GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Venezuelan General Deterrence: New Axis of Evil or Third World Liberation?

By Ryan Mallett-Outtrim
Global Research, December 30, 2013
Venezuelanalysis.com 25 December 2013

Region: Latin America & Caribbean
Theme: Global Economy

Over the last decade general deterrence imperatives have played a major role in shaping Venezuelan foreign policy. This is largely a response to US imperialism. After decades of aggression against its southern neighbours, Washington is today viewed by the Venezuelan state as a prime security threat. The threat however, is not reciprocal despite efforts to securitise Venezuela as a belligerent in US discourse. However, even after years of modernising its armed forces, the Venezuelan military plays an almost insignificant role in the country's general deterrence strategy, and are of a negligible threat to Washington. Instead of relying on military deterrence, Venezuela has instead sought to soft balance the US through the creation of international cooperative institutions. However, these institutions are more than just conventional alliances, and merely disregarding them as populist appeals is simplistic. Yet while the revolutionary character of Venezuelan foreign policy remains unclear, it is evident that the country's deterrence policy is not only a bulwark against US imperialism in Latin America, but is also ideologically incoherent with neoliberalism.

For over a decade, the presence of an overwhelmingly powerful regional antagonist has played an important role in shaping Venezuelan foreign policy, with the 2002 coup acting as a watershed moment in the securitisation of the US in Venezuelan discourse. When former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was temporarily ousted from his elected office that year, Hakim (2006, p 48) concedes that Washington's "initial enthusiasm" for the armed insurrection raised questions about US "commitment to democracy". Of course, *initial enthusiasm* is an understatement. As Harvey (2003 p 8) puts it, Washington was gripped with "euphoria" when it was evident that "a businessman" had seized power. Although it's unclear whether or not the US was an "organizing [sic] force" behind the coup (as Chavez suggested), it's "clear is that the U.S.[sic] had prior knowledge that a coup was in the works and quickly recognized[sic] interim President Luis Carmona Estanga when he took power" (Smilde, 2013). Indeed, Carmona was widely viewed in Washington as someone who would create "the basis for solid future development" (Harvey, 2003 p 8). However, given the historic position of most of Latin America in the world economy, perhaps *development* isn't the right term. Since the 16th Century, the continent's economic underdevelopment has been the "outcome of a particular series of relationships to... [the] international system" (Bodenheimer, 1971, p 330). Bodenheimer (1971, pp 331-332) postulates that Latin American underdevelopment can be explained in the framework of dependency theory, whereby the "growth in the dependent nations occurs as a reflex of the expansion of the dominant nations, and is geared towards the needs of the dominant economies". Like European colonial powers in the past, during the last century US "development" and Latin American "underdevelopment" were "structurally linked...two outcomes of the same historical process: the global expansion of capitalism" (Bodenheimer, 1971, p 334). These

two historic factors are crucial to understanding contemporary Venezuelan-US relations.

However, despite the historic importance of the region to US development, Washington's unfocused, and at times lethargic approach to Latin America in the new century has not only contributed to the persistence of glum relations with Caracas; it has also reinforced a growing perception in the region that the US is unreliable. Following September 11, 2001, US interest in Latin America became "sporadic and narrowly targeted" (Hakim, 2006, p 39). Throughout the first half of the decade, US-Latin American relations "seriously deteriorated" and support for US policy diminished notably (Hakim, 2006, p 39). By the decade's mid-point, few "Latin Americans, in or out of government, consider[ed] the United States to be a dependable partner" (Hakim, 2006, p 39). These perceptions are not without both contemporary and historic justification. Indeed, while the White House "praised…and justified" the 2002 Venezuelan coup (Clement, 2005, p 70), "[m]ost people in Latin America…recalled what the Chileans now ironically refer to as 'their little September 11th of 1973 when the democratically elected socialist, Salvador Allende, was overthrown in a brutal croup by General Augusto Pinochet" (Harvey, 2003 p 8). Over 100,000 Chileans were detained and tortured under Pinochet, and thousands were killed under a regime that enjoyed significant US support (Winn, 2004, pp 18-19). A declassified CIA cable concerning the event states that "[i]t is a firm and continuing policy that Allende be overthrown by a coup"; hence unsurprisingly in 2002 many in Latin America "immediately saw the hand of the CIA" (Harvey, 2003 p 8). Indeed, the overthrow of Allende wasn't the only attempt by the CIA to undermine a Latin American leftist government. Throughout the 1980s, the "American terrorist army, the Contra" massacred thousands of Nicaraguans in their war against the Sandinista government while being "trained, armed and funded by the CIA" (Pilger, 1998, p 26). In such a context, the suspicion levelled at the US isn't entirely unfounded. After all, in leaked diplomatic cables written in late 2006, then-US Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield outlined Washington's four point plan to seemingly destabilise the government by "penetrating Chavez's political base," "dividing Chavismo," "protecting vital U.S. business" and "isolating Chavez internationally" (Wikileaks, 2012). It seems that old habits die hard.

