemingly possessed no regard for the alarm evidenced by its Western European and North American counterparts as it seemed to have during earlier periods, and displayed no interest in speaking with members from the North American and Western European international community concerning this new piece of legislation. During this December legislative session, as I will discuss below, many NGO leaders also stated that they were on vacation, and had no ability to combat the law, should they have wanted to organize their efforts. They also asserted that by this point, the Venezuelan government had severed most

of its dialogic relations with most NGOs, and, similar to the US and Western Europe, seemingly possessed no interest in discussing the legislation and its effects with them.

The Breakdown of Dialogic Relations with the NGO Community, 1998-2010

While Chávez campaigned in 1998 on the idea of constructing a new constitution that would promote a protagonistic and participatory democracy, his government's relationship with most NGOs deteriorated throughout his time in office. In the end, his earlier relations with the NGO community would become replaced by relations with community councils and other popular power bases, a move running parallel with integration into its new subfield.

In 1998, Chávez corralled the support of various segments of society. He blasted neoliberalism and argued that it produced rampant inequality. Smilde (2011: 4-5) shows how the "economic decline of the 1980s and 1990s ... spurred a fundamental realignment in social-class identity political cleavages. In effect, Venezuela moved from a modern conflict between Right and Left, to a postmodern clash between those with a place in organized, formal society and those without ... The former work in jobs with benefits and legal protections, have legally recognized property, and enjoy municipal services such as water, telephone, and police protection; the latter lack formal employment, live in barrios and rural areas not fully recognized by the state, and do not enjoy full access to the benefits of modern citizenship: job security and protections, professional health care, municipal services, and professional police protection."

What Chávez most clearly emphasized in his 1998 campaign was the need to rewrite the constitution to allow for participatory democracy, and, upon winning, he set out to rewrite the Venezuelan Constitution with the assistance of several NGOs. An individual representing an

NGO that focuses on public health and environmental conservation legislation and participates in Sinergia, an organization that represents the interests of a multiplicity of NGOs, recounts that

“in 1999 Sinergia did a large consultation process with organizations around Venezuela to bring in proposals to the new Constitution ... so there was a lot of participation in the process of writing the new Constitution. For example, the article that deals with the right of free association has an added phrase which says not only that every person has the right to associate freely but also that the state has the obligation to facilitate the exercise of social rights. That was added by Sinergia.”

At this time, relations between NGOs and the government were rather constructive, and dialogic relations existed wherein representatives could meet with high-ranking government members and express their demands (Garcia-Guadilla 2003; Salamanca 2004: 101). The head of an NGO that focuses on police brutality and human rights recounted in an interview that in 1999 her organization worked with the government on issues of impunity and pushed the government to address these issues within the constitution. She believes that during this time the government truly wanted to work with NGOs that also endorsed the move toward participatory democracy.

In fact, the new constitution identified civil society as an essential component of society writ large. Salamanca (2004: 101-102) points out how “the constitution ... confers the following attributes to civil society: Article 206 says that civil society should be consulted by the state-level Legislative Councils on matters of interest to the states ... and Article 296 states that civil society nominates three members to the ... National Electoral Council.” However, who exactly would represent “civil society” and be considered “the bearers of rights to intervene in public affairs” became contested terrain, as civil society indeed encompasses any organization that sits between the market and the state (Salamanca 2004: 102).

If at the beginning of Chávez's rule there was some ambiguity concerning who the government would recognize as the voice of civil society, the government clarified what groups possessed legitimacy in the post-coup 2002 period. Smilde (2009: 4) describes this period between 2003 and 2006 as a period in which the government began to actively sponsor the participation of some select groups. Rather than consulting with various segments of civil society, including human rights groups, neighborhood associations, and the multiplicity of existing religious groups, it began sponsoring citizen groups that generally supported the government. As an example, "at the end of July 2004, several neo-Pentecostal groups received \$400,000 from the government for a project to foment peace and dialogue. They used the money for several small workshops but also two large rallies ... At the rallies, the organizers claimed to speak for the entire evangelical movement in throwing their support behind the Chávez government" (Smilde 2009: 4-5). After the coup, the government had also become increasingly suspicious of NGOs that received funding from the US government. In 2003, the government enlisted the support of several groups to assist with the transformations that would take place in the transition from the old to the new constitution. However, "criteria for participation excluded from official recognition those social organizations 'that receive foreign financing,' thus denying them the right to participate in the decisionmaking process" (Garcia-Guadilla 2003: 188).

