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# ***Protecting democracy?* The Role of the OAS and UNASUR When Facing Democratic Crises in Latin America**

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International Relations (2014-2016)

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## **Declaration**

I, Are Izquierdo Skjær, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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*El sol que nace y el día que muere,  
con los mejores atardeceres.  
Soy el desarrollo en carne viva,  
un discurso político sin saliva.  
Las caras más bonitas que he conocido,  
soy la fotografía de un desaparecido.  
Soy la sangre dentro de tus venas,  
soy un pedazo de tierra que vale la pena.  
soy una canasta con frijoles,  
soy Maradona contra Inglaterra anotándote dos goles.  
Soy lo que sostiene mi bandera,  
la espina dorsal del planeta es mi cordillera.  
Soy lo que me enseñó mi padre,  
el que no quiere a su patria no quiere a su madre.  
Soy América latina,  
un pueblo sin piernas pero que camina.*

Calle 13

## **Abstract**

Being a region that has undergone numerous dictatorships and authoritarian regimes throughout history, Latin America has over the past two decades enjoyed significant democratic stability. Despite this, the challenges to democracy in the region have not vanished, and a number of countries have experienced democratic crises over the past decade. Many of the international organizations in the region have engaged in these crises as they have democracy protection as part of their political agendas. Democracy was consensually defined as representative in type, and the Organization of American States (OAS) the designated organization to protect it at the turn of the millennium. As of 2016, this consensus is challenged by the emergence an alternative understanding of democracy as participatory in type, and Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR) as an alternative organization for democracy protection. The thesis addresses the roles played by these organizations in five empirical cases of democratic crises: Bolivia, 2008; Honduras, 2009; Ecuador, 2010; Paraguay, 2012, and Venezuela at present.

The thesis is a qualitative case study research exercise in which the cases are the organizations, and the primary sources of data is relevant literature and interviews conducted with relevant actors. The thesis presents two hypotheses that serve as guides throughout. The first states that the divergent understandings of democracy in the region affect the role pf the organizations in the crises, and the second claims that state interests hamper the “actorness” of the organizations. The thesis employs Peripheral Realism as the theory with which it aims to answer the research question and address the hypotheses. The thesis argues that the theory is better equipped to explain political motivations and normativity in Latin America and the thesis involves a critique of Liberal Institutionalism, a common theory used to advocate for international organizations and their importance in global politics.

The thesis argues that UNASUR is a counterhegemonic organization that by virtue of defining democracy generically is normatively and ideologically more suitable to engage in democratic crises than the OAS. The values underpinning participatory democracy is a real alternative in the region, rendering the applicability of the IADC questionable. The thesis argues that organizations do not have “actorness” as they share the same weakness of having their decision-making process susceptible to national interests and concerns of sovereignty by member states. Both organizations settle with elections as the benchmark of reinstatement of democracy, but eroding democratic governance in-between elections is unaddressed. Theoretically, the thesis claims that the universality of Liberal Institutionalism is false.

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## 1. Introduction

With a history riddled with dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, Latin America has for the past two decades experienced unprecedented political stability and undergone significant positive socioeconomic developments that have lifted many Latin Americans out of poverty (World Bank, 2015). However, it remains the world's most unequal region in terms of income and wealth distribution (Bull, 2015) and the past decade has not gone by without severe challenges to democracy. As mechanisms to avoid a reversion to bygone practices of governance, many regional organizations in the Americas have protection of democracy as part of their agendas. This thesis addresses the role played by two regional organizations in the face of national crises: the Organization of American States (OAS) – the world's oldest - and Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR<sup>1</sup>). The latter organization is less than a decade old, and forms part of a trend in Latin America that complements the abovementioned stability and developments, namely the emergence of new regional organizations. Besides mere age, the two organizations differ in objectives and normative underpinnings. The OAS is critiqued for being overly influenced by the US and UNASUR exemplifies a counterhegemonic organization that has been active in mediating national crises since its inception. The two organizations are furthermore symbols of two contesting theoretical approaches within International Relations, when discussing state motivations, international organizations, and democracy. With this brief overview, the research question for this thesis is *what can explain the OAS' and UNASUR's success in or failure to protect democracy in the face of national crises in Latin America?*<sup>2</sup>

Theoretically, the thesis discusses the importance and role of international organizations, and the rationale underlying states' engagement with and within these by contrasting Liberal Institutionalism and Peripheral Realism. The former is a universalistic, western-originated theory that advocates for international organizations as relevant, and potentially positive actors on the political stage, based on universalistic, normative tenets. The OAS is an organization that lies close to this theory. The latter is a particularistic, non-western theory that is skeptical towards organizations as neutral actors, political liberalism, and the normative underpinnings of globally dominant theories and political practices. The thesis argues that the latter theory better reflects Latin American political concerns, and motivations for engaging with or within a regional organization. Theoretically, the thesis argues that UNASUR lies closer to this

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<sup>1</sup> From this point onwards, the organizations are referred to by their acronyms.

<sup>2</sup> The thesis will generally refer to "Latin America" but where "South America" is the only logical term, this will be used.

Peripheral Realism as it better reflects Latin American particularities. In the endeavor of answering the research question, the thesis will answer two hypotheses that act as guides throughout. The first entails that democracy is not uniformly understood or practiced in the region, and the second is whether the organizations have autonomy, or “actorness”. In addition to democracy and actorness, sovereignty is a key concept in answering the research question, but I argue that the relevant operationalization of the concept differs somewhat from most western theories of International Relations. After the theoretical and conceptual discussions, the internal structures of the organizations and key documents are presented. Both organizations have documents that act as guidelines to states’ democratic governance, and that stipulate the measures to be taken in the face of breakage of the guidelines. The OAS has the *Inter-American Democratic Charter* (IADC)<sup>3</sup> and UNASUR the *Protocolo Adicional al Tratado Constitutivo de UNASUR sobre Compromiso con la Democracia*<sup>4</sup>. Shortly after the adoption of the IADC, certain authors identified weaknesses in the documents (Ferguson, 2003), and the thesis will illustrate that the IADC still has those weaknesses, and UNASUR’s equivalent document also. The empirical matter of the thesis, which provides evidence to how the organizations engage in the face of crises, are five different country cases where democracy has been challenged. Bolivia in 2008, Honduras in 2009, Ecuador in 2010, Paraguay in 2012, and Venezuela at present constitute the empirical cases. These crises will help uncover the role played (or not played) by the organizations, and similarities in the cases. The organizations have not responded in similar fashion in every crisis and the theories and key concepts of the thesis will provide possible reasons for this in the discussion chapter.

The ongoing corruption scandal and demands for impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (BBC, 2016) that is occurring in Brazil at the time of writing shows why the thesis topic is relevant. Democracy is still subjected to challenges in the region. First, Latin American politics is to an unfortunate degree overlooked in Norwegian International Relations courses and wider academia. This thesis is a modest addition to the literature. Second, Western-centric theories do not necessarily explain the political processes and motivations pertinent in other corners of the world. Alternative theories should receive more attention as they can enrich the subject field. Third, 2015 and 2016 are election years in several Latin American countries (see table 1), and as such looking at democracy is relevant. Fourth, on a personal plane I hold the region dearly.

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<sup>3</sup> The Inter-American Democratic Charter will be referred to as “IADC” for the remainder of the thesis

<sup>4</sup> Additional Protocol on Commitment to Democracy: My translation. It will for the remainder of the thesis be referred to as “the Protocol”.

## 2. The Socio-Economic and Political Context from 2001 till Present

“[...] Ya no estamos frente a las dictaduras de los años setenta. Algo ha pasado [...]”<sup>5</sup>—  
Arrighi, Jean Michel, OAS Secretary for Legal Affairs.

The historical scope of the thesis spans from the day the Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC) was adopted, in 2001, until today. Latin America today is a relatively peaceful region that lacks the great humanitarian catastrophes that other regions in the South suffer. It has also experienced an increasingly stable political landscape in terms of governance over the past few decades, as the above statement indicates. Despite this, it is also frequently denominated the world’s most unequal region in socioeconomic terms (Bull, 2015). Inequality in Latin America is transversal and structures society along economic, educational, ethnic and gender lines, to name a few. Over the past 10-15 years, the region has experienced unprecedented growth rates, and a vast number of Latin Americans have been lifted out of poverty (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). This positive trend has been helped by high commodity prices, but also by progressive policies, but at present the commodity prices have decreased, and the public income levels will diminish rendering the future more uncertain. At the time of writing, Venezuela, the main oil economy in South America is undergoing a severe recession (World Bank, 2015a). Latin America is per May 2016 a formally democratic region. As Benedicte Bull points out, present-day democracy in Latin America is fairly young (Bull, 2013). Constitutional democracy is found in every country, and elected governments and regular elections are found region-wide, with the exception of Cuba. This was not always the case, as Diamond points out: “Latin America has gone from a region of scarce or chronically unstable democracy [...] to one where democracy is the predominant and expected form of government” (2013: 95). Present-day democracies emerged post-1974 in what is, by some, referred to as the third wave of democratization, (Diamond, 2013: 99). Since independence, nearly every country in Latin America has suffered several authoritarian and dictatorial regimes, military or otherwise. Despite certain events during the past decade that have culminated in the premature end of presidential terms, the democratic system seemingly remains untouched. However, more critically, while the democratic governance is seemingly the “only game in town”, there are countries that might challenge this notion. Parallel to the positive economic developments over the past two decades has been the emergence of several new regional organizations.

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<sup>5</sup> *We no longer face the dictatorships of the seventies. Something has happened:* my translation. Statement made by Arrighi when interviewed at the OAS headquarters in January 2016 (see appendix 12.2).

The idea of regionalism in Latin America is not new. Going back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during which the vast bulk of Latin American states obtained independence, regional integration has been an ideal for many and an oft-voiced goal. Simón Bolívar wished for the creation of a united (part of) Latin America and until his deathbed advocated for increased integration and regionalization (Clem and Maingot, 2011: 2). In most countries, the idea of “Latin-Americanism” is strong. This can be understood as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) in which all Latin Americans are somehow united through their identity as such. This identity sentiment is often voiced, be that by renowned authors such as Eduardo Galeano in his seminal work *Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina* or by quasi-political musicians such as Calle 13<sup>6</sup>. Reality, however, paints a different picture. Latin American regional integration is ambivalent. By way of an indication of this, regional trade amounted to only 27% of the total trade figures in the region in 2013 (The Economist, 2013), making it the least integrated region worldwide in terms of trade. Border disputes and smaller conflicts of various sorts are furthermore not unheard of in the region<sup>7</sup>. Despite these traits, several new regional organizations have emerged in recent history, possibly indicating a willingness to integrate and to cooperate more closely. Examples are Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), Alianza del Pacífico, Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC), and Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR). However, some of these organizations have overlapping and ideologically competing agendas. UNASUR and the OAS are examples. Protection of democracy as a governance form lies at the crux of this, and while the OAS and its democracy concept was encouraged and consensually accepted, at the turn of the millennium, the thesis will illustrate that this has changed and that UNASUR might be a more apt organization today.

A large proportion of the years in the scope of the thesis are often referred to as the “Pink tide” (Bull, 2013): a strengthened political Left throughout the region, especially in South America. Countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela were part of the “tide”. and have had ambitious social programs aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the majority of the population. However, in Argentina’s 2015 presidential elections the Right won, as it did in Venezuela’s parliamentary elections in December 2015, and the abovementioned scandal in Brazil may result in a change of government. These are but examples of what some would argue is an end to the leftist tide (Mitchell, 2016), and it will

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<sup>6</sup> Particularly exemplified by the song “Latinoamérica”: one of the most popular Latin songs ever made. [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> As an example: Bolivia and Chile are at the time of writing in trial at the ICJ over Bolivian sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean (BBC, 2016a).

become clear that political ideology is important in some of the crises to be presented in the thesis. As has happened in Venezuela, the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela<sup>8</sup> (PSUV) party led by Nicolás Maduro has taken steps to hinder the (democratically elected) opposition in their first few months in parliament (Entravisión, 2016). The Venezuelan president's actions led the OAS' secretary general Almagro to send him an official letter in which he calls for respect of democracy and the electoral results (Organization of American States, 2016). The following chapter will discuss regional organizations through the lenses of Liberal Institutionalism and Peripheral Realism.

**Table 1 - non-exhaustive list of important political events in the region in 2015 and 2016**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>
Argentina	25.10.2015	Presidential elections
Belize	4.11.2015	General elections
<b><i>Bolivia</i></b>	<b><i>21.2.2016</i></b>	<b><i>Constitutional referendum</i></b>
Dominican Republic	15.5.2016	Presidential elections
<b><i>Ecuador</i></b>	<b><i>Tbc*</i></b>	<b><i>Popular referendum</i></b>
Guatemala	25.10.2015	Presidential elections
Mexico	7.6.2015	Legislative elections
Nicaragua	6.11.2016	Presidential elections
Peru	10.4.2016	Presidential elections
St. Kitts and Nevis	16.2.2015	General elections
St. Vincent and the Gren.	9.12.2015	General elections
Suriname	25.7.2015	Parliamentary elections
Trinidad and Tobago	7.9.2015	Parliamentary elections
United States	8.11.2016	Presidential elections
<b><i>Venezuela</i></b>	<b><i>6.12.2015</i></b>	<b><i>Parliamentary elections</i></b>

Sources: <http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/calendario.asp>;

[http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado\\_asamblea2015/r/0/reg\\_000000.html](http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado_asamblea2015/r/0/reg_000000.html)

\*to be confirmed

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<sup>8</sup> United Socialist Party of Venezuela: my translation

### **3. Regional Organizations: A Theoretical Discussion**

As the thesis addresses the role played by two intergovernmental organizations in national crises, the approach adopted to reach that aim is a comparative one, in that I compare the two organizations' responses to five different crises of the past decade. Having intergovernmental organizations as units of analysis necessitates a theoretical discussion on the primacy and relevance of such organizations in international politics, because it can help inform the study as to the beliefs and values that underpin the existence of such organizations, and their potential influence on state behavior. I will draw on a longstanding debate within the subject field of International Relations – that of Liberalism versus Realism by specifically addressing two branches within each paradigm: Liberal Institutionalism and Peripheral Realism. The former is a theory that is universal in scope and that emanated from the United States, and the latter is represented by the Argentinian scholar Carlos Escudé, stemming from a South American context. I argue that these theories stand in tension and that the latter can help provide insights to Latin American regionalism and state motivations to which the former is not sensitive. The following discussion will emphasize the importance of regional organizations in Latin America and the effect the organizations may have on domestic politics.

#### *Liberal Institutionalism*

The 1990's were marked by a renewed impetus towards regionalism in the Americas (Karns et al. 2015: 195), and were marked by the reawakening of Liberalism in International Relations due to the end of the Cold War. It was a global victory of the West, and with it the ideologies and theories emanating from it. Liberalism is one such theory. Although relevant since the end of World War 2, the 1990's marked the heyday for this theory. Liberalism in this context is not to be confused with the oft-criticized neoliberal economic models that dominated the Latin American region, and other regions in the South, in the 1980s and 1990s. The socioeconomic effects of such policies are well described elsewhere<sup>9</sup>. Liberalism as understood in this thesis is a normative paradigm founded on a positive belief of cooperation among states. The normativity of Liberalism is represented globally through values and ideas, such as democracy, human rights, free markets etc. The two former values are universal, whereas the latter – possibly the most institutionalized worldwide - can be said to symbolize integration. Liberalism is a statist paradigm (the state is the primary unit) but it holds that cooperation between states can help reach common solutions to common problems that in turn are beneficial for all.

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<sup>9</sup> For a solid overview of the negative consequences of neoliberal economics, consult Ferguson (2006)

International organizations help facilitate and encourage this cooperation (Keohane and Martin, 1995:42). With a conviction that regional integration and cooperation is desirable and possible, some claim that liberal international institutions can be found virtually everywhere on the planet (Stein 2008: 201).

What is understood by “Liberal Institutionalism” here is heavily drawn from Robert Keohane and John Ikenberry. The assumption that is at the root of any liberal institution is that there is willingness among states to collaborate and cooperate within such an institution in order to obtain common goals (Ikenberry 2009: 72). Proponents of this theory stand at odds with the standard understanding of state sovereignty, so often associated with Realism, as Ikenberry argues that “the liberal world order of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by erosion of state sovereignty and reallocation of political authority to [institutions on] the global stage” (Ikenberry 2009: 71). In other words, political authority is thus increasingly transferred to institutions, which are given legitimacy by states. Many would disagree with that statement, and the reliability of it will be tested in this thesis. These institutions are a “basis for political authority, conceived as a fusion of power and legitimate social purpose”, in which the social purpose largely is to provide human security, welfare and liberty as a result of a more peaceful, prosperous and free world (Keohane 2012:125-126). Thus, international liberal institutions encompasses those institutions that advocate for and rely on cooperation, collective action, and where common rules play a key role. States are still key actors, but non-state institutions are in given circumstances and at particular times given relative authority over them. Based on an IR-mainstream view of the international system as inherently anarchic and competitive (Waltz, 1979), and according to liberal institutionalists, the institutions referred to in this thesis are thus possible to envision as in place to help govern the anarchic international system<sup>10</sup>. Liberal Institutionalism holds that conflict is not natural and that cooperation is indeed possible and in accordance with the interests of all involved actors. The global free market is often used as an example. According to Keohane, Institutions are crucial for sustained cooperation that will be beneficial for most, if not all (2012:127). This however is not achieved by itself. The rule of law is a necessary component of Liberal Institutionalism, and on the international stage it refers to the degree to which agreed-upon rules affect the established order (Ikenberry 2009:73). In sum, the theory rests on an assumption that cooperation is beneficial for all, and that institutions

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<sup>10</sup> While the notion of anarchical world system is most known as a Realist idea, most Liberalists also accept it. Where they differ is in how states can, and should, act in such a system.

are the guardians of states when these are engaged in conflict or disputes. They provide the arena and “rules of the game” for states. For the purposes of the thesis, the latter would be democracy as governance form, and protection of the same.