Suspicion towards Washington is now deeply engrained in Venezuelan political tradition. Throughout his presidency, Chavez often accused Washington of plotting against him. His successor, Nicolas Maduro, has likewise alleged that he has been targeted by an assassination plot backed by figures in the US (Robertson, 2013(1)). Crane (2005) quotes Sweig as labelling these accusations as part of a "rhetorical tit for tat" between Caracas and Washington; but there is more to it than such a simplistic conclusion presumes. In Copenhagen-esque terms, "speech acts" play an important role in converting something (anything potentially) into an "existential threat" to a specific "referent object" (McDonald, 2008, p 69); hence securitising it in public discourse. As previously outlined, such discourse is not without material justification. Alternatively, the cynic could label Chavez/Maduro's rhetoric on the US as a mere attempt to manufacture consent, but that would inarguably call Brownfield's credibility into question. It would also require ignoring policy pursued by the US that in conventional security terms would easily constitute as aggression, like its intensive spying on the Venezuelan petroleum industry (Pearson, 2013) and sanctions on the Venezuelan state arms manufacturer CAVIM (Orozco, 2013). Washington's own securitisation in Venezuelan (and arguably Latin American) political discourse is thus the outcome of a long history of aggression that continues today. The notion that the US is at best apathetic towards its southern neighbours, malicious at worst, is indeed very well substantiated by a long line of precedents.

In either case, given historical context, it's not at all surprising that in recent years the Venezuelan government has increasingly pursued a policy of deterrence aimed at mitigating perceived state security risks posed by the US. Yet the threat isn't reciprocal. A comprehensive examination of the threat posed by Venezuela to the US is beyond the scope of this essay, though if Venezuela poses any threat to the US, it has been greatly exaggerated in common discourse. Indeed, prior to 2002 Venezuela's contribution to the collapse of bilateral diplomatic cosiness consisted primarily of opposition to the US invasion of Afghanistan and "the increase in internal opposition to Chavez" (Nagel, 2003). These two factors don't seem comparable to Washington's long resume of aggression briefly discussed above, hence necessitating the construction of a new, anti-Chavez securitising discourse in the US. Discourse like that of Noriega, who has accused the Venezuelan government and Hezbollah of collaborating to engage in "asymmetrical warfare against U.S. [sic] security, interests and allies close to the homeland" (Noriega, 2013). Suchlicki (2012) likewise argues that "Venezuela's growing relations with Iran and Chávez' support for terrorist groups both in the Americas and the Middle East should worry the U.S [sic]". Furthermore, according to Berman (2013) Iran's "extensive", "evolving" operations in the hemisphere could soon pose threats to US "allies in the region and to the U.S.[sic] homeland itself". Such conceptual constructs may be more amicable to US policy, though none of it is actually taken seriously by Washington, and with good reason. According to a June 2013 US State Department report, Iran isn't supporting any terrorist cells in Latin America, and its influence in the region is "waning" (Goodman, 2013). The fictional Caracas-Tehran-Beirut-terror connection has been therefore deemed of no practical value by US regime elites. On the other hand, the Venezuelan government appears to continue to view the US as a threat. In September 2013, Maduro went as far as cancelling his first trip as president to a session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), claiming former US officials planned on hatching a plot against him, possibly with the knowledge of the White House (Mallett-Outtrim, 2013). Despite the best efforts of the Noriega types to reify the intangible, there is still only one aggressor.

With this in mind, it should be no surprise that Venezuelan foreign policy does not rest on the state's ability to wage war (asymmetric or otherwise), despite a push for military modernisation. Since 2006 Venezuela has sought to "assert military independence" (Corrales, Romero, 2013, p 21). Between 2005 and 2006 Venezuela's defence budget increased by 12.5%, and between 2005 and 2007, the country's arms expenditure exceeded US$4 billion, making it Latin America's largest weapons buyer at the time (Romero, 2007). The government also sought to build up a military reserve force of 1.5 million personnel (Wagner, 2005). Partly due to US refusal to supply Venezuela with arms, Caracas has diversified its arms suppliers away from its traditional US sources (Bromley, Perdomo, 2005, p 14). The largest beneficiary was Russia. By 2007, Venezuela had become one of Russia's largest arms purchasers; a long list of Russian arms purchases include 24 Sukhoi fighter jets, 50 helicopters and 100,000 assault rifles between 2005 and 2007 (Romero, 2007). In 2012, Venezuela began manufacturing Kalashnikov assault rifles with Russian aid (AP, 2012). By then, the country had already spent nearly US$11 billion on Russian military equipment (Blank, 2011). Today, Venezuela's military probably boasts around 140,000 troops, plus around 1 million members of the National Militia, according to government sources (Sanchez, 2009). However, in 2009 Sanchez argued that only around 10,000 to 15,000 of militia troops were actually combat ready. Nonetheless, it would appear that contrary to the proposition of this essay, Venezuela is actually pursuing a relatively conventional deterrence policy based on military might. Indeed, deterrence theory at its most simplistic dictates that the "level of inimical activity conducted by the enemy… ranging from terrorist attacks to full-scale invasion" is predictable based on "incentives of

both sides…summarized [sic] by utility functions that depend on the outcomes" of a potential engagement (Levine and Levine, 2007). Moreover, as deterrence theory is traditionally "based on the assumption that the participants coolly and "rationally" calculate their advantages according to a consistent value system" (Schelling, 1960, p 16), military assets of nation-states inevitably play an important role in shaping the behaviour of actors. After all, as Quackenbush (2010) cites Morgan as arguing, general deterrence is the "basic rationale for the maintenance of armed forces". However, to conclude Venezuela's military plays a core role in the country's deterrence policy is to end history at 2008.