During the period of sponsorship, the government also sponsored the development of communal councils throughout the country with the passage of the Law on Communal Councils in 2006. Smilde (2009: 4) describes the communal councils as "local initiatives in which 200-400 households within a self-defined geographical area, consisting of 20 percent of the population, hold elections and write a charter. They then write a history of the community, make a list of problems the community suffers, and translate these problems into projects. They request

financial support from public institutions and then are charged with exercising supervision over these projects.” Some individuals have asserted that while the communal councils might empower particular communities to make changes and improve their neighborhoods, the communal councils are not truly autonomous groups as they rely upon the federal government for their funding. One former representative from Sinergia, the umbrella organization representing a number of Venezuelan NGOs, asserted that:

“[i]f you concentrate in your very local community, [and on their] practices, policies, or needs, you are listened to. Otherwise, forget it. If there is a major decision taken even though it affects you, you have no word, and you will not be listened to. So we are seeing a lot of people upset, people who strongly believed in this idea of participation ... even if they get organized as an organization of the popular power, they are not listened to or have a major influence ... so I think that more and more what we are seeing is the authoritarian face of the government ruling by decree laws ... above the people and not really listening.”

Others, however, view the communal councils as a countervailing check on unbridled state power and the true motor behind the creation of a new radically democratic, socialist society (Wilpert 2007).

By 2006, although the government had clearly demonstrated what groups it deemed to truly represent the interests of civil society, NGOs were not entirely cut off from discussions. In June 2006, when the government first considered the LIC, a representative from an NGO focused on the rule of law, recalled that government members working on the law “invited [his organization and other organizations] to a kind of formal meeting. We spent perhaps a couple of hours ... discussing what we thought, giving them our opinion, they gave us their opinion. We

kind of shared both opinions, but that was it.” Although he did not evidence much enthusiasm for the meeting that took place between the government and these groups, the event illustrates that the government still reached out to some NGOs concerning the law and were at least willing to hear their concerns. And when these NGOs could no longer directly consult with the government, this representative stated that they worked through foreign embassies and international groups in order to convey their demands, as illustrated in the previous section.

Smilde (2009: 4) describes the current period, that is, beginning in 2007, as characterized by government-centralized participation. Through constitutional reform, the Law on Communal Councils, and thereafter the Law of Communes, the government has promoted the development of a Communal State, wherein communal councils can group together to form an extensive commune. Within the communes, communities can possess jurisdiction over banks, communal projects, and state-allocated resources. While government supporters portray these changes as providing citizens with directly democratic mechanisms, critics have argued that these legislative changes create parallel governments that aim to undermine opposition mayoralties and states and are thus illiberal and undemocratic. Regardless of opinion, however, what is evident is a clear shift in perceptions of legitimacy. Throughout this current period, many NGOs have expressed feeling marginalized from the government and its discussions on various issues, and some have even reported harassment from the government. The representative from the NGO focused on the rule of law that had a brief meeting with the government over the LIC, for example, recounted how the government has denounced his and other organizations for their work:

“They publicly insult you, they threaten in general: ‘[NGOs] are doing this,’ ‘they are not patriotic,’ ‘they are selling away the motherland,’ and ... accusations of being also even terrorist ... or working for [the US] in order to overthrow Chávez, for example.”

When the LDPS came up for discussion in December 2010, NGO representatives were not consulted as they were in 2006. That is, within its new subfield, regard for political NGOs no longer remained normative. As one head of an NGO focused on promoting general human rights recalled: “when [the LDPS] was first discussed, I was on vacation ... I think this is why they did it at this time [December], around the holidays. Most people were away and were not thinking about it ... We really had no time to prepare a response and the government was not interested in speaking with us.” Although the government has yet to prosecute any organization under this law, representatives fear that it could be used at any point, and some have even returned or foregone funding, because of it.