According to the above outline of Liberal Institutionalism it becomes clear that the proponents of this strand of thought, at least in an ideal-type version, would claim that institutions such as regional organizations increasingly obtain authority vis-à-vis states and are a true force to be reckoned with on the global political stage. It would also appear that they assume that organizations have autonomy of action, or “actorness”. That is, capacity to act as independent units. If what Ikenberry claims when he states that states increasingly cede sovereignty to international institutions is true one is led to assume that regional organizations such as the OAS and UNASUR would indeed have influence over domestic politics of their members. As Galeano (1971) has vividly illustrated, the region – despite its many differences – share a wide range of historical commonalities of foreign interventions, social inequalities, and common challenges which could lead one to imagine that processes of regional integration could grow on fertile ground. However and as briefly noted in section 2, regional cooperation in Latin America is ambiguous. Whereas the economic alliances in the region have achieved some momentum<sup>11</sup>, the organizations with a more political-normative agenda seem to struggle more. By this I mean that organizations with normative and value-laden prescriptions for states are met by differing perceptions and values within individual states, resulting in an obstacle for integration. The universalistic, western-originated values and norms that permeate Liberal Institutionalism are embodied in the OAS. Being the oldest intergovernmental organization in the world, with the US as a key member, it has clear liberal underpinnings and – if one accepts such a claim – represents the dominant, global discourse of Liberalism. Needless to say, the presence of the US among its members strengthens this statement, as the country is an active proponent of liberal values worldwide. For the purposes of this thesis, the OAS’ democracy protection agenda also reflects the liberal adherence of the organization. For one, democracy is a central value of liberalism in general, but not just any kind. OAS specifically propagates liberal, representative democracy. This specification is important, as UNASUR merely makes a generic reference to democracy. For the present purposes, regionalism in a liberal institutionalist perspective refers to regional integration on the basis of a common set of values and norms, where democracy as form of governance is key, and in which the regional

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<sup>11</sup> Notably the Pacific Alliance (composed of Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile).

organizations embody an arena for such integration. It follows from their positive view on international organizations as actors on the political stage, that these organizations, by having provisions for action in the event of democratic crises or breakdowns, would have autonomy of action, or actorness.

Liberal institutionalists ground their convictions and arguments on liberal, universalistic values, and on an assumption that these are universally accepted and adhered to. This, and the further implication of institutional authority and influence over individual states' domestic policies is problematic, as there are several other political strands of thought in Latin America today, which are better explained by other theories. Furthermore, the US historical impact in the hemisphere renders the adherence to liberal values all the more questionable. Based on these reservations towards Liberal Institutionalism, I find that Peripheral Realism can help understand potential challenges to Liberal Institutionalism from a Latin American vantage point because it is sensitive to Latin American particularities, which the latter is not.

### *Peripheral Realism*

As with liberalism, Realism in general is a rationalistic, state-centric paradigm that is known for concepts such as the anarchical world order, states as like-units, sovereignty, national interests, and the separation of domestic and foreign policy spheres. I ask the reader to accept this very general overview, as the point here is simply to outline some of the main tenets of the paradigm. The outline is largely based on the writings of the two major authors of realist theory, Morgenthau and Waltz<sup>12</sup>. Anarchical world system refers to the understanding of the international system of states, as one in which there is no worldwide authority, or enforcer, to control the acts of individual states (Morgenthau, 1967). By like-units it is meant that states are functionally equal, meaning that they are all committed to the same activities – pursuing national interests – within the international system. Following from this functional equality, the concept of sovereignty is important. Every state is sovereign in that its internal, or domestic, dealings are controlled and enforced by itself. National interests are often understood as pursuing security and safety, both economical and from external violence. The separation of spheres is based on the idea that foreign policies exist outside the domestic realm, and are not mutually influencing. Latin America experienced the “realpolitik” of the Cold War with the US

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<sup>12</sup> The thesis does not aim to provide an extensive overview of the paradigm, thus leaving branches such as “Offensive Realism” (Mearsheimer) and others out.

crusade on communist governments in the hemisphere. Many of the Latin American dictatorships of the 1970's emerged as a result of US support and their active intervention. The Operación Cóndor in the Southern Cone presents a clear case<sup>13</sup>. The emphasis of the theory rests solely and exclusively on the state. There is little to no room for regional organizations or international institutions, and insofar they exist they are little more than the sum of the interests of the states comprising it. In other words, there is little importance given to regional organizations and the influence on domestic politics is irrelevant.

This section is dedicated to Carlos Escudé's theory Realismo Periférico<sup>14</sup>. He argues that theories such as Liberalism and Realism are western-centric and that they reinforce the real-world dominance of the West in general, and the United States in particular (Escudé, 1995b: 9-10). Being a Realist, albeit critical, his primary focus lies with the state but his tenets differ from mainstream Realism. As the intergovernmental organizations addressed here are composed of states, it is pertinent to adopt a set of lenses through which one can understand state motivations for being part of, and accepting provisions from, such organizations. Peripheral Realism can illuminate this, from a Latin American perspective. As a major argument, he claims that the international system is not anarchical. He describes it as hierarchical, where the central, or core, states are in a dominant position vis-à-vis the countries in the periphery (Escudé, 1995a: 3). Any peripheral state attempting to pursue foreign policies that do not conform to the globally accepted status quo will experience pressures to align with the dominant regimes. In terms of democracy protection by the OAS and UNASUR, it would then entail that any discrepancy from their provisions – if one accepts the organizations as representatives of the “dominant regime” – would result in pressures by these to realign with them. Especially with the former organization this issue lies at the crux of the challenges they face with democracy protection in Latin America today, as the idea of democracy is contested. Following from his hierarchical understanding of the world system he discards the validity of the concept of “like units” (Escudé, 1995: 24). States are by no means equal, and the capabilities of each vary greatly. In this world system, the dominant states, or hegemon(s), to a large extent dictate the rules of the system, and react to any discrepancy from the ruling regime. Following from this, the theory does not agree with the notion of separated spheres for domestic and foreign politics, because the domestic economic conditions impede most peripheral states in

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<sup>13</sup> Operación Condor is most famed for the ousting of Chile's president Salvador Allende in 1973, but also involved the dictatorships of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, to name a few. For an overview: Dinges (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Peripheral Realism: my translation.

developing power politics in the classical realist sense. In addition, and more pressing, dominant states do intervene in weaker states' domestic affairs, as has happened throughout history in Latin America as a whole, with the colonial era, followed by the British economical domination, and in recent decades, US interventions in the region (Galeano, 1971). In sum, domestic politics in Latin America has recurrently throughout history been subjected to external pressures and interventions, rendering the separation of spheres postulated by Realists highly questionable.

The international hierarchy and the long history of foreign interventions helps understanding why states in Latin America are showing restraint towards provisions or interference from external actors such as regional organizations with foreign, or globally dominant, values. It also helps explain why sovereignty in Latin America is so important. State sovereignty and regional organizations stand intuitively opposed and seen in tandem with historical considerations, it can help understand potential resistance to an organization such as the OAS. Having a hegemon of the stature as the US, which has a long history of interventions in the region, and propagating a set of western values may well be a significant issue for many states in the region that do not feel identified by such values. UNASUR was created in 2008 as a regional organization that would in part counterbalance US dominance in the region and to reflect South American interests. Whereas the US might be absent in UNASUR, the organization is still potentially in tension with concerns of sovereignty in the region. Interestingly, Escudé rejects any notion of nationalism, with those of sovereignty and national interest closely linked, as illusions that are potentially hurtful to the citizenry (Escudé, 1995: 20). Such concepts relate to the state, and the state in Latin America is contested. Whereas Realism tend to regard states as givens, Peripheral Realism does not. The rationale for this lies closely connected to the hierarchical ordering of the world system, and the foreign interventions suffered in the region. The ones living within the national territories of the Latin American states that have benefitted, historically, from such interventions (and foreign economic and political trends) are the elites. Latin American states have since independence been subjected to elite capture, meaning that the state has not been characterized as one in which the entire population is represented; merely the elites. Peripheral Realism, then, postulates that non-dominant states ought to protect the citizenry to curb the politics of globally dominant trends, which has entrenched elite interests in the region (Escudé, 1995b: 5). The major interest of peripheral states ought to be economic development domestically, to increase the welfare of its citizenry, and to grow its economic stature vis-à-vis other states because any ambition of becoming a military power is futile in a hierarchical world.

The tenet of developing the economic welfare of the citizenry is a frequently recurring component of political ideologies leaning towards the Left, and coincidentally, the past 10-15 years has seen a reappearance of Leftist parties in government in many Latin American countries. Beyond ideology, this tenet also helps understand the emergence of a new form of democracy, one that breaks with the dominant representative understanding of democracy, namely participatory democracy. A discussion on democracy follows in the next chapter. Despite Escudé's critique of the sovereignty concept, I find that it is an important concept in understanding foreign politics in the Latin American context<sup>15</sup>. As mentioned, sovereignty is a concept that stands in intuitive tension with regional organizations, but it can also help understand the emergence of UNASUR. In the peripheral realist view there exists no *neutral* third party that regulates international acts or enforces international rules. In distinction to the classical realist assumption, Escudé claims that the international organizations reflect and reinforce the hierarchical ordering of states on the international stage (Escudé, 1995: 38). He explicitly criticizes the liberal institutionalist point of view of international organizations as a place where states interact as equals (Escudé, 1995a: 25):

“La influencia del Tercer Mundo sobre las organizaciones internacionales nunca puede ser suficientemente fuerte como para crear en nuevo orden económico interestatal que significativamente ayude a generar equidad social y económica [...] la más importante “contribución” de las organizaciones intergubernamentales al Tercer Mundo no ha sido la promoción de la equidad social y económica ni un orden económico interestatal más justo, sino la legitimización de dictadores y oligarquías locales“ (Escudé, 1995a: 28-29)<sup>16</sup>.

He makes direct reference to the OAS in his critique, and during the 1970's the organization, while propagating democracy as the desired form of government, had several dictatorships as members. However skeptical Peripheral Realism is towards international organizations, as briefly indicated above, UNASUR can be envisioned as a counter-hegemonic – theoretically and politically - initiative in which the South American states are united in a common, sovereign unity. Having avoided a (global) hegemon among its members, and being an entirely South American construct inaugurated during a period of good economic prospects where many states were more progressive and inclusive in their policies, it may have been the organization Escudé

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<sup>15</sup> I argue that the concept should be understood as “popular sovereignty”. It is addressed in chapter 4.2.

<sup>16</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> world influence in international organizations can never be sufficiently strong so as to create a new inter-state economic order that significantly helps create social and economic equity. [...] The most important “contribution” the international organizations have given the 3<sup>rd</sup> world has not been the promotion of social and economic equity, nor a more just inter-state economic order, it has been the legitimization of dictators and local oligarchs: my translation.

would have argued for. It also shows a willingness to keep up with global developments, as regional organizations are increasing in number worldwide. Symbolically it can be seen as the materialization of South American self-governance and independent problem solving. However, whereas Peripheral Realism can help explain its emergence and its normative groundings, it does not necessarily explain the relationship the individual states have with the organization. In fact, there are voices that claim that UNASUR has a structural bias towards the incumbent presidents (Closa and Palestini, 2015) by having decision-making processes largely dependent on the political considerations of individual member states, which would entail that it is implicitly designed to reflect considerations of national interests and sovereignty.

The two main pertinent factors for this thesis are democracy as form of governance on the one hand, and actorness by the organizations in protecting said democracy, on the other. The first theory presented here, Liberal Institutionalism, claims that cooperation is desirable, possible, and positive for all parties, and institutions are arenas to help achieve this. It also argues that these are given authority to act and mediate in potential crises or conflicts and that they have a autonomy of action, or actorness. However, cooperation is based on explicitly liberal normative groundings, which makes it controversial in the region. Peripheral Realism helps understand how and why that is, and also why states may be reluctant to accept organizations with too much autonomy of action or influence in domestic politics. It also helps understand the emergence of UNASUR as an alternative to the OAS, and the emergence of the former may, as Aruguay and Moreno note, entail a situation of competing regionalisms in South America (2014).

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

As an extension of the theoretical discussion, there are three concepts that need to be clarified. These are democracy, sovereignty, and the “actorness” of the organizations.

##### **4.1. Democracy**

At a very basic level, democracy is a political system where people can choose and replace leaders through elections that are free, fair and regularly held (Diamond, 2013: 94). One of the most revered democracy scholars, Robert Dahl, argued that a key aspect of democracy is that the alternative preferred by the largest amount of people is elected to govern. This he denominated “the Rule”, and elections are the only materialized example of measuring it (Dahl, 2006: 64). However, as Sen notes, we should not equate democracy with mere majority rule (2001: 9) as democracy is not universally practiced nor uniformly accepted (Sen, 2001: 5). Due

to scope limitations, this chapter will be devoted to two ideal-type strands of democracy that are most commonly advocated for in present-day Latin America: representative democracy and participatory democracy. These are normative, and prescribe government practices not just during elections but also between such events. The OAS advocates for the former understanding, whereas a number of governments in the region frequently voice the latter form. Furthermore, and recalling Peripheral Realisms' tenet of citizen inclusion and welfare as a key interest for state, participatory democracy can be understood as an attempt to break with previous state practices and to include the entire population instead of solely the elites. The link between participatory democracy and the arguments of Peripheral Realism is more thoroughly presented in section 4.1.2. The distinction between the two understandings of democracy pose a challenge for the OAS, as the type of democracy they aim to protect is, in certain states, not the type practiced or advocated.

#### **4.1.1. Representative Democracy**

Democracy scholars in the 1990's were positive towards the trend of more and more states turning democratic, and democracy triumphing over authoritarian regimes. The liberal representative democracy ideal is arguably the one that is most frequently advocated for globally. There are several components to this form of democracy, and one can highlight four commonalities of modern liberal, representative democratic regimes. First, government officials and authorities are voted into office. Second, all adults have the right to vote. Third, civil liberties and political rights are protected and lastly, governments are not subjected to military control (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53). Robert Dahl presented seven criteria for a healthy democracy, and these can be summarized, as O'Donnell<sup>17</sup> has done, as two main categories: 1) inclusive, competitive, and fair elections and 2) political and social freedoms are key not only during, but also between, elections (2001: 114). Liberal, representative democracies are normally composed of a system of checks and balances in order to avoid a centralization of power, usually in the executive branch of government. This form of democracy is based on the premise of political competition and limited time in power, and spaces for political participation (i.e. freedom of assembly) are usually encouraged. This is an ideal-type definition of what representative democracy entails, and should be viewed as such.

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<sup>17</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell is critical to the idea of liberal, representative democracy in Latin America. As such I do not wish do associate him directly to the writings of R. Dahl, but his summary is neat and precise.

A Western construct, the representative democracy model might have seen its heyday in Latin America in the final decade of the 1990's and early 2000's (ref. the adoption of the IADC), today's picture seems more complex. Latin American democracies, as we know them today, are young and have been constructed on a very different ground than most of the western democracies. Democracies in Latin America have been created in the context of states whose presence looks partial and precarious in territorial, judicial, and social terms (Schedler, 2001: 157). The partiality refers to the dominant status of elites and that the state structure in general terms is not designed to account for all inhabitants within the territory of the state. This has led to a skewed practice of democracy. The democracies of Latin America have been, in varying degrees, characterized by effective democratic freedoms such as un-coerced voting, freedom of opinion, movement and association. At the same time for large parts of the population, basic liberal freedoms are denied or recurrently trampled: the rights of peasants to obtain fair trials against property owners, the rights of the poor and minorities to decent treatment and fair access to public courts are often denied (O'Donnell, 2001: 124). In any fully functioning democratic order, the legality of citizenship has to be universalistic, meaning that any member of the citizenry regardless of social standing can invoke it (O'Donnell, 1993: 1360). While citizenship is intrinsic to democracy the fulfillment of citizenship depends on the legality of the state (O'Donnell, 1993: 1361). Here I wish to remind the reader of Peripheral Realism's tenet of the state as elite-dominated. In many parts of Latin America, peasants, slum-dwellers, women and other groups have not been able to experience the civil rights the state is supposed to provide and protect. Pervasive particularism (clientelism), delegated rule (i.e. by appointment), and weak horizontal accountability are trends that have dominated the political landscape in Latin America. These have at least two drawbacks: First, generalized lack of control, which enables old authoritarian practices to reassert themselves. Second, in countries that established representative democracies under conditions of stark inequalities, organized and powerful economic interests further biased the making and implementing of policies (O'Donnell, 2001: 124). O'Donnell further problematizes the feasibility of representative democracy in Latin America when he writes that although the formal institution of elections is in place, the informal institution of clientelism prevail (2001: 114). Clientelism and corruption are tightly related. The present Brazilian crisis is a case in point. As clientelism and blurred lines between public and private spheres abound, elections survive as the main characteristic that certifies a country as democratic or not by the international community (O'Donnell, 2001: 123). Elections, as will be evident later in the thesis, is the measurement of choice by the regional organizations to assert if a country has emerged from its national crisis and reinstated democracy.