In the first half of the last decade, Venezuela did indeed seek to modernise its military, prompting suspicion that the Chavez administration was adopting a more militarised foreign policy posture. The modernisation drive has been met with criticism from the US. Fox news cited "security experts" who believed the move would "destabilize [sic] the region" and prompt an arms race (Fox News, 2008). Then in 2008, proposed joint Venezuelan Russian naval exercises in the Caribbean prompted a response likened to the "Cuban Missile Crisis" (Kozloff, 2008). However, concerns over Venezuela's military investments would only be legitimate if they bore anything more than a vague, obscure and fundamentally tenuous relationship with reality; which of course, they don't.

Despite regional trends of ballooning military expenditure, Venezuela now devotes a relatively small percentage of its GDP to military spending. By 2012 Latin American regional spending on arms was rising- up 4.2% from 2011, "bucking a global trend that indicated downturns in Europe, North America and parts of Asia and Africa" (UPI, 2013). According to SIPRI (2013), Venezuela increased its military expenditure by 42% in 2012; the second largest increase in Latin America (Paraguay had 43%). However, according to Smilde (2013), Venezuela's 2012 expenditure "does not surpass the annual allocations during the 2006-2008 period". Moreover, between 2009-2012, military expenditure "halved as a percentage of GDP" (Robertson, 2013(2)). Furthermore, in 2010, Venezuela actually led the region in reducing military expenditure, with a 27% drop (Lissardy, 2011). Hence, for the periods 2008-2012, Venezuela's overall military expenditure averaged out to just 1%- lower than the 1990s averages of around 2% prior to Chavez's election to presidency (World Bank, 2013). Comparatively, during the same four year period both Colombian and Ecuadorian military expenditures both sat at around 3% of their GDPs, while Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile all spent around 2% and the United States spent 4% (World Bank, 2013). It therefore is hard to maintain that Venezuela's military expenditure is particularly abnormal by regional standards, despite the government's efforts to modernise its armed forces. Moreover, as a component of a specific deterrence policy, the role of Venezuela's military appears negligible if we assume the country's foreign policy is largely directed towards deterring US aggression. Indeed, in 2012 the US Department of Defence had a budget of US$676 billion- when adjusted for inflation the highest level since World War II (Harrison, T, 2011). Moreover, over the last decade US military spending increased by 35% (Johnson, 2011). After comparing these levels of expenditure, it's obvious that either Venezuela isn't driving a regional arms race, or the Pentagon needs to start hiring Venezuelan accountants en masse.

The only rational assumption is, of course, that Venezuela's military modernisation plays an almost insignificant role in the country's deterrence strategy; which is primarily an exercise in soft balancing focused on creating institutions of regional cooperation. The Chavez administration's soft balancing policy first began to be implemented between 2003 and 2007 (Corrales, Romero, 2013, p 50). A detailed explanation of all of Venezuela's

international cooperative efforts is beyond the scope of this essay; instead, this essay will focus on a handful of the most significant initiatives undertaken over the last decade; most of which (at least partially) constitute soft power projection. According to Williams, (2011, p 262),

"Soft balancing theory posits that states seeking to constrain U.S. [sic] power might craft economic arrangements and policies that advantage weaker countries, exclude the…[US], and/or limit its economic benefits."

Under the Bolivarian government, Venezuela's foreign policy has developed five main objectives: "[p]romote multipolarity" and "Latin American integration", "[c]onsolidate and diversify Venezuela's international relations", "[s]trengthen Venezuela's position in the international economy and "[p]romote a new regime of hemispheric security" (Wilpert, 2007, p 152). All of these pillars of foreign policy contribute in some way to Venezuela's general deterrence policy. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) is Venezuela's most ambitious Latin American integration attempt, and its flagship soft balancing project. Described by Chavez as a ""socially oriented" trade bloc dedicated toward eradicating poverty" (Corrales 2009, pp 97-114), since 2004 ALBA has grown from a joint Cuban-Venezuelan initiative to include nine countries (Borrero, 2013). While Venezuela has likewise pushed for greater "democratization [sic]" of pre-existing institutions such as the UN (Wilpert, 2007, p 153), it has also been cultivating ALBA as an alternative to established international bodies. More precisely, ALBA offers an alternative to US backed regional initiatives like the shelved Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by prioritising "the state's role in development and promoting social welfare over that of the free market or the corporation" (Williams, 2011, pp 262-263). According to Wilpert (2007, p 155),

"The basic idea of ALBA is modeled [sic] to some extent after the European Union. Poorer countries would receive development aid from… [ALBA's Compensation Fund], while wealthier nations would have to contribute to this fund."