Discussion and Conclusion

For much of the 20th century, pluralists and neo-Marxists led the sociological debate over legislation. While pluralists contended that interest groups ultimately condition the passage of legislation, neo-Marxists asserted that business interests prevail. In the case of the LDPS in Venezuela, however, neither pluralist nor neo-Marxist theory helps us make sense of the passage and timing of the LDPS. In contemporary Venezuela, *chavistas* have dominated all political institutions and socialism has garnered legitimacy. We are thus pressed to make sense of the obstacles to its passage and examine how international factors have played a role in shaping the government’s initial decision to stall the passage of a more radical piece of anti-NGO legislation and pass a less radical version of legislation prohibiting foreign funding for political NGOs.

Some scholars have used realist theory to account for Venezuelan government behavior. For example, some have understood the Venezuelan military’s acquisition of Russian arms as a realist response to the perceived threat from the US (Corrales and Romero 2013). While this

example theoretically makes sense, realist theory cannot account for the “when and why then” involving the passage of the LDPS. Based on realist theory, we would have expected the government to have prohibited foreign funding for at least some NGOs in the aftermath of the 2002 coup that removed Chávez from power. The US had recognized that several US agencies funded NGOs that vocally supported the coup and the transitional government it established. Several independent journalists also produced evidence showing how many of these NGOs received increased funding in the months leading up to the coup. However, the government did not enact any restrictive legislation until 2010. While realists may understand the LDPS as in the government’s interests, realism, by itself, cannot account for when Venezuela passed the LDPS.

By contrast, world cultural theory helpfully directs attention to how a globally produced system of norms often conditions government behavior. It also helps make sense of the fact that, for a time, the government did not enact restrictive legislation due to the continued influence of the US and Western Europe. However, this theory cannot account for why the government broke with norms surrounding NGOs. That is, without substantial reformulation, it cannot explain why Venezuela broke with the “world culture” and opted to target entities that promote democracy.

Global fields theory with an emphasis on the existence of subfields and networks rectifies the problems associated with these theories and allows the researcher to account for the shifting subfield within which Venezuela has directed its focus, and ultimately account for the passage of the LDPS. Venezuela initially sought relations with the US and Western Europe, and, even when it became apparent that the US government funded some of the 2002 coup supporters and even participants, it remained keyed into a subfield involving these countries. Dialogic relations between Venezuela and multilateral groups persisted. Even more, the US and the EU remained Venezuela’s primary trading partners, effectively financing the Bolivarian Revolution.

Over time, however, the government increasingly embraced other anti-imperial and some authoritarian governments that composed a newly developing subfield championing multipolarity and counteracting US and Western European global influence, including enacting anti-NGO legislation. By 2010, when the Venezuelan government enacted the LDPS, a more toned down piece of legislation in comparison with the LIC, its strongest political-economic relations existed with, on the one hand, the authoritarian governments of China, Russia, Belarus, and Iran, and, on the other hand, anti-neoliberal, Latin American governments. This changing subfield was domestically paralleled by increasing emphasis on communal councils and communes. And, while the government's formerly dialogic relations with the US and Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, NGOs, stymied Venezuela's original efforts to pass restrictive legislation, these avenues were all but sidelined by 2010, as Venezuela became fully integrated into a new subfield.

By 2010, the subfield in which Venezuela had become embedded was a field in which authoritarian and anti-imperial governments, on the one hand, and popular power bases, on the other hand, commanded the government's attention. These newly prioritized relations between Venezuela and these entities – and de-prioritized relations with formerly important governments and organizations – allowed the government the political opportunity to pass this legislation. By this point, no legitimate opposition stood in the way of the government's goals, and those groups and governments that had developed close relations with Venezuela, were not governments or organizations that opposed restricting NGO operations. In addition, a new Venezuelan commission took up the anti-NGO cause in the wake of recent elections that eliminated the PSUV's congressional supermajority. And while the initial legislative committee might have remained hesitant to pass legislation that targeted all NGOs, the new legislative commission

constructed legislation that circumscribed its focus to target only political NGOs, political parties, and the foreign individuals that might sponsor to speak within the country. All together, Venezuela's restrictive policies conformed to behavior that had begun to burgeon among its international allies throughout the world.