#### 4.1.2. Participatory Democracy<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the representative version of democracy in essence entails that eligible voters elect their representatives – presidents, congressmen etc. – to rule and to pass laws “for” the voters, or the people (demos), participatory democracy essentially entails that eligible voters vote on every issue that concerns them. Sartori, when describing democracy as “popular power”, writes that democracies ought to be political systems or regimes in which the people rule. He then poses the quintessential question related to democracy: Who are the people? (2014: 27). Considering the skewed representation and accountability (and inequality) that have characterized representative democracies in Latin America, this is a very relevant question. Recall here what Escudé posited when he claimed that the Latin American states have been elite-dominated, and that a key state interest ought to be the increase of welfare for its citizenry. From this vantage point we can understand the attempt made by several states in Latin America to implement a participatory democracy model. At the very least, the participatory democratic model is based on the principle of universal inclusion – that no one should be deprived of an equal voice in choosing those who will govern (Plattner, 2001: 87-88). At an initial glance, considering the criticisms of representative democracy raised by O’Donnell this turn towards participatory democracy makes sense. The issue of lower-class (and indigenous) representation has been problematic for democracy in the region (Collier, 2006: 120) and the implementation of participatory democracy models can be envisioned as an attempt to curb this problem. Put differently, if understood in a way in which Peripheral Realism accounts for the objective presuppositions of state’s ethical-political ordering, it would mean that Realism stops where liberal, democratic, and socialistic regimes begins. They are the results of implanting the ideal in the objective; of the “ought to be” in the real (Sartori, 2014: 44-45). In the Latin American context, the objective, structural presuppositions would be the hierarchical, elite-dominated nature of the states, whereupon the participatory democracy model can be understood as the implementation of the “ought to be”, given those structural presuppositions. Participatory democracy, I argue, is an attempt to mitigate the elite-dominated state structures. Participatory democracy is a term that is sometimes used to describe, for example, three countries in this thesis: Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela (Ellner, 2012). The three countries can also be denominated popular interest regimes, where the emphasis on lower, and lower middle class (and indigenous groups) is strong.

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<sup>18</sup> I have chosen this term for simplicity. Several names could have been chosen: radical, deliberative, direct, participatory, communitarian, and so on. They have at least one common trait: to break with the status quo in governance.

The participatory democracy can be understood in Latin America, in general terms, as a reaction to the lack of responsiveness and accountability that the dominant representative democratic model presents. As García Linera, Vice President of Bolivia, claims when speaking of his native country: the majority of the population have different political techniques and practices as a result of their own material lives. The participatory model is less of a mono-organization and more one that respects different political and cultural practices (2004). A key aim of participatory democracy is that of political equality and in order to achieve social consensus one has to implement deliberative measures of participation (Fleury, 2005: 49). The citizenship-oriented participatory democracies provide political-legal equalization through citizenship status that gives legitimacy to the exercise of power, and attempts to equalize social stratification (Fleury, 2005: 57). The inclusion of the citizenry into the political community is an expression of an expanded state, instead of the previously known restricted, elite-dominated state, and thus become more democratic, just, and equal. A participatory democracy can be envisioned as the collective decisions that arise from arrangements of collective choice, under the conditions of public and free reasoning among equals who, then, in turn are governed by such decisions (Fleury, 2005: 67). In sum, this form of democracy can be based on a foundation of recognition, participation and redistribution, which is fitting in the Latin American context given its historical presuppositions. Furthermore, it is more responsive to what Cansino claims is a typical feature of many Latin American societies: “dynamic popular mobilization” (2013: 94). Social activism- and movements form an important aspect of society and political life<sup>19</sup>, arguably because of lacking representation in politics. In Bolivia, social movements and formal politics have gone the furthest in integrating, as the current president is a former social movement leader.

Sartori, a proponent of the representative democracy model lists two precautionary remarks to the participatory practice. For one, those advocating for the participatory model rarely make of such a model the complete substitution of representative democracy, as they usually rely on elections and representation (2014: 95-96). After all, genuine and full participation is highly inefficient. Secondly, the active use of referendums – a common feature of participatory democracies - is problematic, as it constitutes a “zero-sum democracy”. Those models that consistently use referendums as a tool for deciding, not just who gets to decide, but also on

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<sup>19</sup> For a review of the importance of such activism, or the role of social movements, consult Bull (2013).

specific issues, effectively create a zero-sum dynamic in the sense that one votes for or against a person or a cause – leading some to total victory, and others to total defeat (Sartori, 2014: 101). Such a mechanism may well lead to heightened tensions and potential conflicts (Sartori, 2014: 103).

Although the two strands may have been presented as two poles in a dichotomous relationship, this is not the case in practice. They are to be understood as ideal-types. By this, I mean that whereas one state may advocate for a more participatory model and another a more representative model the two are not definite forms. One finds aspects of representative democracy in participatory models and vice versa. Although the lines between the two can be blurry in practice, I argue that the adherence to one or the other creates challenges for the democracy protection agendas of the organizations. In light of this, I present the first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) that is relevant for the purposes of the thesis: *the divergent views on democracy in the region affect the role of the organizations' work for protecting democracy in the face of crises.*

#### **4.2. Sovereignty**

As I alluded to in the theoretical discussion above, the concept of sovereignty is closely related to the general paradigm of Realism, and thus often assumed to stand in tension with any idea of regionalization or ceding authority to international organizations. Whilst I use Peripheral Realism to help explain the emergence of UNASUR and participatory democracy, I will restate that Escudé rejected the importance of the concept, attributing it to entrenched elite interests in real life, and to a dominant Western line of thought, theoretically. However, I argue that Peripheral Realism helps explain the importance given to the concept in many Latin American states, and possibly even more so in the states that advocate for a more participatory model of democracy. During the democratic transitions in the 1980's, "the people" were largely left out – most transitions were conceptualized as elite negotiations or elite-led processes of transition politics (Collier, 2006: 123) which reinforced the historical normality of elite dominance of the state. Being a region with a long history of foreign dominance and interventions, which have merely benefitted the elites in individual states, it should come as no surprise that such a concept becomes treasured in states that are increasingly independent from external influence, and the citizenry becoming more involved. Due to space limitations I will limit the operationalization of the concept to "popular sovereignty", meaning that I attribute it qualities that go beyond mere physical, territorial integrity as postulated by the likes of Waltz and Morgenthau. It stresses the sovereignty of the people, and the collectivity that citizenship entails, and the ability of the

citizenry to act and decide on political issues independently from external pressures, either in the form of a foreign actor or domestic elites. As such the concept reflects the importance given by Escudé to the citizenry, and I argue that participatory democracy and sovereignty, as understood here, are closely related. This is because in participatory democracies, where the demos is fully, or more than before participating in political decision-making, the collective autonomy and sovereignty of the people – whom directly influence the state - becomes a treasured value.

Having established the abovementioned, some aspects related to the role of the OAS and UNASUR emerge. OAS is the organization that is most susceptible to resentment and critique as it embodies globally dominant practices, actively propagates representative democracy, and has the US as a member state. UNASUR on the other hand may stand in a somewhat different position. For one, a wholly South American project, its establishment occurred in a time with various understandings of democracy present on the continent. It does not make an explicit commitment to a given form of democracy. Its initial years involved a renewed self-assurance on the continent due to significant positive socioeconomic developments in all its member states, and UNASUR's founding documents (including the Protocol) better reflects the realities, wishes, and motivations of the countries on the continent. An exemplification of this, in addition to the generic definition of democracy is its recurrent mention of the sovereignty concept. However, although UNASUR might better reflect the sovereign will of the South American people, the very principle of sovereignty may still pose challenges to autonomous action by both organizations in the region.

### **4.3. “Actorness”**

From a liberal institutionalist point of view, international organizations have gained worldwide prominence due to ever-increasing interconnectedness and interdependence between states (Karns et. al., 2015: 4). As a consequence of increased interconnectedness, proponents of said theory often argue that norms and values such as human rights, rule of law, and democracy (among others) will spread. This spread is facilitated by international organizations, though processes of socialization (Gheciu, 2005). The thesis aims to gauge the actorness of the organizations by focusing on their democracy protection agendas because the organizations' ability to diffuse norms among its members is, as Barnett and Finnemore argue (2004: 31), part of the sources of IO authority. By implication this indicates that along a liberal institutionalist line of thought international organizations can be understood as independent actors. It follows

from such reasoning that international organizations need to possess authority and autonomy vis-à-vis states in order to be considered an actor in its own right (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). These two are closely related. In terms of the former, political authority is ideally to be delegated to institutions by states, which are given legitimacy and thus enjoy delegated authority (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004: 22). As for the latter, autonomy of action of an international organization entails the ability to act independently, for example by mediating conflicts and relations, and regulate state behavior. Both qualities need to be empirically tested as to see whether an organization truly possesses them, and the institutional design of an organization is important to determine the extent of each quality.

According to Realist thought, the effect international institutions have on states is virtually nonexistent (Mearsheimer, 1994: 47). Realists tend to be negative of international organizations because they largely view state motivation to be self-centered and that while cooperation does occur, it is only fueled by that same self-centered motivation. Furthermore, it remains a core idea that handing over authority or parts of one's sovereignty is irrational and undesired from the point of view of a state. This implies that intervention from one such international organization in the affairs of a state is problematic. Escudé claimed that there were no neutral "3<sup>rd</sup> parties" in the international world system, and that the hierarchical ordering of states is reinforced by this fact. International organizations can plausibly be understood as potential solutions to the absence of such a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, and it is furthermore possible to envision UNASUR as an organization that attempts to reflect South American interests within the hierarchical world structure. The Realist view on the importance of international organizations is negative, and they point towards an existent tension of international organizations' authority in a world system where the central units are sovereign states. Thus, considering the Realist reservations one needs to distinguish between organizations as actors in their own right that can influence state behavior, or as arenas for states. Actorness refers to the extent an organization can act autonomously, and independently from individual state interest, within the bounds of its agenda and constituency. Chapter 6 will discuss the nature of each organization and the level of actorness they have will become clear as the country cases are presented in chapter 8.

As a second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) I argue that *the actorness of the organizations is limited as a consequence of individual state interests*. The two hypotheses presented will be the guiding lines for the remainder of the thesis, as they are key to understanding the role the organizations have when considering democracy protection in the region.

## **5. Methodology**

The approach I have chosen for my thesis is one of a comparative case study design. The units of analysis are the OAS and UNASUR. This approach is the most applicable as the thesis aims to uncover the different approaches the organizations have taken in the face of five different democratic crises in the region. Furthermore, I find it all the more relevant to adopt this approach with its logic of comparison considering that the latter organization by some is voiced as a direct alternative to the former. The comparative approach will potentially also be helpful in showing how the states in question relate to the organizations and their approach to the different crises. To use five different empirical events as the grounds on which the organizations will be assessed is justifiable on theoretical grounds as the different empirical cases potentially strengthen the sensitivity to factors underlying the patterns of actions of the organizations within a given context (Bryman, 2012: 74); which in the thesis is democracy protection. Concretely, the thesis will compare the key documents from each organization related to democracy protection, their provisions, and ultimately it will compare and contrast the approaches adopted by each organization in the face of the five crises presented in chapter 8. The thesis employs a qualitative research method. It is primarily based on existing literature on the different issues relevant to answering the research question, and on the empirical cases. Given that the bulk of the data sources used in the thesis is obtained through existing literature, the thesis stands on the proverbial shoulders of experts on the relevant topics of the thesis. However, I have conducted a field trip to Washington, D.C., USA where I interviewed OAS and WOLA<sup>20</sup> staffs. I have also interviewed relevant actors domestically, in person, and abroad via Skype. The data obtained during the field trip and the individual interviews constitute additional insights to the literature used. The total amount of interviews conducted was 15 (see appendix 12.2).

### **5.1. Data collection and sampling**

The thesis uses two main sources of data: existing literature and the data obtained from the interviews. The literature that is used in the thesis ranges from academic books, journals, press releases, official documents, to newspaper articles and all are part of the literature review that will be used to analyze the role of the organizations. The main data source, literature review, provides the insights of how the theories relate to the events that have taken place in real life, how the organizations acted, and serves as a base on which the interviews will add information not necessarily readily available in the literature review. The sample units were OAS employees

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<sup>20</sup> Washington Office on Latin America.

and of a variety of other relevant organizations and agencies (see appendix 12.2.). Some of my informants are located in Oslo, thus making them so-called convenience samples (Bryman 2012: 201), as to gain access to them have been more straightforward than with others. In the case of the OAS employees I had to rely on the willingness of the organization to grant me the interviews firstly, and secondly on the willingness (or availability) of each informant to meet me. As the first two interviews were concluded, they arranged interviews with colleagues and relevant people within the organization. The employees at WOLA I had previously arranged interviews with. The sample criteria for all the informants was that they either worked in sections of the organization (in the case of the OAS employees) related to democracy protection; had extensive experience with either the concept of democracy in the region, the organizations in question, or knew the relevant countries' politics extensively. Some samples have been added throughout due to recommendations from informants, in what is commonly known as "snowball sampling". I did not set a maximum number of informants. Prior to the field trip I designed a research design scheme (see appendix 12.1) to clarify what I wanted the interviewees to reflect upon. I did not, however, nudge them towards these reflections, and the interviews were kept open-ended so that it would be able to develop without restraints from my part.

The interviews were semi-structured in format, and the interview sheet (see appendix 12.3.) that was prepared prior to the interviews was based on issues I considered pertinent at that moment, and that the reflections sought after would help inform the study, and systematize the responses in order to simplify the coding of the interviews. I chose to use semi-structured interviews because although I wanted the interviews to focus on the reflections I assumed to be pertinent, I also wanted the informants to feel free to answer as they pleased and to add information that they regarded as relevant for their answers (Bryman 2012: 471) that I might have been a priori unaware of. Admittedly, this made the coding lengthier than structured interviews would have been but at the same time, it has revealed information that indeed has proven to be of relevance. Due to the geographical spread of interviewees, every interview was individual, but where they could have been in groups (at the OAS) the interviewees were available at different times. The choice of semi-structured interviews worked well in most cases as the interviewees had a lot to say but in a few of the interviews, the opposite occurred. In the cases where the informants did not want to answer, did not know how to answer, or simply chose to answer in brief, having additional questions helped keep the interviews going. Because the interviews were semi-structured and several of the informants turned out to provide

significant amounts of relevant, additional insights<sup>21</sup> that I had not anticipated, I chose to transcribe each interview in verbatim in order to avoid leaving anything potentially relevant out. The technique used for the coding was open coding (Bryman 2012: 569) where concepts relating to the anticipated reflections were highlighted by using a color-coding technique. Furthermore, the analysis of the raw data was done using a directed content analysis (Berg and Lune 2012: 352) in which the major themes of the transcriptions, relating to the abovementioned reflections were identified. A precautionary note is due: the interviews represent a nonprobability sample. The sample sizes are too small to be anything else. Their contributions are to add insights to the literature review, and whereas certain trends in the responses have been found I do not consider these to be “true” nor that they constitute a “fact”. However, they do to a certain extent confirm some of my assumptions regarding the role of the organizations with democracy protection in the region. This will be illustrated in chapter 9.

## **5.2. Limitations**

The data collection has limitations. First, when it comes to a thesis based primarily on literature review one risks overlooking potentially important topics, concepts and theories, due to the vast existing literature body. However, I consider my prior knowledge on the topic to be significant, and the interviews gave me an implicit confirmation that my assumptions do have foothold “in reality”. Secondly, there are limitations to the usage of interviews as data collection method. One, the sample group (my informants) is a nonprobability sample, meaning that the number of informants does not constitute a large enough number to be considered truly representative of either the OAS or the country cases. Second, due to time and financial constraints I have only been able to conduct one interview with each informant, thus I have not had the chance to carry out follow-up rounds of interviews. Third, as is probably obvious to the reader, I have not managed to obtain any interviews with UNASUR employees. The reasons for this is that they have not responded to emails or to phone calls, and due to time constraints I have had to prioritize the data available over pursuing new data. Given these limitations to the interview part of the data collection, the bulk of the thesis has been written based on existing literature, and while I only obtained interviews from one of the two organizations, I have been cautious not to write a biased thesis.

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<sup>21</sup> Both factual and contextual insights that helped provide a “thicker description” (Geertz, 1973) of the OAS and the individual country cases.

## 6. The Organization of American States (OAS)

The OAS was established in 1948 but traces its roots back to 1889<sup>22</sup>, effectively making it the oldest regional organization in the world. The OAS is unique in at least two ways. First, there is no other regional organization worldwide with such a strong north-south dimension. Second, it is one of the first organizations worldwide that explicitly provisioned democracy as the required form of governance for its members. Every country in the hemisphere<sup>23</sup>, formally at least, is a member of the OAS. The organization has a wide agenda and mandate. Among the overarching purposes of the organization is peace-strengthening, weapons limitation, seeking solutions to political, economic, judicial problems, and human rights protection. Finally, and of most relevance to the thesis, it is strongly committed to promoting representative democracy. The organization is an international entity that fits the description of a traditional intergovernmental organization in the sense that it is kept apart from domestic government officials, and the meetings and decision-making is done by formal diplomatic delegations (Slaughter, 2004: 160). The three main organs of the OAS include the General Assembly, the Permanent Council, and the General Secretariat. The first is the highest-ranking decision-making body of the organization and meets annually or upon special requests. Decisions are made, formally, with majority voting (two-thirds), but it normally operates with the principle of consensus. The second takes care of day-to-day activities and is where decisions relating to the IADC are accorded. It also formally employs two-thirds voting but most decisions are made based on consensus. The General Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General<sup>24</sup>, who is one of three parties with the ability to invoke a meeting for the potential application of the IADC (the other being the affected member state; the third, another member state).