Some of ALBA's initiatives so far have included a development bank with over US$1 billion in capital for humanitarian and social welfare projects, a long standing doctors-and-teachers-for-oil deal between Cuba and Venezuela that "has seen Venezuela eradicating illiteracy and providing free healthcare to millions of people", a housing and education project for Nicaragua's "47,000 street children" along with five "major agricultural projects that are producing soy beans, rice, poultry, and dairy products" (Hattingh, 2008). Furthermore, social movements within member countries are "directly involved in the planning and administration of ALBA" through their own representative council (Hattingh, 2008). ALBA member countries have also actively pushed for an alternative to the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), due to the "the predilection of ICSID to rule in favor [sic] of corporations" (Beeton, 2013). ALBA is far from the only Venezuelan soft balancing initiative. During the Chavez administration, "Petrocaribe was established "to deliver subsidized [sic] oil from Venezuela to the small states of the Caribbean", and Venezuela began "financing regional news network Telesur", which is designed to offer an alternative to other cable channels like BBC and CNN (Hakim, 2006, 44). Critics deride many of these initiatives as lacking in transparency, suffering a lack of long term planning and "undercutting previous efforts to build more decentralized [sic] decision-making procedures" (Feinberg, 2007). Nonetheless, "Venezuela's aid is hard to refuse because it comes with very few conditions" (Corrales 2009, pp 97-114). Moreover, given that the structural adjustment policies of the Bretton Woods institutions have produced an abundance of failures in the developing world, (Schatz, 1994 pp 679-692) the

popularity of Venezuela's alternatives are hardly surprising, despite their critics. Washington, however, has been excluded from these initiatives, as "the US is too powerful and would overwhelm and thus exploit its weaker southern partners" if it were included" (Wilpert, 2007, p 154). In Latin America, Venezuela's soft balancing game is multi-faceted, and growing.

However, to assume that Venezuela is merely attempting to forge a conventional alliance is to miss the point. Among the multitude of acronyms there is an obvious long-term goal; the forming of a cohesive collective actor. Morgan (2003, p 174) defines a collective actor as "a cluster of states established and designed to decide and act for the general welfare". Morgan (2003, pp 83, 174) argues that collective actors differ from conventional alliances as they act for the "collective good, as opposed to pursuing member interests only", citing the United Nations and the "new" North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as examples. The latter appears somewhat questionable. It's hard to believe NATO was acting in the interests of the common good as far back as its intervention in the former Yugoslavia, where NATO troops may have committed numerous war crimes (AI, 2000). Even in its latest humanitarian intervention, NATO has "failed to acknowledge dozens of civilian casualties from air strikes during its 2011 Libya campaign, and has not investigated possible unlawful attacks" (HRW, 2012). Comparatively, Venezuelan regional integration efforts like ALBA tend to emphasise ideals like creating networks of solidarity (Artaraz, 2011, p 88-105). Such networks are not necessarily based on material reciprocity. At Venezuela's Dr Salvador Allende Latin American School of Medicine (*Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina Dr. Salvador Allende*) students studying medicine for free have told Venezuelan media that would never have been able to afford such studies otherwise (Mora, 2010). In 2011, a joint Cuban-Venezuelan project saw the opening of the first high school in Western Sahara's refugee camps (EFE, 2011). More recently, Venezuela and Cuba extended Miracle Mission International to the West Bank to provide free eye surgery (the mission provides such free treatment in many other parts of the developing world), while at the same time the Maduro administration announced what it described as a "solidarity" oil deal with the Palestinian Authority (Robertson, 2013(3)). Venezuelan solidarity isn't limited to the developing world though. In the US, Citgo (the US subsidiary of state owned oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.* (PDVSA)) has stated that its US$400 million heating oil program has helped more than 1.7 million Americans, including native communities (Gonzalez, 2013). Furthermore, although it was rejected by the Bush administration, Venezuela was among the first to offer the US aid in the wake of Hurricane Katrina (Campbell, 2005). Just a few years after the 2002 coup, Venezuela's response to Hurricane Katrina would appear inconsistent if purely viewed as a component of what The Economist (2013) has described as an "anti-American alliance of like-minded leaders and client states" reinforced by populism at home. However, Bolivarianism is nothing of the sort.

Once aspect of the misconception that Chavez was simply a populist hate-monger stems from a simplistic understanding of not only Venezuelan general, deterrence, but also of populism. Indeed, "[i]n populism, the enemy is externalized [sic] or reified into a positive ontological entity…whose annihilation would restore balance and justice" (Zizek, 2006). Part of the explanation is simply that the externalised subject of Bolivarian discourse is US imperialism, or as Roberts (2013) puts it, "Chavez was not an enemy of America…[h]e was an enemy of Washington's hegemony over other countries". There is also another complication with the populist argument. According to Zizek (2006), populism's "dominant leitmotiv is to situate the evils of society" in some pathological actor, which although is "abstract", is "always supplemented by the pseudoconcreteness of the figure that is