Instead of championing the ability of NGOs to promote human rights, Venezuela and other countries have championed their national sovereignty and sought to roll back the influence of the US and Western Europe, and their domestic NGO communities. While the US and several EU countries have distanced themselves from the Venezuelan government, the Venezuelan government has found itself ever closer with the Chinese and Russian governments, among other allies. And instead of a consensual "world culture," we see that these latter governments increasingly diverge from US and European priorities, by, in some instances, promoting radical democracy, state-based economies, a multi-polar world, and twenty-first century socialism.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

In this research project, I have arrived at two sets of findings as they concern the two central foci of this study: the nature of US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez government, and how the Venezuelan government has legislatively targeted foreign funding for political parties and political NGOs. First, I have recognized that the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives, which have governed previous analyses of US democracy assistance efforts, contain several theoretical blindspots, and, as a result, I have developed a third theoretical perspective, that is, a neo-Weberian perspective on US democracy assistance efforts abroad. And second, I have argued that a global fields approach that emphasizes the shifting nature of Venezuelan international relations helps us account for the timing of the passage of legislation that has prohibited Venezuelan political parties and NGOs from receiving foreign funding. In the sections below, I detail each of these sets of findings. From there, I discuss how these findings might inform future work on related lines of research, and, finally, I provide some concluding thoughts on what sorts of research I intend to pursue that will build upon the research in this project.

Main Findings

The Nature of US Democracy Assistance: Neo-Tocquevillian and Neo-Marxist Shortcomings

First, these findings include a demonstration of the utility of a neo-Weberian perspective. Neo-Marxist and neo-Tocquevillian perspectives have each governed previous analyses of US democracy assistance efforts. These two perspectives, however, possess several theoretical blindspots, and, with the development a neo-Weberian perspective, the aim of this project has been to rectify these blindspots and provide a more theoretically robust understanding of US

democracy assistance efforts in the contemporary world. In addition, the aim is that these findings might inform future work on US democracy assistance, US foreign policy more broadly, anti-NGO legislation, and political globalization.

Indeed, the neo-Tocquevillian and neo-Marxist perspectives cannot account for several issues involving contemporary US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela. First, the neo-Tocquevillian perspective fails to respect the multiplicity of democratic visions that exist throughout the world. Democracy, of course, remains an essentially contested concept, but neo-Tocquevillian scholars uncritically promote only a US-style form of liberal democracy. This conceptualization markedly contrasts with the Venezuelan government's perspective on democratic politics, and their emphasis on radical, rather than solely liberal, democratic features of governance. Due to these differing perspectives, the US has primarily funded an array of opposition political parties and opposition-oriented NGOs, and hardly worked with the Chávez government on public projects.

Second, neo-Tocquevillian scholars might object that they fund opposition groups, because these groups are the country's true democratic champions. However, the neo-Tocquevillian perspective fails to recognize that the US has funded several groups within Venezuela that have engaged in anti-democratic and unconstitutional practices. And while the US might not have funded these groups for these particular purposes, it continued to fund them even after these groups had engaged in these anti-democratic and unconstitutional acts, including supporting the 2002 coup d'état and the transitional government that temporarily displaced the Chávez government. Of course, this was a confusing time, and many individuals had believed that Chávez ordered military and police forces to fire upon protesters. However, many of these groups supported an unconstitutional transition of power. And indeed, these groups continued

their efforts to unseat former President Chávez even after the 2002 coup failure, albeit in a legal manner, and the US continued to provide them with technical and material support. These dynamics illustrate that US funding has frequently operated in a partisan rather than a principled manner.