Despite the OAS' engagement with democracy promotion and protection, they have at least two critiques raised against them that affect their legitimacy in the region. First, during the Latin American dictatorships of the 1970's and 1980's these states were not suspended nor expelled, effectively leading an organization committed to democracy to have several dictatorships as members. Second, many Latin American countries are skeptical to the organization's legitimacy due to strong US influence. The country contributes 41% of the total budget in 2013. Furthermore, US interventions in the hemisphere during the Cold War has caused an important

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<sup>22</sup> It was then called the International union of American Republics, and later renamed the Pan American Union (Karns et.al. 2015:195).

<sup>23</sup> Every country in the Americas, from Canada in the North to Chile in the south are members, except Cuba.

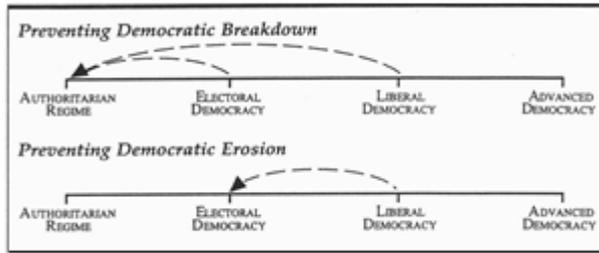
<sup>24</sup> The current Secretary General is Luis Almagro Lemes of Uruguay (Organization of American States, 2015), succeeding José Miguel Insulza from Chile.

level of suspicion. However, at the turn of the century, the OAS adopted the IADC shortly after the unconstitutional attempt made by Alberto Fujimori to be elected for a third term in Peru in 2000. Briefly put, the IADC was the result of a number of efforts to consolidate democracy in the hemisphere and to be able to address institutional breakdowns in the Americas (Olivari, 2014: 5). It was a turning point for the organization, as it mustered consensus on the topic, and was the designated regional body to mediate such breakdowns. In the next section I will review the IADC, sometimes referred to as the “democracy clause” (Olivari, 2014: 7), which is the most recent document for democracy protection by the organization.

### **6.1. The Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC)**

Despite past contradictions in practice, the organization has a longstanding commitment to democracy promotion and protection, and the IADC is the most recent tool to this end. It is the principal guide for defending democracy in the hemisphere, and every government in the region has signed it, formally embracing a commitment to democracy (Perina, 2012: 77). It should be understood as an attempt to broaden the scope of OAS’ democracy protection agendas beyond mere military coups, which were covered in earlier documents and resolutions but were blind to more elusive democratic irruptions (Ferguson, 2003: 1), such as the events in Peru in 2000. Whereas it does not hold the legality of a treaty or resolution, it is signed by all member states and thus holds symbolic value in that democracy has, in essence, gained recognition as the only accepted form of governance in the hemisphere. However, the adoption of the Charter has not eradicated democratic breakdowns in the region, as chapter 8 will illustrate. Furthermore, despite the seeming consensus at the time of adopting the IADC, it is relevant to note that Venezuela had concerns regarding the content. A proponent of participatory democracy, Venezuela voiced its concerns surrounding the explicit labeling of democracy as *representative* in the charter draft during the negotiations to complete the document (Organization of American States, 2001a: 181-183). Despite the efforts, and as is evident upon reading the minutes from the negotiations, little support was given to Venezuela.

Article 1 of the charter states that “the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy [...]”, and is followed by article 2 in which democracy is defined as representative in form. According to article 3 the IADC, the “essential elements of representative democracy include [...] respect for human rights, [...] the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage [...], and the separation of powers and independence of the branches of government” (Organization of



**Figure 1 - illustration of how one can envision “internal erosion of democratic order” (bottom) (Schedler, 2001: 152) and a democratic breakdown**

American States, 2001). Having outlined the content of what constitutes democracy and democratic practice, it is necessary to look at the circumstances the IADC can be applied. The IADC can be applied in three circumstances: (1) the forced overthrow of a democratically elected government, (2) if an unconstitutional interruption of democratic order occurs, and (3) if there is an unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously hinders democratic order (El-Hage, 2010: 2). The definitions of these circumstances are vague but the first circumstance easily translates to a coup d'état<sup>25</sup>. The second circumstance is more complicated, as it resembles the first. However, as El-Hage points out, it can be understood as both self-coups – the removal of democratically elected legislators and/or closure of governmental branches by the executive - or impeachment coups, in which the legislature removes the president without consideration of constitutional guidelines (El-Hage, 2010: 7-8). The third circumstance is the internal erosion of essential elements of democracy (see figure 1). This circumstance is the most complicated to identify, as there are no specifications as to when a government has changed from democracy to something else. Figure 1 illustrates such a move, and the “electoral democracy” concept is an example of this “something else” – a hollow democracy where democratic principles are trampled. It is furthermore complicated by the fact the perpetrators are usually the governments themselves, in particular the executive branch, and considering the provisions in the IADC that it is only the executive that can invoke the IADC (Ferguson, 2003: 3), no such invocation is likely to occur. The other branches of government have no means of invoking the Charter. As for the other states within the OAS, any such invocation is subjected to political calculations, as to openly invoke the IADC may result in a negative relationship with the government upon which it is invoked. Chapter 8 will show that there are developments in certain states in Latin America that resemble such an internal erosion.

Article 20 of the IADC gives every member state and the Secretary General the right to convoke an immediate collective assessment by the Permanent Council of any event that impairs a democratic regime, or unconstitutionally alters the democratic regime, in a member state. Given the assessment of the council, they will attempt to “foster the restoration of democracy” in the

<sup>25</sup> Understood as the military coups of earlier years.

affected member state through diplomatic means, but if the measures the permanent council implements prove to be unsuccessful, the Permanent Council must immediately convene a special session at the General Assembly. As postulated in article 20 of the IADC, the General Assembly will adopt the decisions they find appropriate (through voting) and employ initiatives in accordance with the IADC, the OAS' founding Charter, and international law (Organization of American States, 2001). Article 21 states that if such measures are unsuccessful, the state in question shall be suspended from its membership in the OAS. The suspension is subjected to voting in the Permanent Council, and the principle of affirmative vote of two thirds counts (Organization of American States, 2001). Suspension entails that the state cannot participate in the functions of the OAS, but it must still obey OAS provisions on i.e. human rights, and the OAS will continue to strive to restore democracy. This restoration, empirically, is generally equated with holding new elections.

## **7. Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR)**

Tracing its emergence to the mid 2000's, UNASUR was formally established in 2008, and its constitutive treaty adopted in 2011. It was initially envisioned as a regional integration project, loosely modeled on preexisting continental organizations such as the European Union and the African Union. Closa and Palestini points to the long tradition of external intervention in domestic crises - and politics more generally – as the historical justification for its inception as an autonomous South American organization (2015: 7). This strive for autonomy can be understood as an effort by the governments in the region to demonstrate that South American states are able to address South American problems. Much like the OAS, UNASUR has a large agenda and initially there were ambitious talks of significant integration measures such as uniting the currencies of the region and tighten security cooperation. However, as per the time of writing nothing indicates that this will be accomplished any time soon. Accordingly, some have argued that UNASUR should be considered as a tool for top-level political dialogue and political coordination, but not a full integration attempt (Malamud, 2013: 5). Being an entirely South American construct gives the organization a certain degree of legitimacy, if only in psychological terms. It is an intergovernmental organization that claim to represent the [...] determination [of the member states] of constructing a South American identity and citizenry, and to develop a regionally integrated region in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, energetic, and in terms of infrastructure [...]” (UNASUR, 2011: 7). However, as of today, it mainly contemplates the promotion of physical integration through transport, energy and communication networks, but it does not envision any transfer of sovereignty. In

fact, the Constitutive Treaty of the organization emphasizes the importance of the sovereignty of the individual member states, to a much more explicit degree than the OAS. Again, this fact may also lend the organization a greater degree of legitimacy. As mentioned, UNASUR may be the ideal 3<sup>rd</sup> party actor that Escudé would have argued for, considering that it is more sensitive to Latin American political motivations and values. However, UNASUR has many, if not all, of the same structural deficiencies as the OAS.

The organization is structured as follows: its highest decision-making body is the Council of Heads of State and they meet annually. Extraordinary meetings here – as when a democratic crisis occurs – can be convoked by any member state, through the *pro tempore* president, with the consensus of all member states (UNASUR, 2011: 14). Hierarchically subordinated to the Council of Heads of State is the Council of Foreign Ministers, which meet each semester. Extraordinary meetings can be convoked, also through petitioning the *pro tempore* president, with the support of the member states (UNASUR, 2011: 15-16). For the purposes of this thesis they are not very relevant, but the Council of Delegates is 3<sup>rd</sup> in rank. They cannot convene meetings of extraordinary nature. Finally, one has the General Secretariat, headed by the Secretary General<sup>26</sup> that for purposes of political controversy is rather powerless although they are the day-to-day caretakers. Adoption of resolutions, decisions or dispositions is voted over based on the principle of consensus (UNASUR, 2011: 20). Interesting for their rather contradictory nature are the following provisions in article 12 and 13 the Constitutive Treaty: The former states that every “normative act” stemming from UNASUR will be obligatory for its member states as soon as they are incorporated into the judicial order of each member, in accordance with internal (i.e. domestic) proceedings. The latter states that any given state can exempt itself from applying, totally or partially, approved policies, on a permanent or temporary basis (UNASUR, 2011: 20-21). As the treaty does not specify what differentiates a “normative act” from a “policy”, any decision made within UNASUR is seemingly subjected to individual governments’ aspirations, potentially rendering any decision made by the organization hollow. For the purposes of democracy protection the organization has two mechanisms in addition to the Constitutive Treaty. The first is the electoral council and the second is the Protocol. These will be presented in the following section.

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<sup>26</sup> Ernesto Samper Pizano of Colombia is the current Secretary General (UNASUR, n.d.).

## 7.1. The Protocol

The organization makes little explicit mention of democracy in its Constitutive Treaty. Just months after the establishment of the organization, it was de facto involved in its first national crisis on the continent, namely the constitutional crisis in Bolivia in 2008. This was the organizations' litmus test in terms of legitimacy and capability to act. Their involvement will be elaborated in chapter 8.1. The 2010 attempted coup and police insurgency in Ecuador led the organization to adopt the Protocol in 2011 and ratified in 2014. According to article 1 of the Protocol, it is applicable in the following scenario: "En caso de ruptura o amenaza de ruptura del orden democrático, de una violación del orden constitucional o de cualquier situación que ponga en riesgo el legítimo ejercicio del poder y la vigencia de los valores y principios democráticos"<sup>27</sup> (UNASUR, 2014). Article 2 states that the Council of Heads of State (or in their defect, the Council of Foreign Ministers) will meet in an extraordinary session, convoked by the president pro tempore, by petition of the affected, or another, member state (UNASUR, 2014). Article 3 stipulates that the decision to be taken is to be decided upon by consensus voting and always "in respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected state" (UNASUR, 2014). The Protocol delineates a series measures to be taken in the event of situations where the protocol is to be applied, including suspension of membership; suspension and/or limitations in trade, air traffic, energy provisions and so on, and promotion of suspension of the state in question from other international organizations. The provisions for action in the Protocol share with the IADC the trait of ambiguous and vague criteria, leaving enforcers – that is, national governments – a wide margin of interpretation.

What they do not share, however, is the definition of democracy. Whereas the IADC clearly refers to representative democracy, the Protocol merely reads "democracy". On the face of it this can be a positive feature in that it better reflects the various understandings of democracy that are found in the region, as previously illustrated. However, they do not make any clear definition of the term in the sense of what democracy ought to be in practice. It then logically follows that the notion of "democratic rupture" in article 1 is also ambiguous. Closa and Palestini have identified a grave problem for the application of the Protocol, in that the lack of substantive definitions may well render governments to interpret democratic rupture as a threat to themselves, given that it is defined as "any circumstance that endangers the legitimate

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<sup>27</sup> In the case of a rupture or threat of rupture of the democratic order, in the case of of a violation of the constitutional or under any circumstance that endangers the legitimate exercise of power and democratic principles and values: my translation.

exercise of power” (2015: 3). This intuitively entails that it will not be invoked on that premise, as the only ones who can invoke it are the executive branch of the different governments. Additionally, every president in the region has been elected through (more or less) free and fair elections and can thereby claim to be legitimate. Another difference between the two organizations is their democracy agendas understood more widely. In particular, the OAS sends electoral observation missions to any inviting state that desire to employ them to monitor and scrutinize elections. The OAS, once they are present during elections, act independently of the inviting government, and can, if the case so requires, report back in a critical manner. Examples would be in the event of vote buying, vote manipulation and so on. UNASUR does not have this independence of action. First, they are hamstrung by the fact that any one government can veto any invocation of the Protocol due to their consensus-based voting scheme. Second, and different from the OAS, they do not send electoral observation missions; they send ”accompaniment missions” which are effectively bound by the restrictions imposed on them by the inviting state, in terms of territorial mobility, level of scrutiny, and the final report is sent for review to the inviting state before publishing. Despite the structural impasses that have been outlined here, UNASUR has been involved in a series of domestic crises since its inception, namely in Bolivia in 2008, Ecuador in 2010, and Paraguay in 2012, and has been signaled as the right organization to get involved in Venezuela by Venezuelan authorities and other governments in the region (Meza, 2015). These crises are going to be addressed in the following chapter, and will present the involvements of both the OAS and UNASUR, or the lack of involvement.

## **8. Case Studies**

Although democracy seems as the only legitimate form of governance, the region has not been without its challenges to democracy. This section will present five cases of national, democratic crises, and the organizations’ approach to these. The crises are presented in chronological order, and will provide illustrative accounts of the key events, and the responses by the organizations. As will become clear, they are at times compatible and at times, they diverge in approaches, and sometimes they do not engage.

### **8.1. Bolivia 2008**

Bolivia is the country in South America with the highest proportion of indigenous population. The elites in the country have ever since independence been the white minority. During the 1980’s, Bolivia followed the regional trend in implementing comprehensive neoliberal reforms,

which in practice led to a concentration of capital among the elites, and this political elite expressed little regard for the large number of impoverished and marginalized people in the country. Bolivia is also one of the countries in Latin America with the longest tradition for protest, social movements and struggle against the government (Bull, 2013). It is the country in which social movements have gone the furthest in working with formal politics. The current ruling party *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) began as a social movement for coca growers and peasants fighting for their land rights. When the social movement-cum-political party won the elections in 2005, Evo Morales became the first indigenous president in the country. He won because of his ambitious and radical agenda, wherein equality of all sorts were key objectives. The MAS agenda can be defined as a radical state-building agenda that clearly marks a breaking point with the long history of elite domination, politically and economically. Constitutional reform was among the core issues for the newly elected government, in order to create a plurinational, more inclusive, and participatory state (Arugay and Moreno, 2014: 12). The emphasis for the new government was the whole citizenry of Bolivia, not merely the elites. Unrest followed from his electoral victory, involving electoral contest from the oppositional Right and subsequent high political polarization, which peaked with the deadly confrontation among opposition movements and public officials in the northern Pando region (Phillips, 2008). The constituent assembly was installed in 2006 but found itself in gridlock as it was only approved by MAS. It needed a two-thirds majority to pass but the other branches of government – dominated by the opposition - voted against. The government responded by invoking a recall referendum on his presidency, as an attempt to break the gridlock, that Morales won. These processes aggravated the tensions in the country and the opposition threatened to deny abiding by a constitution they deemed illegal.

#### *The OAS' role*

The OAS was present in the country during the presidential elections of 2005, in which the organization – despite some challenges and irregularities – stated that “[...]We believe, without the shadow of a doubt, that the elections held in Bolivia on December 8, 2005 were peaceful, free, fair, and massively participatory[...].” (OAS, 2006: 44). After the elections, they remained present in the country through other observation missions during the Constituent Assembly and the referendum processes. As the polarized political panorama gridlocked, the OAS was given the mandate to mediate between government and opposition (Arugay and Moreno, 2014: 13). The opposition was skeptical towards the intermediary role of the organization, claiming that it was biased towards the government and president Morales. Despite this, they did accept the

role of the OAS. The chosen approach, acting as the conveyor of demands and perceptions for the conflicting parties, was effectively nullified when the government called for the recall referendum in 2008, and their role was relegated to electoral observation yet again. This was a blow to the organization. The uncertain nature of the referendum process posed a challenge to the observation, as it was unclear how to assess the voting results. The OAS was, as a result, weakened as the opposition criticized the voting process for being non-transparent, and when the violence erupted in Pando in 2008 UNASUR stepped onto the stage.

### *UNASUR's role*

The involvement of UNASUR in the Bolivian constitutional crisis received praise of other states in the region as it was perceived to be successful. The organization took a clear stance from the beginning, and emitted a communiqué in strong favor of the Morales administration, and referred to the recently held referendum – which MAS won - as an expression of his legitimate exercise of power (Phillips, 2008). The communiqué also showed strong reservations against any form of anti-constitutional insurgency or act that would threaten the territorial integrity of the country (as part of the opposition movement threatened with secession). This robust declaration from UNASUR gave the opposition no support and explicitly backed Evo Morales in his decision to imprison the leader of the violent uprising in the Pando region. UNASUR was then solicited to act as mediator between the government and the opposition, and also sent a fact-finding mission to the Pando region. The developments of the Bolivian situation led to wider international attention, and the pro-Evo recommendations from the EU and the UN also helped assert the government's status as legitimate. As the situation cooled, and the dialogue reopened between the conflicting parties, the government accepted modifications to the constitutional draft from the opposition, and when the constitutional referendum was held in 2009, the OAS was reinserted and monitored the voting process. Among other things, the reform draft included a single reelection possibility for Morales, but not indefinite reelections as initially proposed. The proposed constitutional reform presented by the government won by a landslide. The use of referendums has later become an active tool for the government, and the latest one held – 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2016 – also revolved around opening up for more reelections, which they lost (Lafuente, 2016). The active use of referendums is a government mechanism relatively frequently employed in Bolivia, but also in Ecuador and Venezuela, which all are advocating for more participatory democracy. Referendums are a way of involving the citizenry in political decision-making, and are an important facet of participatory democracy.