selected as the enemy, the singular agent behind all threats to the people". This thereby excludes any serious structural critique, as "for a populist, the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such" (Zizek, 2006). This ultimately would contradict the essence of ideological *Chavismo*. Chavez's stated "ambitious plan to turn Venezuela into a socialist state" (Castillo, 2013) has been widely reported. Of course, the issue of whether or not *Chavismo* is truly revolutionary is a topic of contention. Wilpert (2011, p 124) argues that institutions of participatory democracy enshrined in the Venezuelan constitution indicate that Chavez "did indeed launch a fundamental overhaul of Venezuela's political system" over the last decade. Since then, there has been an acceleration of "the registration and formation of communal structures" (Mills, 2013). Moreover, as Muntaner, Chung and Mahmood (2011, pp 252-253) argue, the social change sweeping Latin America not only emanates from Venezuela, but also goes as far as contradicting Fukuyama's prediction of history ending with "the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism". Given the economic zero sum game between core and periphery countries postulated by dependency theory advocates (Ferraro, 2008, pp 58-64), the security benefits that would accompany the eroding of global capitalism for developing countries like Venezuela are self evident. However, the promotion of leftist governments across the region doesn't in itself mean *Chavismo* is revolutionary. Gramsci (paraphrased by Choat, 2010) posited that "the seizure of power [by socialists is] not adequate for socialist transformation". Nonetheless, the Bolivarian process "is veined with destabilizing [sic] contradictions, making the future uncertain" (Ponniah, 2011, p 293). Indeed, the question of the ultimate fate of Venezuela's participatory project cannot "answered in theory but only through praxis" (Mills, 2013). Hence, while there is reason to presume that disregarding*Chavismo* as merely a populist phenomenon is premature, the extent of the Bolivarian movement's capacity for rising beyond reformism and instigating permanent post-capitalist structural change is unclear. What is clear, however, is that an off-hand dismissal of the Bolivarian project as a mere populist stunt is an obstruction towards deeper investigation into the character of the Venezuelan state and its foreign policy.

Hence, although the revolutionary character of Venezuelan foreign policy is questionable, its effectiveness as a general deterrence paradigm is not. During Chavez's last presidential campaign, the incumbent ran on a platform promoting international mulipolarity and an end to US-led neoliberalism (Chavez, 2012). As a global economic system, neoliberalism seeks to subordinate all institutions, norms and ideals to the restructuring demands of private capital (Gills, 2000, pp 4-5). The result of this reorienting of capitalism is described by Stephen (2009) as "increasing uncertainty, exclusion, marginalisation, alienation, and even destruction of the means of subsistence for much of the global population". While promoting this form of capitalism, over the last decade the US has undertaken a "violent imperial adventure…undermining…the basic humanist achievements of American liberalism" (Stephen, 2009). Under these circumstances, it's no surprise that a state with such poor relations with the US would seek an effective deterrence policy. Evidently, "Venezuela has been displaying all the usual signs" of working to apply soft balancing to counter US influence (Corrales, 2009, pp 97-114). However, Venezuela has done more than that, working to forge something more than a conventional alliance. Collective actors are intended to offer "considerable improvement over deterrence by individual states or alliances", and have a "special interest" in general deterrence (Morgan, 2003, pp 174-6); making such a structure (devoid of US influence) rationally desirable for a nation in Venezuela's position. .

There is good reason to believe Venezuela's efforts to eject the US from Latin America are

showing signs of success. In “the past decade, South America has been ‘lost’” to Washington (Chomsky, 2011). However, this is part of a global decline in US dominance (Jorgenson in Felsenthal, 2011). Yet a perceivable end to US regional hegemony is far from certain (Nye, 2010). Moreover, potential candidates are already jostling for primacy in the region. Along with Brasilia’s emerging power, “China’s economic prowess is already allowing Beijing to challenge American influence all over the world” (Rachman, 2011). As “Latin Americans are increasingly looking to China as “an economic and political alternative to U.S. [sic] hegemony”, Washington is increasingly viewing the Asian giant as an emerging threat to US interests in Latin America (Hakim, 2006, pp 45-46). Venezuela has contributed to this trend; China is now Caracas’s second largest trading parter after the US, courtesy of Chavez-era realignment policies (Smilde, 2013). Hence, neither resurgent US dominance or the the emergence of a new power like China can be ruled out for the continent- the latter partially due to Venezuelan policy. However, none of this is indicative of a failure of *Chavismo* to confront the capitalist core. Rather, the Gramscian concept of hegemony indicates that the rulers of a capitalist system must maintain their own “moral, political and cultural values” as societal norms (Hay, 1999 p 163). However, Hay (1999 p 163) quotes Milibrand as stating that hegemony “depends not so much on consent as on resignation”; or convincing the oppressed that there are no alternatives to their oppression. In either case, Venezuela’s foreign policy efforts have contributed to a growing regional “aspiration for an alternative form of development in which humanity deliberatively, directly, and democratically shapes society” (Ponniah, 2011, p 293). There is, therefore, a compelling argument that Venezuela’s foreign policy framework of general deterrence and soft balancing are both antithetical to US hegemony and the neoliberal orientation of capitalism.

The result of Venezuela’s deterrence policy is neither an aggressive axis nor a liberated third world. While it’s responding to US belligerence, Venezuela’s itself is not on the offensive. Instead, its soft balancing policies are leading to the creation of cooperative institutions that not only offer effective collective defence, but also offer a framework for responsible regional institutions. Populist or not, the new institutionalism propagated by Venezuela offers an alternative to imperialism and neoliberal primacy. Although Venezuela is less vulnerable to US aggression than it once was, the revolutionary potential of its foreign policy is far from clear.