On the other end of the spectrum, the neo-Marxist perspective also fails to provide a convincing analysis of US efforts in contemporary Venezuela. First, this perspective inaccurately asserts that transnational capitalist class interests direct US democracy assistance efforts. Throughout most of the NED and its associated groups programs, we have found that there is hardly much emphasis on economic issues. Indeed, the NED has funded some groups that focus on private property rights, and the NED has commented in their program descriptions on how the Chávez government has discouraged international investment. However, most of their programs have centered on purely political issues such as rule of law, conflict mediation, decentralization efforts, and civil liberties. Indeed, one group associated with the NED includes CIPE, and this group has primarily worked with one libertarian group, CEDICE, that has promoted free market principles within Venezuela. However, it is not entirely clear that even this group has promoted policies that necessarily enfranchise a transnational capitalist class, so much as a domestic Venezuelan capitalist class. In addition, in the instance of rural property rights, several domestic Venezuelan groups, rather than transnational corporations, condemned the Venezuelan government's ability to expropriate unused, rural landholdings. Neo-Marxists might certainly object that US funding need not flow to actors that specifically promote neoliberal economic interests. Liberal democratic policies, however, do not necessarily translate into policies that enfranchise transnational capitalist class interests above all else. A theoretical lacuna thus remains concerning why it is that the US promotes the sorts of political policies that it does

within places such as Venezuela. And so, overall, there is hardly convincing evidence that transnational capitalist class interests have directed US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela.

Second, in some few instances, the US has indeed worked with groups that ultimately lent support to the democratic credibility of the Venezuelan government, including an electoral observation group that continually verified Chávez and other *chavista* politicians' success at the polls, an NGO that lauded former President Chávez' creation of a new Constitution and its focus on human rights, and an NGO that worked with the Ministry of the Interior to investigate the deaths during the 2002 coup as well as on conflict mediation efforts in a *chavista* neighborhood. In addition, the IRI and NDI also worked with Chávez' party on several occasions, including providing his party with research on the perception of his party and the views of Venezuelans on several political issues. The neo-Marxist perspective, however, cannot account for these instances, and ultimately all of these dynamics involving both perspectives have pushed us to consider an additional perspective on contemporary US democracy assistance efforts abroad.

In order to rectify these issues, I have developed a neo-Weberian perspective concerning contemporary US democracy assistance efforts abroad. From this perspective, we can account for the ideological biases that are imbued within these US efforts, that is, we can, like the neo-Tocquevillian perspective, recognize how an emphasis on US-style liberal democratic forms of governance have shaped US efforts abroad. In doing so, we can theoretically make sense of why the US has thus furnished the Venezuelan opposition with funding and support, as it understands these groups as ultimately encouraging US-style liberal democratic reforms, despite some of their anti-democratic efforts. What is more, we can make sense of the fact that on few occasions

the US has supported groups that have ultimately bolstered the Venezuelan government and its claims to legitimacy.

And finally, and most importantly, the neo-Weberian perspective helps us to link US democracy assistance programs with a history of regional paternalism, wherein US officials have understood many leftist Latin American leaders as requiring a political education in order to properly govern their subjects. In the case of Venezuela, we have seen how US democracy promoting agencies continually denigrated the Venezuelan government and many of the public policies and political developments that Venezuelan citizens electorally approved, including the new Venezuelan Constitution. In addition, we see how the US also continually depicted former President Chávez as governing in an authoritarian manner, and likening many of his policies to Soviet and Cuban policies, that is, policies that have been enacted under one-party states. What is more, we have seen how US officials have depicted former President Chávez in an Orientalist and racist manner. That is, US officials have described Chávez in rather beastly terms, and they have portrayed him as an uncivil, barbarous, and undemocratic individual. We encountered these depictions in both US embassy cables and US agency documents. Indeed, these visions have served as a justification for US democracy assistance efforts in the country.

In many historical instances, the US went beyond these forms of tutelage and attempted to displace many Latin American governments that seemingly have not shared the same political-economic vision for the region as the US government. And while such brazen efforts to openly overthrow leftist Latin American governments would conceivably receive more resistance in the post-Cold War world, US democracy assistance efforts indeed resemble some of the softer tactics that the CIA and the Department of State utilized during the mid-20th century in Latin America and beyond. Nonetheless, these efforts also remain rooted in racist and Orientalist

understandings of foreign leaders and the citizens that support them, and have led to a paternalist foreign policy approach towards Venezuela.