As a wider contextualization, Bolivia under Morales has undergone certain changes that potentially are problematic. The executive branch of government has been in conflict with the judicial branch, which ultimately led to a temporary paralyzing of the latter (Wolff, 2011: 6). A strengthened executive vis-à-vis the other branches of government challenges principles of accountability as the actions by the executive branch are under less institutional and popular control. Measures to undercut the opposition have been documented (Wolff, 2011: 9), and others argue that the present administrations has co-opted and disempowered social movements (Bull, 2013: 93). These traits in principle lie contrary to the practice of participatory, or any other type of, democracy.

## **8.2. Honduras 2009**

Honduras has been lauded as democratic success story when compared to its Central American neighbors by some (Ruhl, 2004) but its current constitution is young as it was adopted in 1983. However, democratic stability ended in 2009 when President Manuel Zelaya was arrested in his home, and forcefully put on a plane to Costa Rica. This was not a traditional coup d'état in which the military overthrew the president and installed a military junta. The Honduran case points to a unique role played by the military in that they were "invited moderators" (Marsteintredet et.al, 2013: 111). Invited by the civil institutions who were alienated by Zelaya, the military fulfilled their purpose (forcing Zelaya into exile) and immediately gave power back to civil rule. Left-leaning Zelaya became increasingly unpopular within his own party, in congress and among the powerful business sector. When Honduras integrated into Petrocaribe<sup>28</sup> and was closing ties with ALBA,<sup>29</sup> the national political climate tensed. His proposed nonbinding referendum on whether the country should vote for a constitutional assembly to reform the constitution for which he was accused of perpetuating power and for being anti-democratic by the opposition and parts of his own government, led to his overthrow. As noted by Llanos and Marsteintredet, among the main causes for the coup d'état was the inter-institutional conflict between the presidency and Congress (2010: 175). Accounts from OAS employees indicate political practices in Honduras during the Zelaya presidency that were questionable in democratic terms, but most importantly for the purposes of this thesis is that the Honduran case points to a willingness to resort to undemocratic practices (Ruhl, 2010: 105) to

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<sup>28</sup> Petrocaribe is a Venezuelan energetic cooperation scheme in which participating countries can buy oil at preferential terms. For more information, see Petrocaribe (2015).

<sup>29</sup> ALBA is a largely socialist-leftist, anti-imperialist organization consisting of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua etc. and has a strong anti-capitalist-agenda.

achieve political goals, or to avert politically undesired outcomes by representatives in government branches. Despite having experienced a fairly stable democratic order for many years, the 2009 crisis shows how fragile democracy is in the country. The coup was met with great international criticism from such ideologically disparate countries as the US and Venezuela.

### *The OAS' role*

The nature of the coup was one in which the military was indeed active, but only as the instrument of Congress. The polarization that the figure of Zelaya had generated in the country also divided the different government agencies. Among these was the army. The military agents acted on the instigation of Congress – dominated by the opposition – by forcefully putting Zelaya aboard a plane bound for Costa Rica. The coup happened so fast and presented such a clear case that the only option for the OAS was to suspend the membership according to article 21 of the IADC (Organization of American States, n.d.). More specifically, the Honduran permanent representative at the OAS invoked the IADC on behalf of Zelaya. The suspension lasted until 2011. In practice, the suspension meant significant trade reductions, freezing of development funds coming from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), recall of ambassadors, and general “shaming”. The suspension differs from an expulsion in that the state is obliged to follow OAS’ provisions on human rights, among other things, during the suspension to be able to reintegrate into the organization. The consequences, at least monetarily, have been significant for the country, and the two years as a state non grata arguably has had an effect on the present-day situation in Honduras, which is affected by high levels of violence. The OAS, and the wider international community, reprimanded the ousting of president Zelaya that influenced a swift process of trying to regain recognition and legitimacy in the region. Interim president Micheletti announced elections briefly after the ousting of Zelaya, but according to OAS employees the whole process was riddled with irregularities and instances with questionable traits if viewed democratically. The OAS was convened to monitor the electoral process, and employees who were actively engaged with this process point to manipulations from the de facto government to avoid Zelaya’s reelection. When elections were held in November 2009, Porfirio Lobo, former vice president, won and took office in January 2010. The organization and key actors in the region such as the US gradually accepted the results and the newly installed government was considered legitimate by most states, although some remained reluctant to accept the Lobo administration. In fact, the US pushed for elections as a way of overcoming the crisis, but without recommendations as to who to elect. Brazil, on

the other hand, was actively pushing for the reinstatement of Zelaya, and housed him in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa during the post-coup period. After four years, in 2014, new elections were held and Juan Orlando Hernandez was elected president. The OAS also monitored these elections. The country was readmitted to the OAS in June 2011, almost by consensus. Only Ecuador voted against (La Nación, 2011).

#### *UNASUR's role*

Honduras is not a South American country and it follows from this simple fact that UNASUR did not play a highly significant role in the aftermath of the presidential ousting. The stance UNASUR took echoed that of the wider international community, and it reportedly would not accept any convocation of elections by the de facto government (i.e. the ones responsible for the coup). The Honduran crisis did, for the benefit of the organization, act as a precedent to the adoption of the Protocol, which was adopted as a direct consequence of the events in Ecuador the year after.

### **8.3. Ecuador 2010**

After a proposed police salary reform, a large number of the police forces committed “insurrection” (Notimerica, 2014) and violent protests spurred throughout the country. The same news channel reported that the incident, nicknamed “30S”, claimed 10 lives and left around 300 injured. The crisis was labelled as an attempted coup by the government, and by the wider international community. It is relevant to point out that the behavior of president Correa during the protests, in which he actively threatens the protestors to try and kill him (Agence France Presse, 2010) was unhelpful. During the demonstrations in Quito, the vehicle Correa was in was shot 4 times (Notimerica, 2014), and he later had to be rescued from a hospital by army personnel. The violent demonstrations against the reform that affected the police forces, and the subsequent siege on the hospital in which Correa was receiving treatment from injuries incurred during the demonstrations, has been speculated to function as a cover-up of the true goal, namely to overthrow Correa. Prior to current president Rafael Correa, Ecuador had an extensive turnover of presidents, where none of the previous presidents since 1998 remained in office their whole term, and the country had seven different presidents from 2000-2007 (Political Database of the Americas, 2009). With Correa came stability. Furthermore, and crucially, economic growth has boomed in Ecuador during his presidency, which has allowed him to implement comprehensive social, political, and economic reforms. His election, as Evo Morales’ in Bolivia, was based on an agenda of political change involving the abandonment of

neoliberal economic policies, mitigate inequality, and open up for political participation for the citizenry. The government advocates popular participation and social mobilization as key factors of governance, and claim to provide beneficial policies for the entire citizenry. As Morales, he convoked a constituent assembly shortly after being elected, which won, and among the contents of the new constitution one finds the reformulation of Ecuador as a plurinational state, as demanded by CONAIE<sup>30</sup>, the extension of presidential term limits, the strengthening of indigenous rights (among others), and the propagation of participatory democracy. A constitutional referendum is planned for this year, in which presidential terms yet again is up for debate (see table 1).

In Ecuador, the polarization in society is high. The president is himself partly responsible for ensuring this aspect of Ecuadorian society by using aggressive language when addressing the opposition, as the abovementioned threats made to protestors indicate. Terming the government opponents as “disloyal opposition” is not unheard of (Ellner, 2012: 98). The combination of hostile attitude towards non-likeminded actors and an outspoken desire for popular participation- and mobilization on a large scale (Ellner, 2012: 100) is contradictory and can set the stage for confrontations. As with Bolivia, the executive branch in Ecuador has been strengthened during Correa’s presidency, and some argue that democracy is under strain in Ecuador. As the judicial branch is subjugated to the executive, horizontal accountability between government branches eroded, and civil rights undermined (de la Torre, 2015). Furthermore, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has reprimanded the Correa government for its violent crackdown against protestors, reminding the government of its citizens’ right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly (Williams, 2015). This was due to a national strike in august 2015 in which several protestors and police officers were injured and several protestors arrested. Following from this, a demonstration took place in Quito in September 2015 where, among other things, there was a call “for” democracy (Latinnews, 2015). CONAIE, Correa’s previous electoral ally, was among the protestors. The abovementioned points at tensions within the Ecuadorian society that have intensified with the presidency of Correa. It resembles some of the dynamics experienced in Bolivia. The governments’ agenda for (radical) change, the alienating discourses by the president, and a

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<sup>30</sup> The largest grouping of indigenous movements in Ecuador and the western hemisphere, and a key ally for Correa in his electoral victory in 2006.

perceived strengthening of the executive branch at the cost of other governmental branches by the opposition, strengthen the political cleavages in Ecuador.

#### *The OAS' role*

The OAS Permanent Council convened in an emergency session and adopted a resolution to repudiate the actions and express its firm support for the constitutional government of President Rafael Correa. The Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, traveled to Ecuador to show support for President Correa and inform him about the Organization's determination to "demand the observation of the principles and norms enshrined in the Democratic Charter" (OAS, n.d). Much like the response in Bolivia, the OAS showed full support to the incumbent, and repudiated the antidemocratic nature of the protests. The IADC was not applied, as the uprisings quickly cooled off (and the president was, in fact, not overthrown). The stance taken by the OAS was the same as with the uprisings in Bolivia, namely to make clear that the elected incumbent is the legitimate authority. However, the organization did not intervene in physical terms in any way, besides the visit by then-secretary general Insulza to Correa.

#### *UNASUR's role*

As reports of the occurrences in Quito reached the organization, then-secretary general Nestor Kirchner convened an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Heads of State in Buenos Aires on the very same day as the insurrection in Quito. Ecuador's president Correa – then president pro tempore of the organization - could for obvious reasons not participate. The meeting resulted in the *Declaration of Buenos Aires*, in which the organization stated an explicit condemning of "[...] el intento de golpe de Estado y el posterior secuestro del Presidente Rafael Correa Delgado registrado en la hermana República del Ecuador el 30 de septiembre"<sup>31</sup> (UNASUR, 2010), and showed strong support of president Correa. The organization presented its full support, if summoned, to help the country reestablish the constitutional order. Interestingly, they referred to the crisis as also involving a kidnapping of the president, whereas the OAS made no such mention, and to my knowledge, no such thing happened. The Declaration also included the measures to be implemented if the constitutional order was violated: closure of borders, trade sanctions, and so on. Some of these measures were

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<sup>31</sup> [...] the attempted coup and the posterior kidnapping of president Correa in our sister republic of Ecuador on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September: my translation

made by neighboring states<sup>32</sup>. Importantly for the organization's dedication to protecting democracy on the continent, the last point of the Declaration was the decision to adopt the Protocol. The swift reaction, and importance given by the organization to address the Ecuadorian crisis, and to present its clear stance on the matter, has led some to argue that UNASUR reacted in a more proactive manner, whereas the OAS made a more timid statement while also being perceived as slow in its reaction.

The event led UNASUR to adopt the Protocol, and whereas the content of it had de facto been employed in the Bolivian and Ecuadorian case, the crisis that struck Paraguay two years later, in 2012, was the first event occurring post-adoption of the Protocol. The two South American cases presented thus far have pointed at similar approaches and a relatively strong convergence of content in statements by the organizations, albeit in different degrees. The Paraguayan case exemplifies a crisis in which the two organizations diverged in their responses.

#### **8.4. Paraguay 2012**

Before then-president Fernando Lugo, the conservative Colorado Party had governed the country for around 60 years, and the two dominant parties, the Colorado Party and the Liberal Party had in many ways captured the state in the sense of a lack of other alternatives in a stale, conservative political context. Fernando Lugo won the elections in 2008, but met resistance in congress, as he was an independent candidate<sup>33</sup> with weak cross-party political support. However, despite advancing a Leftist political agenda, he was not overly opposed on law proposals in congress, except on land reform – his main political cause – due to the high stakes held by political and economic elites in ownership of land. When a clash between landless peasants and landowners resulted in the death of 17 people, the opposition-dominated Chamber of Deputies (the lower house in Congress) impeached Lugo for his lack of fulfillment of presidential responsibilities. The Paraguayan constitution allows this, but requires two-thirds majority of votes. This requirement posed no problem for the Chamber of Deputies, who effectively blamed him for the 17 deaths and for bringing “instability” to the country (Marsteintredet et.al, 2013: 114). Lugo initially accepted the verdict, but later appealed and was given two hours to present his case, which he rejected due to the extremely short time allocated.

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<sup>32</sup> Peru and Colombia closed their border to Ecuador as acts of “solidarity with president Correa” (El Mundo, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Not entirely: he was the elected candidate of the Patriotic Alliance for Change, a coalition of small parties and organizations, but due to legal requisites he had to be part of a political party to be able to run for president. Thus, he legally represented the Cristian Democratic Party (Europa Press, 2007).

The limited amount of time allocated gave the whole impeachment process a somewhat murky nature, and resulted in diverging reactions by the international organizations. On the one hand, the constitution was not violated, as it allows for such a process, thus underscoring the legality of the impeachment process. On the other, the limited amount of time given to Lugo to present his case in the Courts was probably a case of “bending the rules”. The whole process has been identified by Marsteintredet et.al. as the workings of the dominant Colorado Party seeking to remove the president on political grounds, not because he violated the constitution (2013: 117). If his removal was made based on underlying political interests, the responses by certain regional organizations arguably were also so. Mercosur, the common market of the south, suspended Paraguayan membership as it considered the impeachment process anti-democratic, and within months, Venezuela became a new member. (Ospina-Valencia, 2012) The Venezuelan integration to Mercosur had been left in suspense since 2006, as Paraguay refused their admission. The sheer size and kind of the Venezuelan economy (i.e. oil and larger market) leads one to wonder about the democratic dedication of the other members of Mercosur. The response from Paraguay was explicit. They criticized Mercosur for being hypocritical: acting so swiftly in proposing Venezuelan membership when the swift nature of the impeachment process was a key part of the suspension of their membership.

#### *The OAS' role*

Whereas Mercosur quickly reacted with a suspension of the country, the OAS did not. The hemispheric organization sent a fact-finding mission to the country and concluded that the IADC or any other forms of sanctions were not to be applied. The organization held an extraordinary meeting in the Permanent Council, in which the decision was taken to deploy an investigative mission to the country in order to obtain information firsthand (OAS, 2012). The mission lasted three days and its participants were representatives to the OAS from other member states and then-Secretary General Insulza. The OAS had two primary arguments for their decision. First, the impeachment process was carried out in a constitutional manner, although they acknowledged that the hurried nature of the process and the short time Lugo received to present his appeal gave an “[...] aura de ilegitimidad al proceso [...]”<sup>34</sup>. Second, the fact that Lugo himself accepted the decision of Congress to destitute him, despite reverting later on. The OAS chose to view the impeachment process in a larger context, considering the violence in the northeast, the large number of critics of the president in the government

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<sup>34</sup> An aura of illegitimacy to the process: my translation

branches, and the political polarization in society as a result of his presidency as factors that help understand the decision to impeach him. The decision made by the OAS was to acknowledge the new president, Federico Franco, as a legitimate one, and to assist the country in the elections held in April 2013. Franco lauded Insulza and the OAS for respecting the internal political decisions of Paraguay.

#### *UNASUR's role*

In the face of the (hurried) impeachment process, UNASUR acted in tandem with Mercosur and chose to suspend the membership of the country due to the – in their view – antidemocratic nature of the impeachment process. As with the OAS, UNASUR sent a delegation of representatives to Paraguay to meet with the conflicting parties, but in difference with the OAS they quickly took sides, supporting Lugo's presidency, and denounced the impeachment process as a “rupture of democratic order by not respecting due process” (Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2012). Despite their differing approaches, both organizations warned that the impeachment process would harm democracy in Paraguay. The 11 other member states quickly stated that they would not recognize the government headed by Franco, and those with embassies in the capital Asunción withdrew their ambassadors. UNASUR issued a communiqué on June 22 that year in which the foreign ministers of the UNASUR member states “[...] consideran que las acciones en curso podrian ser comprendidas en los articulos 1, 5 y 6<sup>35</sup> del Protocolo [...]”.<sup>36</sup> However, as Paraguayan crisis occurred before the ratification<sup>37</sup> of the democratic Protocol, it could not be formally invoked but the organization consensually decided to suspend the membership of the country – who coincidentally held the presidency pro tempore at the time (as Ecuador did in 2010) – at a meeting of foreign ministers from the member states. The country had to comply with democratic and transparent elections for it to be reinstated as member, and as the Council on Hemispheric Affairs notes, the suspension entailed “[...] the barring of Paraguay from all forums, dialogue mechanisms, political convergence and integration of the region according to what is established in the statutes and regulations of the organization” (2012). Economic sanctions, however, were not imposed on the country. The organization did not insist on the restoration of Lugo as a president either, as

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<sup>35</sup> Article 5 refers to the diplomatic measures the organization will make in order to reinstate democratic order, and article 6 refers to the invocation of the Protocol.

<sup>36</sup> [...] Consider that the ongoing actions can be understood in articles 1, 5, and 6 of the Protocol [...]: My translation.

<sup>37</sup> The Protocol was adopted in 2011, and ratified in 2014.

long as the elections in April 2013 were transparent and providing equal opportunities for all participating parties and human rights respected.