References

Agencia EFE (EFE), 2011, Venezuela y Cuba crean la primera escuela secundario de los campos saharauis, via ABC(es), viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.abc.es/agencias/noticia.asp?noticia=848605

Amnesty International (AI), 2000, Document – Frederal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) /NATO: “Collateral damage” or unlawful killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force, viewed online 29/9/2013,https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR70/018/2000/en/eaeb3f72-df56-11dd-89a6-e712e728ac9e/eur700182000en.html

Artaraz, K, 2011, New Latin American networks of solidarity? ALBA’s contribution to Bolivia’s National Development Plan (2006–10), Global Social Policy, Vol. 11 No. 1 88-105, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://gsp.sagepub.com/content/11/1/88.short

Associated Press (AP), 2012, Hugo Chávez announces Kalashnikov and drone production, The Guardian, viewed online

28/9/2013,http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/14/venezuela-kalashnikov-drone-production-chavez

Beeton, D, 2013, ALBA Members Take the Lead in Crafting Alternatives in Arbitrating Investor-State Disputes, Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/alba-members-take-the-lead-in-crafting-alternatives-in-arbitrating-investor-state-disputes

Blank, S, 2011, Moscow Rediscovers the South American Arms Market, Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol. 8, Issue 89, Jamestown Foundation, via Global Security News, viewed online 10/10/2013, http://global-security-news.com/2011/05/10/moscow-rediscovers-the-south-american-arms-market/

Bodenheimer, S., 1971, Dependency and Imperialism: The Roots of Latin American Underdevelopment, Politics and Society, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://pas.sagepub.com/content/1/3/327.full.pdf+html

Borrero, B, 2013, ALBA se fortalece con la incorporación de Santa Lucía como miembro pleno, Prensa Presidencial (Venezuelano)/ MINCI, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.minci.gob.ve/2013/07/alba-se-fortalece-con-la-incorporacion-de-santa-lucia-como-miembro-pleno-del-bloque/

Bromley, M, Perdomo, C, 2005, CBMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE EFFECT OF ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY VENEZUELA, Real instituto El Cano (El Cano Royal Institute), viewed online 6/10/2013,http://kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/EINIRAS/13680/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/6ADABB7E-A220-4371-8A44-6CE9E7BEB188/en/WP+41,+2005.pdf

Campbell, D, 2007, Bush rejects Chávez aid, The Guardian, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/07/venezuela.hurricanekatrina

Choat, S, 2010, Marx through Post-Structuralism, Continuum International Publishing, viewed online 9/9/13,http://site.ebrary.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/lib/unisaau/docDetail.action?docID=10408637

Chavez, H, 2012, Proposal of the Candidate of the Homeland, Commander Hugo Chávez, for the Socialist Bolivarian Government, 2013–2019, (translated by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Canberra, Australia), Links Journal of Socialist Renewal, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://links.org.au/node/3079

Chomsky, N, 2011, American Decline: Causes and Consequences, al-Akbar English, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/american-decline-causes-and-consequences

Clement, C. I., 2005, Confronting Hugo Chávez: United States “Democracy Promotion” in Latin America, Latin American Perspectives , Vol. 32, No. 3, Venezuelan Exceptionalism Revisited: New Perspectives on Politics and Society, viewed online 20/9/2013,http://www.jstor.org.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/stable/30040242

Corrales, J, 2009, Using Social Power to Balance Soft Power: Venezuela’s Foreign Policy, The Washington Quarterly, Vol 32, Issue 4, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.tandfonline.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/01636600903232285#.UkeK6H_i7bg

Corrales, J, Romero, A. M, 2013, U.S.-Venezuela Relations Since the 1990s: Coping with Midlevel

Security Threats, Routledge, NY, USA, viewed online 6/10/2013, http://books.google.co.ve/books?id=DyIegUcSK2kC&pg=PA48&lpg=PA48&dq=us+venezuela+2002+mid+level+security+threats&source=bl&ots=wGDnYEB6yi&sig=5bPujScOHQmDTqWKZxg_kBAi338&hl=en&sa=X&ei=f4NRUrC0OYLg8ASd6oCgAw&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=us%20venezuela%202002%20mid%20level%20security%20threats&f=false

Crane, M., 2005, U.S.-Venezuelan Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, viewed online 23/9/2013, http://www.cfr.org/venezuela/us-venezuelan-relations/p9253

Felsenthal, M, 2011, Economists foretell of U.S. decline, China's ascension, Reuters, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/09/us-usa-economy-gloom-idUSTRE7082BL20110109

Feinberg, R, 2007, Chávez Conditionality, Latin Business Chronicle, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.latinbusinesschronicle.com/app/article.aspx?id=1296

Ferraro, V, 2008, Dependency Theory: An Introduction, in The Development Economics Reader, ed: Secondi, G, Routledge, UK, viewed online 10/10/2013,https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/depend.htm

Fox News, 2008, Venezuela Military Buildup Is Destabilizing to Region, Military Experts Say, viewed online 28/9.2013,http://www.foxnews.com/story/2008/03/05/venezuela-military-buildup-is-destabilizing-to-region-military-experts-say/