Global Fields and the Timing of Anti-NGO Legislation

In addition to addressing the nature of US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela during the early years of the Chávez government, I have also demonstrated how a global fields approach helps us understand why and when the Venezuelan government passed legislation cracking down on foreign funding for Venezuelan political parties and NGOs. Although the Venezuelan government had threatened to pass anti-NGO legislation in the aftermath of the 2002 coup d'état and in the subsequent years, *chavista* legislators did not actually propose anti-NGO legislation, that is, the Law on International Cooperation, to the Venezuelan National Assembly until 2006, and it did not pass anti-NGO legislation, that is, the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination, until 2010. While the first piece of legislation would have prohibited direct foreign funding for all Venezuelan NGOs and mandate that foreign donors must donate to one encompassing communal pot, which the Venezuelan national government would have discretion over, the latter piece of legislation prohibited foreign funding for political parties and political NGOs and prohibited these groups from sponsoring foreign citizens to enter the country that offend the national government.

In Chapter 8, I argued that from a number of theoretical perspectives the passage of anti-NGO legislation is not actually all that surprising, given that *chavistas* dominated all branches of government and continually emphasized the need to crack down on foreign funding, specifically from the US, for domestic groups. Instead, I have argued that what is indeed puzzling is the timing of the passage of anti-NGO legislation. From a number of perspectives, we might have

expected the Venezuelan government to pass this legislation at a much earlier point. Realist theorists, for instance, argue that state leaders aim to preserve their state power through most any means, including war. From some perspectives, we might also have predicted the Venezuelan government not to have passed this legislation. World cultural theorists, for instance, assert that a world culture exists that champions liberal democracy, human rights, and the NGOs that promote these values. They argue that countries that are keyed into the world culture through their affiliation with IGOs and INGOs will adhere to the world culture. Yet, despite the Venezuelan government's connection with these institutions, it still passed legislation that targets NGOs and their operations.

Instead of these perspectives, I have argued that a global fields perspective that emphasizes the Venezuelan government's shifting international relations helps us make sense of the Venezuelan government's passage of this legislation. Borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, Julian Go (2008, 2011) extended Bourdieu's conceptualization of a social field into the global arena. In doing so, he has argued that states compete with other states over both material and cultural resources, and, in his own work, he has compared and contrasted different aspects of British and US hegemony. I have argued, though, that his perspective lacks attention to the importance of networks of countries within the global field, and how certain norms often develop within certain subfields of countries that exist within the global field.

In terms of anti-NGO legislation in Venezuela, I have demonstrated during earlier periods of time, such as when the Venezuelan government initially sought to pass the Law on International Cooperation in 2006, Venezuela remained keyed into relations with the US, Western European countries, and the European Union. And when anti-NGO legislation came up for discussion, I have argued that these actors successfully pressured the Venezuelan government

to reconsider its passage. In the post-2006 period, I demonstrated that Venezuela consolidated relations with an anti-US, sovereignty-hardening nexus of new allies, including Belarus, Bolivia, China, Ecuador, Iran, and Russia. What is more, I have shown that within this new nexus of relations, anti-NGO legislation had become quite normative as a number of these countries had passed or were also attempting to pass anti-NGO legislation. That is, within this new nexus of relations, anti-NGO was not understood as transgressive, as it was within the Venezuelan government's former set of relations. And come 2010, a large portion of the Venezuelan government seemingly did not care what the US, Western European countries, and the European Union thought of this piece of legislation, and the Venezuelan government passed it in two readings in just under a week. Indeed, several government members had also raised the issue of the Law on International Cooperation in 2010, and several institutions again publicly criticized this piece of legislation, as they did in 2006. However, Venezuelan government members still found an avenue to pass legislation that restricted the operations of political parties and NGOs.

Informing Future Work

The hope for this project is that this research can inform future research endeavors on similar issues throughout the world. There are two main areas of research that this project aims to inform. They include research on US foreign policy and its democracy assistance efforts, and anti-NGO legislation. Theoretically, this project also illustrates the importance of taking ideal interests seriously without reducing them to a materialist base, and how conflict continues to characterize global society and the policies that governments pursue.