### **8.5. Venezuela at Present**

“Venezuela is still a democratic country governed by democratic principles, and has a strong institutional framework which supports it” - UNASUR Secretary General Ernesto Samper Pizano (UNASUR, 2015)

Venezuela poses a more complex case than the other four presented thus far as there are many aspects of Venezuelan politics that are questionable from a democratic point of view. Today Venezuela is a country that is plagued by extensive corruption, it has among the highest crime and homicide rates in the hemisphere and basic goods and services are frequently un-provided for. Additionally, the country is in a deep recession (World Bank, 2015a) which further complicates an already challenging reality. Venezuela has one of the world’s largest oil reserves (Trinkunas, 2011: 24) and has, ever since the election of late President Hugo Chávez in 1998, deepened its dependency on oil revenues. Being a petro-state with little to no other important sources of income, the economic situation of the country is highly dependent on global oil prices, which as per the first quarter of 2016 is low. Beyond the briefly mentioned structural issues, the country has undergone several political changes since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1999: The executive branch is strengthened and the judicial branch subjugated to the executive, presidential terms extended to unlimited reelections,<sup>38</sup> and critical voices towards the government shown little toleration. Furthermore, incumbent president, Nicolás Maduro, has over the past few years ruled by presidential decree on several occasions. It is also noteworthy that – yet not surprising – the relationship between Venezuela and the US is tense. They are firmly opposed to each other politically and the former is adamant in its rejection of any form of involvement, intervention or critique by the latter, which indirectly also affects its relationship with the OAS<sup>39</sup>. At the same time, the US is a key destination for Venezuelan oil.

For the purposes of the thesis, two events are worth addressing. The first are the anti-government protests that shook the country in 2014 and the second are the parliamentary elections of December 2015. The 2014 demonstrations were led by, among others, opposition

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<sup>38</sup> Unlimited reelections has have negative consequences on socioeconomic issues, citizen safety, and general development, according to Corrales and Penfold (2014).

<sup>39</sup> According to some, the aggressive Venezuelan stance towards the US and the OAS is a tactic employed to create a perception of an external threat, thereby legitimizing internal policy choices such as rule-by-decree (Brading, 2014:50).

leader Leopoldo López and were based on a protest against the government's mismanagement, abuses, and urban violence, among other things. Mostly peaceful, the demonstrations have on occasions turned violent. The protests have also been intensified as a consequence of the government's detainment of protestors and treatment of these. Several opposition leaders have been arrested throughout Chavez' and Maduro's presidencies and possibly the most famous one is López. He is serving a 14-year sentence on the charges of instigating violent protests, causing disorder, arson, conspiracy, and for being part of the attempted coup in 2002<sup>40</sup> (CNNEspañol, 2015). The punishment of López has led to outrage throughout the region, with former government officials from neighboring countries and International NGOs advocating his release and criticizing the Venezuelan government for their practices, and the country criticized for incarcerating López based on political motivations. Furthermore, and as an example of the tensions between the OAS and the country, In 2011, the OAS' Inter-American Court of Justice ruled in his favor when he was refused the possibility to run for hold public office as of 2006 (Ramirez, 2011), but the Venezuelan state ignored the verdict. Beyond that, the OAS has remained silent on issues related to Venezuela. UNASUR has voiced its support for the Venezuelan president and calls for respecting the political practices of its member state.

The parliamentary elections of December 2015 had an UNASUR accompaniment mission present, and the elections considered free and legitimate by them. The electoral results, however, were negative for the president, and PSUV. The opposition – a coalition of parties forming the Mesa de Unidad Democrática (MUD)<sup>41</sup> - won the National Assembly. The Venezuelan National Assembly consists of 169 seats, of which 112 is required to obtain a 2/3 majority (“supermajority”). MUD won 109 of these (Consejo Nacional Electoral, 2015). In addition, three seats are reserved for indigenous representatives – all of which sided with MUD, effectively giving the opposition 112 seats. That is significant: By having supermajority the opposition has the legal entitlement of holding constitutional assemblies and propose constitutional reforms (shortening presidential terms, for example), call for referendums, propose laws, and remove officials (Vásquez and Lozano, 2016). It was a hard blow to the PSUV, who have dominated the National Assembly since 1999. The taking of office by the three indigenous representatives did not happen without controversy: the government – via the Supreme Court, which is dominated by PSUV – demanded the rejection of their entry to the

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<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, the first time the IADC was invoked. The second, and last, time: Honduras in 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Democratic Unity Roundtable: my translation

National Assembly due to “electoral irregularities” (Alonso, 2016). Furthermore, the Supreme Court threatened to revoke every act stemming from the National Assembly if those representatives were part of the same. This account goes a long way in illustrating the subjugation of the judiciary branch of government by the executive, and the lack of will to respect democratic processes. The responses by the government to the electoral loss have led to certain regional reactions.

### *The OAS' Role*

As has been mentioned, the relationship between the organization and Venezuela is not the best. The presence of the US within the OAS leads to skepticism on the part of the Venezuelan government, and they are at odds with the democracy agenda propagated by the organization (recall the Venezuelan reluctance to sign the IADC in 2001). From the OAS' side of things, they have largely remained silent regarding Venezuelan affairs throughout the term of the previous Secretary General, and it remains to be seen what the new era under Luis Almagro will entail. Some change in discourse has happened. As a reaction to the process of denying the three indigenous representatives to be admitted into the National Assembly, Almagro sent a hard-hitting letter to president Maduro, in which he states that:

“[...] During these elections and at the beginning of this parliamentary session we have seen the power of the State used to silence and harass the opposition, violations of the checks and balances designed to ensure the separation and independence of powers, the opportunistic appointment of judges, and interference in different branches of government, all amounting to what is known in the doctrine as **erosion of democracy**, which runs contrary to the fundamental pillars of the Organization and the principles clearly established in its founding instrument and the Inter-American Democratic Charter [...].” (Organization of American States, 2016).

This in itself does not amount to actual sanctions or engagement, but it sends a clear message as to where the organization stands, which it had been very ambiguous about in previous years. The secretary general has been critical and outspoken of Venezuelan political practices ever since taking office and the relationship between the country and the organization had deteriorated prior to the elections in 2015, when the OAS stated that the conditions in the country do not ensure fair elections. The country responded by labelling the OAS as a corrupt and obsolete organization. During the protests in 2014 and the subsequent incarceration of Leopoldo López, the OAS remained uninvolved, arguing that the organization has no jurisdiction over domestic legal affairs. The Venezuelan case poses a very complex image, and

the two events chosen here are indicative of the political and socioeconomic reality in the country. At the time of writing, the newly elected National Assembly has petitioned the OAS' Secretary General to apply article 20 of the IADC. There is intense political fighting between the branches of government in Venezuela at present, and how Almagro and the OAS will approach the situation is as per now unclear.

### *UNASUR's role*

Whereas the OAS has gone from noninvolvement with Venezuela to becoming more outspoken and critical lately, UNASUR has acted differently. As it is exclusively South American in character, the tension of having the US within its members is avoided and the organization should thus hold the potential to be able to mediate in Venezuela. According to Closa and Palestini, UNASUR has become the most salient international actor to monitor and mediate the political crisis in the country (2015: 1). In fact, Venezuela itself has proposed UNASUR to mediate in foreign disputes it has had with the US and Colombia. However, domestic politics are different. Note that as of 2014, the Protocol is ratified. According to some observers the organization did little more than issue bland statements during the protests in 2014 (Feldmann et. al., 2015). They did act as a mediator between the opposition and the government during the protests, but the polarization in the country continues to this day, rendering their successfulness questionable. During the December 2015 elections, they sent accompaniment missions to Venezuela, without the possibility to objectively monitor, or comment critically on, the elections. UNASUR has stated its commitment to support president Maduro – as he is legitimately elected – and as the quote at the top of this section reflects, their view on the 2015 elections, and Venezuelan democracy more generally stands clear. Furthermore, Venezuela will head UNASUR's Electoral Council from April 2016, which arguably renders any critical democracy-related engagement less likely. UNASUR, in sum, has supported Venezuela generally, but specifically also the current government. As to the issue of the three indigenous representatives, they have not issued a statement nor responded to the petitions sent out by the MUD.

## **9. Discussion of Findings**

The first four cases share at least one thing. They are all what one can call closed cases in the sense that the crises have been concluded. The Venezuelan case is more complex and the post-elections tumults continue today. Furthermore, this case is an example of lack of action by both organizations. The Bolivian, Ecuadorian, and Venezuelan cases indicate certain ongoing traits

of governance that are questionable. This chapter commences with discussing the role of the two organizations in each of the country cases, before addressing the two hypotheses posed in chapter 4.

### *Bolivia 2008*

The events that shook the country in 2008 were violent, and in conflict with democratic principles. The OAS invited by the Morales administration to mediate the conflict, but did not entirely succeed. UNASUR engaged in Bolivia at a later point, with more resolve, and was considered the most successful organization. This case illustrates a situation which can be interpreted in two ways: as UNASUR asserting itself and OAS lack of success (Arugay and Moreno, 2014), or as a case of organizational complementarity. The former is the most common interpretation. However, I argue for the latter interpretation. Despite the perceived unsuccessful role of the OAS, it remained relevant in the crisis despite UNASUR's involvement, as they were monitoring the recall referendum. UNASUR's perceived positive role in the crisis should be considered an establishment of a new relevant regional organization, and one that can provide complementary services in the event of OAS' lack of success. This was the view voiced by OAS employees who were engaged in the Bolivian crisis. The OAS has more instruments<sup>42</sup> than UNASUR, and is slower and more rigid in its approaches. UNASUR on the other hand was a newborn organization at the time, but proved its ability to act as a mediator between the conflicting sides in the Bolivian crisis. It is important to note that both organizations acted on request from the Bolivian government, and not by independent initiative.

From the interviews of employees in NGO's working in Bolivia, there is a significant emphasis on the clandestine, yet active involvement by the US in the Bolivian crisis. According to several of the informants, the US ambassador to Bolivia at the time met with the opposition movements' leader and supported their anti-Morales efforts, thus infringing on national sovereignty, respect for legitimate democratic electoral results, and proper inter-state conduct.<sup>43</sup> It led to his expulsion from the country. The US interference in the domestic politics of Bolivia adds to the lingering critique of the OAS as dominated by the former country as meddling with internal Bolivian affairs, the US may implicitly have posed a hindrance for OAS' involvement

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<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of the thesis, the most relevant instrument of the OAS besides the IADC is electoral observation, which UNASUR lacks.

<sup>43</sup> It also adds to a long line of US interference in the hemisphere, and is noteworthy because it happened as recent as in 2008.

and helped UNASUR reify itself, as the regionally relevant actor in South America in the event of national crises. Related to the theory of Peripheral Realism, this case is a relevant example of a potentially neutral third party on the political stage, as UNASUR is unaffected by US' influences and thus is a more neutral actor. The US' undermining of the legitimately elected president proves the point of an international system in which there are dominant states who intervene on foreign soil as they see fit, but also that an international organization can, albeit indirectly, help neutralize such intervention. UNASUR proved to be an organization supportive of a democratically elected president, and to be an organization to be reckoned with that is founded on Latin American political principles, and not susceptible to influences from a global hegemon, as is the case with the OAS.

### *Honduras 2009*

Despite its particularities, the Honduran case exemplifies a coup d'état. This made the OAS response easier to accomplish, as it perfectly fitted the first cause under which to invoke the IADC. The petition for invoking the IADC came from Honduras' permanent representative at the OAS, on request from then-exiled president Zelaya. The swift reaction by OAS and its suspension of the country as a member is a case of OAS success if viewed from a legal, formal point of view. In other words, for doing as they claim to do in such events. However, some of the interviewees from the organization stated that the economic and political setback incurred by the suspension were direct precursors to the present challenges of the country, in which high poverty, extensive corruption, rising drug-related violence, and impunity for government abuses are characteristics (Frank, 2012). The response by the OAS was done "by the book", and in example entailed cuts in funds from IDB, aid monies from individual states, and regional shaming. Furthermore, they had to obey provisions from OAS agencies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).<sup>44</sup> The suspension of Honduras point to the range of measures available to the OAS. However, there are two points to consider when looking at the Honduran case: first, the IADC is a reactive mechanism. The organization failed in foreseeing, and thus preventing, the coup. As one OAS employee stated: "si invocas la carta, significa que ya fallaste"<sup>45</sup> meaning that the IADC is a mechanism of last resort, something to avoid though pro-democratic and proactive actions. Second, the consequences incurred by the suspension may potentially be harmful, economically and otherwise, to a country and thus also

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<sup>44</sup> They had to follow such provisions if they wanted to be readmitted at a later stage.

<sup>45</sup> If you invoke the charter [IADC] you've already failed: my translation. Statement made by Thaler, P. (appendix 12.2)

potentially to democracy in the long run, as the present-day situation of the country is indicative of (Frank, 2012). The organization proved its resolve and capability to act as stipulated by the IADC, and if viewed in that manner it was a success. The organization did not pose any demands on the country to reinstate Zelaya, despite its initial support to the president, which indicates a commitment to elected incumbents under threat (as in Bolivia and Ecuador), but not to an overthrown president. While not being mentioned by any OAS employee I interviewed it serves to note the role played by the US in the post-coup d'état negotiations. The US has a long reach in Central America and the 2014 biography of Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State in 2009, shows that the US was very skeptical of Zelaya's administration and his person,<sup>46</sup> and they actively pushed for democratic elections, but not for reinstatement of Zelaya (Clinton, 2014: 266-267). While not breaking with any formal inter-state codes of conduct as in Bolivia, they were not keen on having a leftist pro-Castro, pro-Chávez president so close to home.

#### *Ecuador 2010*

The Ecuadorian case is somewhat different from the others. It resembles the crisis in Bolivia, but on a much smaller scale. The responses from both organizations were similar and their support for the incumbent president was adamant. UNASUR adopted the Protocol as a direct consequence of the crisis, and was quicker to make an explicit pro-Correa statement. OAS was more timid and reacted slower, which relates to a general critique of the organization's bureaucratic nature and slowness. UNASUR proved to be a more dynamic organization and was able to create consensus for their response faster than OAS. Given the nature of the crisis, besides official statements of different levels of explicitness, neither organization had to engage physically in the crisis.

#### *Paraguay 2012*

This is the only case in which the two organizations have chosen very different approaches to a crisis. The crisis, which concluded with the impeachment of then-president Lugo, was a rather murky case. This possibly affected the responses by the two organizations. The OAS sent a fact-finding mission to the country and concluded that the impeachment was constitutionally legitimate. It did not invoke the IADC nor impose sanctions on the country. It did express support for Lugo and issued statements of caution, but did not go further. UNASUR, on the

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<sup>46</sup> "Manuel Zelaya, a throwback to the caricature of the Central American strongman, with his white cowboy hat, dark black mustache, and fondness of Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro" – excerpt from Clinton (2014: 257)

other hand, took the big step of suspending the membership of the country but did not impose sanctions as stipulated in the Protocol. If one accepts Marsteintredet's account in which he emphasizes the political motivation underlying the impeachment process, and not because Lugo violated the constitution, one can draw a parallel to the Honduran crisis. In such a context I argue that their quick decision to suspend the country can then be interpreted as proof of the organizations' resolve and dynamism. Furthermore, both cases share a commonality with the Bolivian crisis, namely that the opposition, or protestors, were right wing. This indicates the importance of political affiliations, or ideologies, in these crises. The three mentioned countries<sup>47</sup> are part of the "pink tide". In all three cases, the ones removing the presidents or protesting were conservative parties or groupings influenced by elite (economic and political) interests. Recall here Peripheral Realism's argument about how elites have captured the state in Latin American states throughout history. Although the elite interests most explicitly materialized in the Paraguayan case, the elites have historically been in power in all three countries and the cases illustrate an unwillingness by these to have someone who moves too far to the Left, or makes too many radical changes, as president. The cases further illustrates the entrenched elite influence and power within the state apparatuses, as they have been able to, in two of the three cases, remove the presidents. The thesis has previously discussed the connection between the globally dominant liberal world order and elite domination of states in Latin America, and these cases pose good examples of this, as the three governments at various degrees aimed to break with previous social and political practices. Furthermore, this can help explain UNASUR's robust response in the Paraguayan case, as it is a counter-hegemonic organization established, and in 2012 dominated, by governments on the Left. The impeachment of Lugo was a threat to revert to undesired past practices. The OAS, on the other hand, resembles more a vehicle for the preexisting liberal order and one can thus speculate as to whether this influenced their response.

#### *Venezuela at present*

UNASUR has tended to show support of the Venezuelan government while the OAS has remained largely silent. This might change now. I argue that Venezuela shows so many deficiencies in terms of democratic governance, that it is problematic to accept it as a

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<sup>47</sup> The Ecuadorian case is left out because the ideological affiliation of the protestors was not as clearly defined as in the other three cases. Ecuador is also a "pink tide"-country (Bull, 2013).

functioning democracy. It is something else. Several authors have theorized this “something”,<sup>48</sup> and parts of their concepts are applicable in the Venezuelan case. I argue that the main issue is the excessive lack of governmental accountability, the neglect by the government of citizen’s needs, and the frivolous abuse of power by the executive power. This latter point has had direct implications on recent electoral results, as evidenced in chapter 8.5. Elections are held in Venezuela, but these are susceptible to the whims of the PSUV government. While elections are held they can “tick the box” of this primordial requirement for democracy, but the day-to-day governance of the state between elections is very different from a functioning democracy. Despite advocating for participatory democracy, the real influence of the people is limited. The two concrete events illustrated in chapter 8.5., and the overall situation in the country are evidences to Venezuela being something different from a functioning democracy. Related to the Venezuelan case, I wish to echo the claim made by Linz and Stepan:

“[...] no regime should be called a democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. If freely elected executives infringe the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of a state of law, their regimes are not democracies” (2001: 94).