Gill, 2000. Toward a Postmodern Prince? The Battle in Seattle as a Moment in the New Politics of Globalisation, *Millennium,* 0305-8298, Vol. 29, Issue 1, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://mil.sagepub.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/content/29/1/131

Gonzalez, A, 2013, CITGO Renews Heating Oil Donations, The Wall Street Journal, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323701904578276363257570702.html

Goodman, J, 2013,

Iran Influence in Latin America Waning, U.S. Report Says, Bloomberg, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-06-26/iran-influence-in-latin-america-waning-u-s-report-says.html

Harkim, P., 2006, Is Washington Losing Latin America? Foreign Affairs, Vol 85, No. 1, Council on Foreign Relations, viewed online 20/9/2013,http://www.jstor.org.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/stable/20031841

Harrison, T, 2011, Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget, Center for Strategic and Bugetary Assessments, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.csbaonline.org/publications/2011/07/analysis-of-the-fy2012-defense-budget/

Harvey, D., 2003, The New Imperialism, Oxford University Press, viewed online 23/9/2013, http://books.google.co.ve/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BaYuydyt-IgC&oi=fnd&pg=PP2&dq=united+states+latin+america+wealth+imperialism&ots=nCvJyUz_H4&sig=vOjDea0npzJU8vAK5VelJAGCRRY#v=onepage&q&f=false

Hattingh, S, 2008, ALBA: Creating a Regional Alternative to Neo-liberalism?, Monthly Review

Magazine, Monthly Review Foundation, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2008/hattingh070208.html

Hay, C, 1999, Marxism and the State, in Marxism and Social Science, eds: Gamble, A, Marsh, D, Tant, T, University of Illinois Press, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/SOC621/Marxism%20and%20Social%20Science.pdf

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2012, NATO: Investigate Civilian Deaths in Libya, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/14/nato-investigate-civilian-deaths-libya

Johnson, R, 2011, The 2012 Defense Budget Is The Highest Since World War II, Business Insider, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.businessinsider.com/2012-us-defense-budget-largest-since-world-war-ii-2011-7#ixzz2gEhFTPWr

Kozloff, N, 2008, The Next Cuban Missile Crisis?, North American Congress on Latin America, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://nacla.org/node/4999

Levine, D. K, and Levine, R. A, 2007, DETERRENCE IN THE COLD WAR AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR', Defence and Peace Economics, Vol. 17, Issue 6, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://www.tandfonline.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/10242690601025526#.UkB1On-7fbg

Lissardy, G, 2011, Sudamérica, la región del mundo en donde más crece el gasto militar, BBC Mundo via La Nacion, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1379859-sudamerica-la-region-del-mundo-en-donde-mas-crece-el-gasto-militar

Mallett-Outtrim, R, 2013, Venezuela's Maduro Cancels UN Trip, Alleges Former US Officials Involved in "Crazy" Plot, Venezuelanalysis, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10049

McDonald, M, 2008, Constructivism, in Security Studies: An Introduction, ed: Williams, P. D, Routledge, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://reader.eblib.com.au.ezlibproxy1.unisa.edu.au/%28S%28kzvbedro5nzdf00vpnznu03c%29%29/Reader.aspx?p=348449&o=110&u=1cEhZFel08fZ5UmSiCFW2g%3d%3d&t=1379964095&h=1A289B3166D9450DF73A7744FEB09A6D27C19540&s=10128921&ut=318&pg=1&r=img&c=-1&pat=n#

Mills, F. B, 2013, "The Commune or Nothing": Popular Power and the State in Venezuela, Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.coha.org/the-commune-or-nothing-popular-power-and-the-state-in-venezuela/

Mora, S, 2010, Por un nuevo médico latinoamericano, CuidadCCS, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://www.ciudadccs.info/?p=24388

Morgan, P. M, 2003, Deterrence Now, Cambridge University Press, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://site.ebrary.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/lib/unisaau/docDetail.action?docID=10070236

Berman, I, 2013, Iran on our back porch: Column, USA Today, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/06/05/argentina-iran-terrorism-column/2389271/

Mariano, C, 2013, Chavez leaves a revolutionary legacy, CNN, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/05/world/americas/venezuela-chavez-legacy/index.html

Muntaner, C, Chung, H, Mahmood, Q, 2011, History Is Not Over: The Bolivarian Revolution, "Barrio Adentro," and Health Care in Venezuela, in The Revolution in Venezuela, eds: Ponniah, T, Eastwood, J, Harvard University Press, USA

Nagel, J, 2013, U.S.-Venezuela Relations Since the 1990s: Coping with Midlevel Security Threats by Javier Corrales and Carlos A. Romero, Quarterly Americas (Winter 2013 issue), Americas Society and Council of the Americas, viewed online 6/10/2013, http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/ius-venezuela-relations-1990s-coping-midlevel-security-threatsi-javier-corrales-and-carlos

Noriega, R. F, 2013, Hezbollah's strategic shift: A global terrorist threat, American Enterprise Institute, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.aei.org/speech/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/hezbollahs-strategic-shift-a-global-terrorist-threat/

Nye, J. S. Jr, 2010, The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 89, Issue 6, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://search.proquest.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/docview/763491561