First, this research project might inform future research endeavors that examine the more idealistic side of US foreign policy, that is, its democracy assistance and non-lethal democracy

promotion efforts. In more countries than not, the US maintains democracy assistance programs, including within most countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. This research might certainly inform projects that involve US democracy assistance efforts in these regions. It is possible that US efforts in Venezuela greatly differ from US efforts elsewhere. For example, while the US has largely worked with opposition political parties and NGOs in Venezuela, the US might regularly work more with governments and state institutions elsewhere. In particular, in countries where the US maintains strong relations, the US democracy assistance community might work with governments and state institutions therein on a more regular basis.

In addition, while it appears that the US government and its main providers of democracy assistance largely cohere on their overall efforts in Venezuela, it is conceivable that the government and these groups might work at cross-purposes in other locations. In particular, it is conceivable that in places where the US government maintains strong relations with authoritarian governments, US democracy assistance donors, such as the NED and USAID, might work with and fund groups that are critical of those authoritarian governments. For example, the US has maintained strong relations with countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Saudi Arabia, which possess authoritarian governments. And so, it is possible that we find several permutations involving US government policy and the policies of many actors in the US democracy assistance community.

Second, Christensen and Weinstein (2013) and Dupuy et al (2016) have shown that anti-NGO legislation and anti-NGO efforts have become increasingly more prominent throughout the world in recent years. While this project deals only with Venezuela, it could certainly inform future work on countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Hungary, and Sri Lanka that have also targeted NGOs and sought to curtail their activities, including their ability to receive foreign

funding. As I have done, scholars could also examine how these countries' international relations correspond with domestic policy. Venezuela, of course, maintains strong relations with Ecuador and Bolivia, as do China and Russia. In Hungary and Sri Lanka, however, it would be interesting to analyze these relations and see how they correspond with domestic policy. In addition, questions remain concerning why some of the governments that pioneered the use of anti-NGO legislation decided to pursue anti-NGO legislation at the time they did. These instances, as discussed in Chapter 8, surely run counter to what world cultural theorists, for example, would predict, and could thus yield important theoretical and empirical insights into the relationship between states and civil society groups.

At a more theoretical level, this project also illustrates how international factors often impinge on broader policy decisions. While this study could certainly inform future work on anti-NGO legislation, it could also inform work that examines state policy more generally. The argument is assuredly not that international actors will always influence the domestic policies of other countries; however, on some issues that involve democracy and human rights, we might certainly expect particular actors to urge particular governments to pass or not to pass particular pieces of legislation. Thus, this study can provide some working hypotheses for additional work on domestic policies that draw the attention of the international community, such as democracy and human rights issues.

Personal Future Research Plans

In terms of my own future research endeavors, I plan to extend my analysis to include neighboring Colombia. Throughout the past several decades, the US government has maintained much stronger relations with the Colombian government. Even despite much international

criticism concerning the Colombian government's support for paramilitary forces that had murdered human rights and union activists, successive US government leaders have continued to supply the Colombian government with economic and military support, and they have continually met with and invited Colombian state leaders to Washington DC.

A comparative analysis involving both Colombia and Venezuela could yield even more robust results concerning the nature of US democracy assistance efforts throughout the world. There are two interesting possibilities that this research could explore. As discussed above, one possibility is that US democracy assistance providers more readily work with the Colombian government and state institutions. In doing so, they might provide less support for political parties and NGOs that criticize Colombian government policies. However, another possibility is that while the US government maintains strong relations with the Colombian government, the US democracy assistance community provides funding and resources for groups that have indeed routinely criticized Colombian government policies on a number of issues, such as workers' rights, women's rights, and other general human rights issues.

Conclusion of the Conclusion

Overall, this project addresses one of the most fundamental political sociological issues: the relationship between the state and civil society. In doing so, it has broadened the lens to include relations between foreign states and civil society abroad. All together, this project has addressed two issues – the nature and trajectory of US democracy assistance efforts in contemporary Venezuela, and how the Venezuelan government has responded to these efforts by passing legislation that curtails the practices of political parties and politically-oriented NGOs, including the reception of foreign funding and sponsoring foreign individuals to come into the

country that offend the Venezuelan government. The hope is that this project might inform future research on both US foreign policy and government efforts to crack down on NGO activities, and, in my own work, I intend to pursue similar questions through a comparative project involving US democracy assistance efforts in Venezuela's neighboring country, Colombia.

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