It is reasonable to state that the IADC is applicable on the two concrete events, yet the OAS remains inactive. The overall situation in Venezuela I argue, by echoing Almagro’s letter to Maduro<sup>49</sup> clearly constitute what the IADC terms as “internal erosion” of democracy. Although the Secretary General of the OAS has reprimanded the Venezuelan government for its behavior after the 2015 elections, no action is taken. UNASUR, however, has tended to extend support to the Maduro government. It sent an accompaniment mission to the December 2015 elections that had nothing to report, and is, generally speaking, on better terms with the country than its hemispheric counterpart is. There are many potential explanations to this. For one, Venezuela is the most active proponent of participatory democracy among those who adhere to such an understanding, meaning that the OAS’ democracy definition is inapplicable in the country. Second, it is highly skeptical towards the OAS for its history and the US membership. Third, Venezuela is an outspoken advocate against western-dominated political Liberalism, and for a more radical left-leaning state policy aimed at benefitting the entire citizenry – at least in theory. However, an apparent contradiction in Venezuela is the significant strengthening of the

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<sup>48</sup> For instance: O’Donnell and Schmitter: *democradura* (1986), Levitsky and Way: *competitive authoritarianism* (2002), and Schedler: *electoral democracies* (2001)

<sup>49</sup> Page 43 in chapter 8.5.

executive branch of government, at the expense of the other governmental branches (Ellner, 2012: 100). This trait stands contrary to participatory democracy's tenet of mass participation and citizen influence over politics as it entails a subjugation of citizen participation by the executive branch, especially crystallized by decisions of the president to rule by decree. However, the Venezuelan government, as with the Bolivian and Ecuadorian, has been elected on an agenda of radical change – and to achieve this change, a strengthened executive is needed to push through policies of change, as the opposition may dominate the other branches, which was the case during the Bolivian crisis. Venezuela furthermore has Petrocaribe, which has been an efficient tool for making political allies within the members of the OAS, as 18 of 34 OAS members are also part of Petrocaribe (Petrocaribe, 2015). I find it unlikely that a state that receives cheap oil from Venezuela would vote against the country, thereby risking their Petrocaribe arrangement. Considering the voting arrangement in the OAS, Venezuela has thus far been “safe” due to petro-fueled allegiances. However, with the diminished global oil prices and national economic turmoil, this might change.

There are certain indicators of the quality of democracy, and as Cansino notes these can be summarized as respect for the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness, and respect for human and civil rights, and ensuring of social, economic and political equality (2013: 85). In Venezuela, I argue that the scores on these indicators are low and that democracy in Venezuela is dubious at best, violated at worst. Yet neither organization has engaged in a way that their democracy protecting agendas dictate. Considering the Venezuelan case, the question then becomes if real-life events in Latin America mirror the provisions for engagement of the IADC and the Protocol, why have the organizations refrained from engaging, in a case like the Venezuelan. Potential explanations lie in the hypotheses presented in chapter 4 about the nature of democracy propagated by states, and the degree of actorness the organizations have, to which the following sections will turn.

### *Hypothesis 1: Definitions of Democracy*

Defining democracy is important because it establishes what to expect from democracy (Sartori, 2014: 17). The thesis argues that there are two ideal-types of democracy being proponed in Latin America today. On the one hand is the representative model and on the other, the participatory model. According to OAS employees, the establishment of the IADC with its explicitly representative definition of democracy was possible during the political and normative conjuncture of the time. 15 years later, there are more voices in the region arguing

for a more participatory democracy model. In other words, the consensual understanding of the concept is bygone. As Marsteintredet states:

“[...] så det er sånn grunnleggende uenighet, og konkurranse om, hvilken demokratimodell som skal gjelde i Latin-Amerika i dag. Det var det enighet om fram til år 2000. Selv ikke Chávez snakka så mye om det radikale demokratiet da. Han ble mye mer radikalisert etter 2002. [...] også generell enighet om at OAS var den rette instansen. Men det er mye mindre enighet om det nå [...]”<sup>50</sup>

Latin America presents a paradox, as it is the only region in the world that combines democratic regimes in virtually all countries with enormous poverty rates; the most uneven economic distribution in the world; high levels of corruption, and the highest homicide rates in the world. Nowhere else in the world are democratic regimes shaped by such combination of factors (Zovatto, 2014). Accordingly, a reason for the lack of consensus on the definition of democracy in the region today, I argue relates to what Peripheral Realism posits as states' primary interest: the welfare of its citizenry, and the economic development of the country. Considering the unequal societies, history of interventions, and elite-dominated state bureaucracies most countries have experienced when practicing representative democracy, which has been the typical form, it is understandable that countries search for new avenues of governance. With Venezuela as the most explicitly outspoken proponent, and Bolivia and Ecuador following suit, albeit to a less radical extent, participatory democracy has over the past 15 years become a real alternative in the region. Robert Dahl's theory of democracy focuses primarily on the social prerequisites for democracy, not the constitutional prerequisites (Dahl, 2006: 82). In other words, he argues that there needs to be certain social prerequisites in order before being able to reach a healthy democracy. He makes direct reference to Latin America when stating that: “We admire the efficacy of constitutional separation of powers in curbing majorities and minorities but we often ignore the importance of the restraints imposed by social separation of powers” (Dahl, 2006: 83). He refers to the hierarchical, unequal societies of the region. This point is key in understanding the dichotomous democracy discourse in Latin America today. The participative democracy model is an attempt to revert the historical, social trends of the region, of which inequality and discrimination are characteristics, and is founded on the principle of

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<sup>50</sup> [...] so there is a fundamental disagreement and competition about which democracy model is to count in Latin America today. There was agreement about it until year 2000. Not even Chávez spoke much about the radical [participatory] democracy then. He became more radicalized after 2002. [...] also general agreement about the OAS as the right organization. There is much less agreement today [...]: My translation. Statement made during interview (see appendix 12.2).

universal inclusion – that no one should be deprived of an equal voice in choosing those who govern (Plattner, 2001: 87-88). Adherents to the tradition of political Liberalism, with its focus on universalism and individual rights, tend to oppose collective rights, which are encouraged in participatory democracy. Linz and Stepan argue that in a multinational, multicultural society and state, combining collective rights for nationalities or minorities with individual rights fully protected by the state is the least-conflictual avenue for governance (2001: 105).<sup>51</sup> As a form of democracy that promotes direct participation and social mobilization, in practice it has resulted in certain generalizable trends in the three aforementioned countries. Majority rule (51% of votes or more), as opposed to two-thirds; the active use of referendums to avoid social unrest in the streets by channeling it into the electoral stage, and the strengthening of the executive branch of government (Ellner, 2012: 100). This latter aspect is pertinent when considering the role of the organizations as it is only the executive branch that can invoke the IADC and/or Protocol. Among the interviewees, there was an explanation to this trend: the presidents were elected because they wanted to break with former social and political practices and as the other branches of government are deemed corrupt, or at risk of being so, the strengthening of the executive is legitimized. Although simplistic and controversial, this holds some interesting aspects. A radical agenda of change, in otherwise conservative contexts has proved to be unacceptable for the opposition, as the Bolivian, Honduran and Paraguayan case have shown. Thus, the strengthening the executive in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela can be a means the governments seek, as it may diminish the possibility of being overthrown by the conservative opposition.

Theoretically, representative democracy is widely considered the dominant form of governance worldwide over the past few decades (Fukuyama, 1992; Diamond, 2013; Sartori, 2014). I have previously stated that the OAS is an organization that fits neatly within the International Relations theory of Liberal Institutionalism, and the liberal, representative democracy model advocated for by the OAS, is an example of this. Furthermore, in much of the literature on democracy there seems to be a taken-for-grantedness when writing about democracy as it appears that what is most often meant by democracy is the representative, or liberal, kind. I found this problematic at the onset of the thesis, and have shown that it indeed is questionable in the Latin American context. However, I argue that while certain states advocate a

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<sup>51</sup> For example, recall that Bolivia and Ecuador are “plurinational” according to their constitutions, thanks to the current governments.

participatory model they have not, as Sartori argued, replaced the representative institutions or eradicated the use of representatives in these. Thus, it is the underlying normativity of participatory democracy that is adhered to. In sum, OAS' definition of democracy renders its aim to protect democracy problematic in the region, as several states advocate a participatory type of democracy. UNASUR is, due to its generic definition of democracy, better equipped.

*Hypothesis 2: Actorness (or the lack of it)*

With the emergence of international organizations on the world political stage, it is important to define what they are, in practical terms. The OAS and UNASUR are organizations with normative, political agendas. The democracy protection commitment they both pursue entail certain provisions on state behavior, at least in theory. For liberal institutionalists this is precisely what they claim is a tendency of the world today: an eroding state sovereignty and deepened integration within the framework of an international organization. For those advocating such a theoretical outlook an international organization, ideally, is an actor on the political stage. The democracy protection agendas point towards an ambition to be authoritative, independent actors. However, to be considered an actor, one has to have true autonomy of action, or actorness, and for the organizations, this depends on states' inclination to cede authority to the organizations. International organizations are often defined in two ways: as actors or as arenas, or as a mix of both (Neumann and Sending, 2010: 132). When understood as arenas they constitute a platform for discussion and cooperation among states. The two organizations' general assemblies are examples of this. The international organizations are then key in providing a framework for state interaction and potential state cooperation. When envisioned as arenas, the organizations do not act independently of states: they facilitate state relations.

For an organization to be an actor in its own right, it requires the ability to act independently, make autonomous statements, and to have an active independent political agenda not subjected to the whims of individual states. Both organizations have secretary-generals, and/or presidencies, that represent the organization and not a state. These positions crystallize the ambitions of the organizations to be actors. Most international organizations are not entirely the one or the other; they tend to be a mix of both. I argue that where most, if not all, international organizations are arenas, the opposite is true about them as actors, because seemingly unnegotiable sovereignty concerns prevail in the region. Peripheral Realism claims that there is no neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party in the world system, and insofar one has international organizations, the

actorness of these is limited at worst, or elite dominated at best. The OAS is a clear case along this line of thought. Furthermore, insofar one has international organizations these do not emerge from a vacuum. They are created by (governments representing) states and are thus at the onset prone to be biased towards state motivations, as Closa and Palestini have argued when discussing UNASUR (2015). The structural design of the organization is thus indicative of whether an organization has actorness. In chapter 6 and 7 the decision-making structure and general design of the organizations was presented. They both operate with consensus-based (formally in UNASUR, informally in OAS) voting arrangements in which each state has an equal vote. Whilst this is an egalitarian and democratic principle it is inefficient, in the sense that generating consensus can be challenging, especially when the topic is governance in individual member states. With the IADC, the principle of majority voting (2/3) reigns formally, and even obtaining this majority is complicated as states consider their own interests when voting. States with membership in both Petrocaribe and the OAS in relation to potential voting against Venezuela presents a good case.

Several of the interviewees from the OAS stated that the organization is, in practice, “a club of governments” by stressing that although states are present at the organization, the physical persons are representatives from the governments ruling at given times in each of the member states, entailing that the organization is subjected to the vagaries of government agendas. The distinction between state and government is relevant. For example, the adoption of the IADC occurred during a conjuncture in which consensus was achieved on how to design the charter, and what kind of democracy to protect. The thesis has shown that the conjuncture has changed, and that democracy is a contested concept. Government influence is also evident in the design of the charter: the only branch that can invoke the charter is the executive branch. For any practical purpose, this means that the IADC will never be invoked by an executive branch guilty of eroding democratic principles, such as subjugating the judicial branch, although this is stipulated as a breakage of democratic principles in the charter. The other two agents who can invoke the charter are another government or the secretary general, both of whom are subjected to political calculations regarding the potential traction an invocation of the IADC might get among the constituency that may well be prohibitive. For the Secretary General this arguably leads him to face a dilemma of whether or not to engage in a dispute he risks losing, thus hurting the reputation of himself and the organization. For other governments it entails risking their bilateral relations with another state by voting “against” them. Recall here that the sovereignty principle is very much an important aspect of Latin American politics, and by invoking the

charter one is actively interfering with the internal dealings of another country, and thus perceived to be infringing on the sovereignty of the same. The Secretary General has a certain degree of autonomy and possesses the capacity to invoke the charter, without being perceived as another state infringing on internal dealings. Beyond the limited probability the invocation of the IADC or the Protocol poses, the organizations have little ability to influence state behavior. Particularly evident with UNASUR, it appears that every member state is free to choose whether to accept provisions stemming from the organization, as the Constitutive Charter states. In terms of democracy promotion and protection, the organizations can only influence state behavior when invited by that same state, or when consensus is mustered for the application of the membership suspensions articulated in the IADC and the Protocol, to which the states must adhere if they wish to be readmitted post-suspension. As illustrated in the Venezuelan case, little engagement has come from the OAS although there are several events that match the provisions of the charter. The current Secretary General has shown more resolve than the previous, and given the current economic state of Venezuela, which negatively affects the country domestically, and in their foreign policies (i.e. Petrocaribe), may present a chance for the OAS to take a more active role. Honduras and Bolivia are examples of cases that easily created consensus to engage in, as the former was a coup d'état, and the latter was a direct threat to a legitimately elected president. Ecuador also posed a similar case.

The IADC needs a reformulation, as an OAS interviewee stated that the charter is a poor fit to the challenges to democracy one finds in the hemisphere today: the internal erosion of democracy, strengthening of executive branches at the expense of other branches, and repressive policies. The charter is primarily targeted towards coup d'états in the classical sense, and is ill equipped in the face more pressing challenges to democracy found in the region today. In terms of actorness, the OAS has little. The decision-making structure is overly sensitive to considerations of sovereignty and state interests, crystallized by the voting schemes. Furthermore, the design of the charter leads the organization into a hamstrung position, as the primary threat to democracy does not come in the form of a coup, but by the governments themselves, materialized as the internal erosion of democratic principles of governance. The value placed on the notion of sovereignty by individual states is too high to provide the organization the independency and autonomy of action required to be described as an actor in its own right. When one adds the tensions of conflicting understandings of democracy, and political skepticism towards the organization, it is not overly surprising that the actorness

possessed is low. In sum, the OAS resembles more an arena than it does an actor, affirming the position held by the interviewee who defined the organization as a club of governments.

UNASUR has certain virtues that the OAS lacks: dynamism and more political legitimacy among certain states. Several OAS employees stressed the former. Quite simply, it is smaller and has a less extensive agenda than the OAS. Importantly, it does not refer to a particular kind of democracy, which makes it more adaptable to particular national contexts. However, despite these seemingly beneficial traits, the structural design suffers from the same weaknesses as the OAS. The consensus-based voting schemes and high prime put on sovereignty render the organization virtually incapable of acting independently of state motivations, and end up being in risk of settling for the lowest common denominator – which is to respect domestic politics insofar there is no coup d'état. Although understandable, with the sovereignty concept being revered in the organization it makes UNASUR risk falling into gridlock, and not accomplishing much in terms of democracy protection. The Venezuelan case shows a clear example of the importance put on respecting internal affairs of member states, as the organization has exclusively shown full support to the country. Much like the OAS, UNASUR acted according to its own provisions in the crises in Bolivia and Ecuador, but as argued, these are uncontroversial cases if viewed from the standpoint of the organization. The Paraguayan case I argue is an example of showing resolve and swiftness, and one in which ideological adherence could have had a significant role to play. The protocol has the same weaknesses as the IADC in that it is designed to react to traditional coup d'états and is less sensitive towards more pressing challenges to democracy. As with the IADC, to invoke the Protocol requires that someone actively perform this act, which is subjected to political considerations and interests that ultimately can avert any state from doing so. In terms of actorness, neither of the two organizations have it. They share the same structural weaknesses in their voting arrangements, and in how one can invoke the documents, and have little influence on state behavior. In sum, the organizations have very limited actorness. While actors when it is not politically controversial, they are generally best understood as arenas, or "clubs of governments". What might be an advantage for UNASUR vis-à-vis the OAS is the less explicit definition of democracy they use, as representative democracy is not the only democracy model adhered to in Latin America.

The role of ideology, I have mentioned is important in understanding the crises. The five countries presented in in this thesis are, or were at the time of their crises, left-wing governments

with varying degrees of societal change as a political goal. In the two cases where the president was removed, he was so by the conservative, right-wing opposition. The two cases where the presidency was challenged, it was by the national right-wing opposition. Three of the countries are active proponents of participatory democracy, and Honduras sought to move closer to Venezuela prior to the coup. These findings indicate that the Leftist governments, who have pursued more inclusionary and egalitarian policies (at least in theory) have been strongly challenged in four of the five crises illustrated in the thesis. The same has happened in Venezuela, but the government there has been effective in silencing the opposition. It is feasible to see the emergence of participatory democracy not only as a way of including the citizenry, but also as a left-wing phenomenon.