Orozco, J, 2013, U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Venezuela's Cavim Arms Company, Bloomberg, viewed online 23/9/2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-12/u-s-imposes-sanctions-on-venezuela-s-cavim-arms-company.html

Pearson, T, 2013, Venezuela and Mercosur Discuss Mechanisms to Prevent US Government Spying, Venezuelanalysis, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10030

Pilger, J, 1998, Hidden Agendas, Vintage, London, UK

Ponniah, T, 2011, Conclusion: The Conceptual Revolution in Venezuela, in The Revolution in Venezuela, eds: Ponniah, T, Eastwood, J, Harvard University Press, USA

Quackenbush, S. L, 2010, General Deterrence and International Conflict: Testing Perfect Deterrence Theory, International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations, Vol 36, Issue 1, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.tandfonline.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/03050620903554069

Rackman, G, 2011, Think Again: American Decline, Foreign Policy, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/02/think_again_american_decline

Roberts, P. C, 2013, Hugo Chavez: Friend of the American People, Enemy of US Hegemony and Washington's Injustice, Global Research, viewed online 29/9/2013, http://www.globalresearch.ca/hugo-chavez-friend-of-the-american-people-enemy-of-us-hegemony-and-washingtons-injustice/5326648

Robertson, E, 2013 (1), Authorities Warn of Plot to Assassinate Venezuelan President Maduro, Correo Del Orinoco, viewed online 23/9/2013,http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9986

Robertson, E, 2013 (2), Venezuela: An Ethical Foreign Policy?, Carnegie Council, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/ethics_online/0083

Robertson, E, 2013 (3), Venezuela Agrees on "Solidarity" Oil Deal with Palestine, Venezuelanalysis, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9967

Romero, S, 2007, Venezuela Spending on Arms Soars to World's Top Ranks, New York Times, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/25/world/americas/25venez.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Sanchez, A, 2009, Separating Fact from Fiction: An Analysis of Venezuela's Military Power, Council on Hemispheric Affairs, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.coha.org/separating-fact-from-fiction-an-analysis-of-venezuela%E2%80%99s-military-power/

Schatez, S. P, 1994, Structural adjustment in Africa : a failing grade so far, The Journal of Modern African Studies, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 32, Issue 4, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://search.library.unisa.edu.au/Record/Default.aspx?sid=FETCH-LOGICAL-c2806-75debbd04f8df0aa11bf7f92ba820d8032176e121607d304316cce0f56fc67061&seq=0

Schelling, T. C, 1960, The Strategy of Conflict, Harvard University Press, viewed online 23/9/2013, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015020741057;view=1up;seq=5

Smilde, D, 2013, Strategic Posture Review: Venezuela, World Politics Review, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13224/strategic-posture-review-venezuela

Stephen, M, D, 2009, Alter-Globalism as Counter-Hegemony: Evaluating the 'postmodern Prince', Globalizations, Vol. 6, Issue. 4, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.tandfonline.com.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/14747730903298819#.UkiDF3_i7bg

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2013, 15 Apr. 2013: World military spending falls, but China, Russia's spending rises, says SIPRI, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/2013/milex_launch

Suchlicki, J, 2012, Iran's influence in Venezuela: Washington should worry, Miami Herald, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/08/05/2930050/irans-influence-in-venezuela-washington.html#storylink=cpy

The Economist, 2013, Hugo Chávez's rotten legacy, The Economist Newspaper Limited, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21573106-appeal-populist-autocracy-has-been-weakened-not-extinguished-hugo-ch%C3%A1vezs-rotten

United Press International (UPI), 2013, SIPRI: Latin America military spending up, viewed online 28/9/2013, http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2013/04/16/SIPRI-Latin-America-military-spending-up/UPI-11451366106545/

Wagner, S, 2005, Venezuela to Create Military Reserve Force of 1.5 Million, Venezuelanalysis, viewed online 28/9/2013,http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/1043

Wikileaks, 2012, Write up on Venezuela, Chavez, Global Intelligence Files, viewed online 23/9/2013, http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/3387123_write-up-on-venezuela-chavez-.html

Wilpert, G, 2007, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power: The History and Policies of the Chavez Government, Verso, New York, USA

Willpert, G, 2011, Venezuela's Experiment in Participatory Democracy, in The Revolution in Venezuela, eds: Ponniah, T, Eastwood, J, Harvard University Press, USA

Winn, P, 2004, Victims of the Chilean miracle: workers and neoliberalism in the Pinochet era, 1973-2002, Duke University Press, viewed online 25/3/12,http://books.google.com.au/books?id=xdwZry4V_4MC&dq=chile+1973+overthrow+neoliberal&lr=&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Williams, M. E, 2011, The New Balancing Act: International Relations Theory and Venezuela's Foreign Policy, in The Revolution in Venezuela, eds: Ponniah, T, Eastwood, J, Harvard University Press, USA

World Bank, 2013, Military expenditure (% of GDP), viewed online 28/9/2013,http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS/countries/1W?page=2&display=map

Zizek, S, 2006, Against the Populist Temptation, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 32, No. 3, University of Chicago Press, viewed online 29/9/2013,http://www.jstor.org.ezlibproxy.unisa.edu.au/stable/10.1086/505378