### **9.1. The OAS and UNASUR: Strengths and Weaknesses**

The two organizations share certain limitations that have implications on their ability to act in national crises, and hence, their successfulness when they do. First, the structure of both organizations is such that decision-making processes are entirely subjected to individual state motivations and interests. Reaching consensus is a hard task with a large number of member states, and it is probable that decisions will reflect the lowest common denominator for all, which is to respect the domestic politics of each member. The thesis has shown that realist considerations of sovereignty are prevalent in the region, and the actorhood of the organizations is limited because of this. Second, the IADC and the Protocol are ambiguous documents that do not provide clear guides for engagement, nor under what circumstances they are to be invoked (Ferguson, 2003, on the IADC). Both are adamant on one point in which to be applied, namely coup d'états. However, merely focusing on military coups may turn out to be a misleading perspective that looks for danger in the wrong places (Schedler, 2001: 154) as coups are largely outdated. In cases such as the Venezuelan, the IADC and the Protocol documents are ill equipped, and if the tendencies in governance seen in Bolivia and Ecuador intensify, the documents will be as ill equipped. Third, both organizations seem to settle with elections as the materialization of democracy, but are not engaging in cases where democratic principles are infringed in-between elections. Fourth, they are both structurally biased towards presidents, given that the only branch of government with an avenue for reclamation is the executive one, but also in practice as they have shown to support elected presidents who are still in office. In cases where the executive branch is the cause for democratic infringement, or erosion, the organizations are hamstrung by their own structural design, as argued by various OAS employees. Fifth, the role of the secretary-generals of both organizations is limited by political

considerations, and they have little influence in cases of controversy because they pose little authority vis-à-vis individual states who can reject any form of intervention or decision made by the organizations.

By looking at the five cases presented, and considering the abovementioned challenges they face certain findings stand out. In the case of Bolivia and Ecuador, the structural bias towards the presidents was exemplified in a positive manner. Regardless of political affiliations in the organizations and of the proposed policies by the two presidents, they were legitimately elected and the challenges to their presidencies – more severe in the former country than in the latter – were effectively repudiated by the organizations. In terms of protecting democratically elected presidents, the two organizations showed that they could, and would, mobilize. This positive account is challenged by the Honduran and Paraguayan cases. In the former case, the democratically elected president was illegitimately ousted in what was effectively a coup d'état, but the OAS did not demand that Zelaya be reinstated. The organization “settled” with ensuring elections and thus avoiding a situation in which they would have to either recognize the de facto government as legitimate, or keep the country suspended from its membership in the organization indeterminately as the de facto government refused the re-installment of Zelaya as president. Neither is an attractive option, and given the severely complicated nature of reinstating a president that was unpopular to the extent of being ousted prematurely from office, the only truly viable option from the point of view of the organizations is seemingly to hold elections. The Paraguayan case illustrates a similar approach by UNASUR, albeit with some reservations. I have argued that the organization saw the impeachment process as unconstitutional and illegitimate, and thus the decision to suspend the membership of the country is appropriate. UNASUR settled with elections, without demands of reinstating Lugo, upon which they accepted the new government as legitimate. Using elections, with no requirement of reinstalling the former president, as a benchmark for democracy indicates a pragmatism by the organizations that pose consequences for a commitment to democracy, which by definition is highly principled. Recognizing the political near-impossibility of reinstating a prematurely ousted president due to the wider society and government institutions that wanted them ousted, the fact remain that both Zelaya and Lugo were democratically and legitimately elected presidents and should, in principle, be protected by the organizations. The non-demand of reinstating these renders it questionable if the support Morales and Correa received by the organizations in their respective crises would have been the same had they been overthrown.

Both organizations are ill equipped to address cases in which the executive branch of government is the culpable for violating democratic principles – representative and participatory alike – as the Venezuelan case clearly shows. The lack of response from the OAS there, I argue, is because the president will not invoke the IADC on himself, the Petrocaribe oil schemes ensures safety in potential voting rounds, and the open critique and rejection of the OAS as a legitimate actor by the Venezuelan presidency. UNASUR is not conditioned by the latter two considerations, but by the former. In the theoretical discussion, I illustrated how the concept of sovereignty and participatory democracy can be understood as related. The empirical cases indicate a correlation between left-wing governments and these two concepts. As UNASUR is an organization formed, and still composed, by several leftist governments, who strongly adhere to the two concepts it is unsurprising that it has taken a supportive stance towards the Venezuelan government. It remains an open question if Venezuela would accept UNASUR involvement in the event of them changing their discourse towards the country, or if the US would do the same if the OAS began criticizing them, for that matter. Besides the issues of ideology and normativity there is a more tangible and practical difference between the two organizations, namely that of dynamism. The cases presented indicate the ability of UNASUR to react more promptly and with more resolve in crises on the South American continent. The OAS, on the other hand, has reacted more slowly and with less explicit responses.

## **10. Concluding Remarks**

Answering the research question of this thesis in a productive manner is conditioned by the nature of each democratic crisis presented. By way of a disclaimer, providing a general answer is not feasible, as the cases have indicated various responses and attitudes by the organizations. However, the thesis poses certain conclusions that help illuminate the research question. Both organizations are best equipped at responding to coups or illegitimate uprisings against democratically elected presidents. The Bolivian, Ecuadorian, Honduran, and Paraguayan<sup>52</sup> cases all illustrate this. An important side to this is that the organizations are exclusively in defense of the incumbent. However, where the president is ousted, illegitimately or not, both organizations accept elections as the symbolic reinstatement of democracy, irrespective of who might win those elections. In other words, when in power a president can be fairly sure to rely on the support of the two regional organizations but should he be removed prematurely from

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<sup>52</sup> OAS in Honduras, and only UNASUR in Paraguay.

office, this support quickly vanishes, as long as there are democratic elections in place relatively shortly after the removal. This, of course, can be seen as a commitment to democracy in a general sense, and not to the individual presidents but it shows a pragmatic approach to democratic practices that may be unfortunate, as the presidents were democratically elected and are symbols of democracy in practice. The a priori commitment to support the incumbent is further exemplified by the structural design of both organizations. I argue that both organizations have a structural bias towards the presidents, given that the executive branch is the only one with the possibility to call upon the organizations in the face of democratic crises. This is very clearly illustrated in the Venezuelan case. When the threat to democracy comes from within – from the executive branch – the organizations are hamstrung by their own design. Of course, this case is particular due to the many allegiances other countries have to Venezuela, or at least its oil through Petrocaribe, but also ideologically in the region. This case is one in which the organizations diverge in their attitudes, the OAS being unwillingly silent, and UNASUR supportive.

The understandings of democracy that dominate in western academia and in states adhering to political Liberalism have tended to take for granted that democracy equals the representative type. This thesis has challenged that notion and shown that in the Latin American context it is incorrect. Several countries are advocates for a participatory model of democracy that, at least in theory, is more inclusive, egalitarian, and fair. Whereas the 2001-born IADC was based on a consensual understanding of what kind of democracy had to be protected, this has changed over the course of the past 15 years. This implies that the OAS has an agenda aiming to protect a specific kind of democracy that is less dominant in the hemisphere today than it was at the turn of the millennium. UNASUR does not prescribe the kind of democracy to be protected. Its commitment lies with democracy, not a specific kind, which gives it more room to act as it can respond to threats to both representative and participatory democracies. This non-specific definition of democracy can be helpful for UNASUR, while it may also represent a pragmatism similar to the one alluded to above. Closely related to the issue of democracy lies that of ideology. There is a correlation between the countries advocating for a participatory democracy model and governments of the Left. Parts of the “pink tide”, the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela have all been marked by a sharp turn in policies and practices under their current presidents, namely to break with the historically dominant trends and practices, and to attempt more inclusionary and socially equal policies for its citizenry. Peripheral Realism has been used to show how this turn, the rationale behind it, and the content of policies in these

countries can be understood. Aiming to break with a historical trend of elite domination, the governments have pursued citizen-centric policies that at state level has broken with former economic practices, and aimed at leveling the socioeconomic playing field, fitting perfectly with Peripheral Realism's core tenets. In all of the cases where relevant the conservative forces have risen up against the governments, and in two cases ousted the presidents, further illustrating the deep elite interests in these countries and the shaky ground democracy stands on.

I argue that Peripheral Realism, although it is negative towards the concept, can help explain the highly prized status of the sovereignty concept in the region, and shown how participatory democracy and sovereignty are closely related concepts. Recall here that sovereignty in this thesis differs from the classical realist notion of it, as it emphasizes the sovereignty of the people, not only territoriality. However, while it explains its emergence in the states in question, the theory does not account well for the revered status the concept has in day-to-day politics. Liberal Institutionalism, the major conventional theoretical framework for explaining and advocating for international organization's role on the global political stage has been proven unfeasible in explaining Latin American realities, as it overestimates the role of such organizations and underestimates considerations of sovereignty in a region where real, popular, sovereignty has been absent for long periods in history. When the states now - partly due to high commodity prices, partly due to conscious policy choices – enjoy this newfound sovereignty, it is understandable that they are skeptical of ceding it to an intergovernmental organization, at least to an organization with strong US influence and a liberal agenda such as the OAS. Considerations of sovereignty hinder the actorness of the organizations in at least two ways. The Venezuelan case has shown how the country is adamant in its rejection from outsider intervention in its internal dealings, especially from the OAS with which the relationship is virtually broken. Second, the decision-making design of both organizations – particularly its voting schemes – is highly susceptible to political motivations and interest-based considerations, which leaves the issue of respecting domestic policies as the lowest common denominator on which they converge. That only the executive branch of government can invoke the IADC or the Protocol leaves both organizations ill equipped to face the most pressing challenges to democracy today, namely domestic forces deteriorating democratic practices and values. Faced with coups, or coup-like events, they have proven to be able to muster the consensus needed to act, but in other events they have not, as the Venezuela case shows.

Neither organization has independent, autonomous actorness in protecting democracy due to their own structural design, and the high prime put on sovereignty in the region. UNASUR has a slight advantage in being less bureaucratic and more ideologically compatible with its constituency, but remains hampered by the abovementioned. Second, democracy is not a uniformly understood governance form in the region, and the IADC needs reformulating to better reflect the realities and challenges of the region. This, I have shown, is an argument more than a decade old (Ferguson, 2003). I argue that issues of accountability, corruption, and impunity are challenges faced in the five countries presented in this thesis, and for the wider region. The current crisis in Brazil and the called-for impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff help illustrate this. The corruption scandal is an example of the Latin American paradox alluded to in the previous chapter, and adds to the underlying structural challenges of deepening democracy (of any kind) in the region. Corruption, impunity, and abuse of positions of power are recurrent in not only Brazil, and this crisis shows that elite interests, influences and dominance are still part of the political panorama in the region. Democracy in the region has established itself as the dominant governance form, but structural aspects of most, if not all, societies in the region pose direct challenges to such a form of governance. Whereas the coup d'états are largely outdated, democracy is not "safe" from internal threats. In sum, I argue that the two main determinants for success or failure by the organizations when faced with democratic crises rests on the degree of actorness possessed by the organizations, and the understanding of democracy. In relation to the latter, the organizations have virtually none, and should be understood as arenas and not actors. To the latter, UNASUR has a potentially more viable definition, and the IADC needs to be reformulated as it is too narrowly defined. In the end, they both depend to a prohibitive degree on individual political considerations by states, rendering elections as the "real" materialization of democracy for both, in the face of a democratic crisis.

Theoretically, the thesis has shown how Liberal Institutionalism, a western-originated theory, is not sensitive to the realities of Latin America. I argue that the OAS is a vehicle of this theory as the normative underpinnings of both theory and organization are dominated by liberal values, which the thesis has shown to not be universally adhered to. Whereas one could explain the emergence of UNASUR through the lenses of Liberal Institutionalism as an example of the global trend of emerging regional organizations that play a part in regional and global politics, it would miss crucial aspects of normative underpinnings permeating Latin American politics that underscored its inauguration. Peripheral Realism is a more apt theoretical avenue for

understanding the politics of the region. Being a citizen-centered theory, it emphasizes the welfare of citizens as a primary interest for states, and in a region characterized by elite domination of state apparatuses, the emergence of participatory democracies that are founded on the principle of true, universal inclusion and mass participation are better explained by this theory. Envisioning the world as hierarchical, the theory argues that there are no neutral third parties in global politics, and insofar there are international organizations operating on the political stage, they are vehicles for the interests of dominant states. OAS is an example of such a critique, due to US' influence. The emergence of UNASUR is best viewed as an attempt to counter US influence in regional affairs, and as an attempt to assert regional sovereignty over regional affairs. In sum, I argue that Peripheral Realism is more apt in explaining the emergence of participatory democracy as it relates to the tenet of improving citizen welfare. In the same vein, it is more suitable for explaining the emergence of participatory democracy, and the adherence to the principle of sovereignty, as the latter has rarely been enjoyed in the region due to foreign interventions. Furthermore, the involvement of the US in both Bolivia and Honduras provides evidence to his notion of the world system as hierarchical, and one in which dominant states interfere with domestic politics of weaker states. His claim that there are no neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> parties in global politics, and insofar international organizations play a part they are influenced by the interests of dominant states. UNASUR, being a counterhegemonic organization, is an organization that I argue would be close to such a neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party. It is based on the premises of South American states, free from US interventions, and have shown to be willing and able to act contradictory to the OAS, a hegemonic organization dominated by western values and normativity. However, there are certain caveats to the theory. . After all, he did criticize the concept as part of western terminology that entrenches the dominant trends of elite rule. While I argue that it goes a long way in explaining the emergence of, and importance given to, the concept of sovereignty by Latin American states in tandem with participatory democracy, it falls short of explaining the continuing adherence to the concept when states relate to UNASUR, which is created by themselves. He may well have underestimated the relevance of the concept. Ideally, Liberal Institutionalism would have it that the emergence of regional organizations entail a ceding of sovereignty to the supranational realm. The thesis has proved otherwise, and it has also shown that the universalistic normativity and values underpinning the theory (and its institutions) – such as liberal, representative democracy - are not sensitive to Latin American regional particularities.

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**12. Appendixes**

**12.1. Research Design Scheme**

<b>Main issues</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Data from collection methods</b>	<b>Sample. Unit categories/sizes</b>
<b>What can explain the OAS' and UNASUR's success in or failure to protect democracy in the face of national crises in Latin America?</b>	Semi-structured individual interviews	Informants' reflections on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tools the organization(s) have for protecting democracy.</li> <li>• The relevance of the organizations as political actors</li> <li>• The meaning of democracy</li> </ul>	As many as possible.
<b>What challenges does the organization face</b>			

<b>to their democracy work?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state of democracy in the region</li> </ul>	
<b>What are the strengths of one organization vis-à-vis the other?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One's own organization work in the relevant cases</li> </ul>	
<b>How does the democracy definition of the organization fit with "reality"?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State motivations for supporting or opposing the organization(s)</li> </ul>	
<b>How does the sovereignty principle interplay with the idea of regional cooperation?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The different ideal-types of democracy</li> <li>• The degree of actorness possessed by the organizations</li> </ul>	

## 12.2. List of Informants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>When</b>
Leiv Marsteinredet	Associate Professor	University of Oslo	November 2015

Kjersti Rødsmoen	Director, Latin America Section	Norwegian Ministry of foreign Affairs	December 2015
Rodrigo Zubieta	Chief Special Missions	OAS	January 2016
Anonymous	Anonymous	OAS	January 2016
Karen Bozicovich	Coordinator of Political and Prospective Analysis	OAS	January 2016
Pablo Thaler	Specialist, Political Analysis	OAS	January 2016
Jean Michel Arrighi	Secretary for Legal Affairs	OAS	January 2016
Joy Olson	Executive Director	WOLA	January 2016
Coletta Youngers	Senior Fellow	WOLA	January 2016
Kathryn Ledebur	Director	Red Andina de Información	January 2016
Yudith Guerrero	Chargé d'Affaires	Venezuelan Embassy in Oslo	February 2016
Jim Swigert	Director, Latin America and the Caribbean Section	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	February 2016
Virginia Aillón	Professor and Editor	Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia (PIEB)	February 2016

### 12.3. Interview Sheet

- Formally speaking, Latin America is a democratic region, with the exception of Cuba. How do you reckon democracy is conceived in the region?
- Socioeconomic inequality, corruption, and high crime rates are problematic for the functioning of democracy. Does democracy have troubled “playing field” in the region?
- Participatory democracy has emerged as a real alternative to representative, or liberal, democracy in the past decade. How can we best understand this emergence? Follow-up:

based on the abovementioned, is true liberal, representative democracy wished for, or even attainable in the region?

- The democratic stability of the past decade or so has not been without its trials, and the national crises in Bolivia, Honduras, Paraguay are examples of this. What are the factors that spur these crises?
- How successful do you reckon the OAS democracy protection engagement to have been? Follow up: and the importance of the IADC?
- The IADC has been actively used twice, in Venezuela in 2002 and Honduras in 2009. What does the consequences of this entail for the countries?
- OAS is a large, and old, organization and has been criticized for its slowness. How does this relate to an insider's point of view?
- Given the emergence of new understandings of democracy in the hemisphere, is the IADC well-equipped to reflect this?
- It seems to be designed to respond to traditional coups, not so much what is defined as "internal erosion of democracy" as stated in the IADC. Is there a need for reformulation of the Charter? Follow-up: the invocation of the charter, in the case of said internal erosion, can only be done by the executive. If he/she is the cause of erosion, then what?
- Another trend of the past decade in the region is the emergence of new regional actors, such as UNASUR. How does the OAS relate, or interplay, with these? Follow-up: is the OAS role in democracy protection challenged?
- Does the OAS possess the autonomy needed to be a truly relevant political actor in the hemisphere? Follow up: What about UNASUR?
- The concept of sovereignty seems to be important in the region. Any ideas as to why? Is it really important? Follow up: how does this importance affect your work?
- The role played by social movements in the electoral victories by Evo and Correa was important, but upon elections the relationships between social movements and government has deteriorated. What are the causes of this?
- What role does civil society play in Latin American countries?
- Venezuela is often referred to as undemocratic, authoritarian, or as a country with severe democratic challenges. What is the OAS stance regarding the country?



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