Three building blocks of a theory of Latin American foreign policy

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The literature treating Latin American and Caribbean foreign policy is extensive and rich. It has been heavily influenced both by dependency theory and political realism and benefits from numerous empirical studies. Nonetheless, too few scholars have incorporated empirical findings and theoretical reflections into an integrated whole. So while we have a body of knowledge about Latin American foreign policy, the field still lacks a firm paradigm to guide its students or make claims about causal relationships. Though numerous edited collections have made attempts at developing theory in Latin American foreign policy, few of these attempts have been followed up with empirical scholarship. Furthermore, the vast amount of empirical work has not been thoroughly analysed with an eye towards developing theory.

Scholarship on Latin American foreign policy—particularly, though certainly not exclusively, that emanating from Latin America—focuses heavily on international law, foreign policy principles and traditions and the role of individual leaders. Increasingly, researchers have expanded the scope of their examination of Latin American foreign policy, encountering in their analyses a broad range of foreign policy goals and explanatory forces. A review of the literature reveals that Latin American foreign policy makers include among their more important goals autonomy, development and the management of their relationship with the USA. Other key goals include developing policy to treat regional relationships, Third Worldism, drug trafficking, national security, arms control, border disputes and other local issues. A literature review also finds that the most frequently cited explanatory factors of Latin American foreign policy are US influence, poor economic resources, leader and regime ideology, and the global distribution of power and wealth.

Researchers in this area rarely spend time pondering methodological issues. Overwhelmingly, the case study approach dominates the literature. Most examinations are qualitative studies of the foreign policy behavior of an individual state, regime or a few countries in comparative perspective. The research heavily focuses on the nation-state and often takes the form of story-telling, albeit in an analytical way which sometimes includes some loosely tested hypotheses. A ‘kitchen sink’ approach is also popular, in which researchers model and examine all the potential explanatory inputs into a particular country’s (or countries’) foreign policy.

This type of comprehensive modelling, reminiscent of (though rarely as
theoretically sophisticated as) Michael Brecher’s input–process–output model,\textsuperscript{7} is certainly thorough and informative. Indeed, this paper draws heavily on works that employ this ‘kitchen sink’ approach. By including everything, however, they often fail to isolate those explanatory components of the foreign policy process which are most crucial, and thereby do not contribute in and of themselves to theory building. The qualitative, and sometimes comparative, approach dominant in Latin American foreign policy literature has put many of its researchers at odds with scholars in international relations who prefer a more theoretically driven and often quantitative approach to the study of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{8} The ‘Latin Americanists’ are frustrated with the ‘international relations’ types, whom they accuse of avoiding the richness of Latin American foreign policy and therefore inappropriately concluding, for example, that international power variables explain Latin American foreign policy behaviour.\textsuperscript{9} In turn, international relations scholars use quantitative analyses of time-series and cross-sectional data to demonstrate, for example, that the Latin Americanists who dwell on the peculiarities of a few individual cases of Latin American foreign policy may not see the wood for the trees.\textsuperscript{10}

Both critiques are to a certain extent appropriate. Latin American foreign policy researchers have failed to build on each other’s work in a way that would move them towards a general theory.\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, foreign policy researchers seeking to explain broad themes of Latin American foreign policy, frequently measured with the region’s voting behaviour in the United Nations, too often fail to examine the internal dynamics of the process and thereby miss an important part of the picture. The aim of this paper is to garner from the vast amount of information and analysis currently available the foundations of a theory of Latin American foreign policy. This assumes that it is appropriate to develop a theory of Latin American foreign policy, i.e., that the foreign policies of Latin America and the Caribbean have enough in common to merit the search for a single theoretical approach to capture them. One must, of course, recognise the multitude of variations, across many dimensions, within the region. John Martz, for example, in writing about the Caribbean Basin alone stated that the region’s many dissimilarities ‘serve to illustrate the folly of undertaking broad generalizations concerning the Caribbean Basin’.\textsuperscript{12} While this is perhaps overstated for some social scientific purposes, it serves as a reminder of the pitfalls facing international relations scholars and anyone else attempting to make claims about the entire south-western quadrant of the globe.

The search for a common theoretical grounding is nonetheless merited for a number of reasons. First, Latin America and the Caribbean share similar histories of colonialism. While much of the Caribbean, particularly the English-speaking islands, gained independence in this century, most of the region has been formally independent for over a century, although it has been unable to eliminate the constraints of neocolonialism.\textsuperscript{13} Second, to varying degrees, Latin American countries retain economies heavily dependent on export, particularly of primary products and other commodities that earn relatively little on the world market. Indeed, many experiments with economic diversification and import-substitution that began in the 1960s failed and were abandoned. Third, Latin American countries share cultural characteristics derived from a common experi-
ence in which Europeans occupied and colonised indigenous communities, and in many cases imported African slaves. Their societies remain heavily bifurcated and characterised by a European, wealthy elite in policy-making positions on one hand and a non-European, poor, marginalised population on the other. Fourth, Latin American foreign-policy makers work in a hemisphere dominated by the USA, a superpower that has made clear its interests in the region and its willingness to pursue them. Finally, a review of the disparate literature contributing to Latin American foreign policy reveals a number of behavioural patterns across the region’s many countries, patterns discussed below and suggesting that the search for a common theoretical approach to understanding the region’s foreign policy is a worthwhile endeavour.

**Three theoretical building blocks of Latin American foreign policy**

My approach here is inductive. I review a large literature that speaks to the foreign policy behaviour of Latin American states and from it extract the building blocks of theory. My approach is not merely empirical, ie I have not simply observed the empirical facts and developed analytical assertions about them. Instead, I rely on the different scholars’ own explanations for the behaviour they describe and with these seek to identify patterns of Latin American foreign-policy behaviour and the explanations that account for them.

In reviewing the literature I have searched for discernible patterns in behaviour. If there are behavioural consistencies, there may also be common explanatory factors to account for them which can become the building blocks of theory. Patterns that emerge from a review of this vast literature reflect at least three distinct dimensions on which to differentiate Latin American foreign policy behaviour: 1) pro-core vs anti-core; 2) autonomous vs dependent; and 3) economic vs political–diplomatic. Each of these ‘cuts’ is discussed in turn and holds the potential as a foundation for Latin American foreign-policy theory.

**Pro-core vs anti-core**

The most immediately obvious axis by which to categorise Latin American foreign policy behaviour is that separating a pro-core from an anti-core foreign policy. The term ‘core’ here derives from the ‘core-periphery’ dichotomy and refers to the Northern industrialised world and the institutions associated with its power. Key core actors include the USA, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), US- or European-based multinational corporations and private commercial banks based in the North. A pro-core policy is one that does not treat core powers as the inherent enemy of Latin America and that seeks to work with the core actors to achieve foreign-policy goals. An anti-core policy emanates from a belief that core actors dominate a global system designed to augment the wealth of the core at the expense of the periphery. It is therefore hostile to core actors and seeks to work outside the dominant international system. Other terms that capture this same dichotomy include status quo vs revisionist, Western-orientated vs Third World-orientated, right-wing vs left-wing, modernisation-theory-orientated vs dependency-theory-orientated, liberal
vs nationalist and compliant vs defiant. All these characterisations point to the same way of thinking about Latin American foreign policy: it is designed by policy makers who are either agreeable or hostile to the current international order and its dominant powers.

The behaviours associated with a pro-core foreign policy include cultivating and strengthening relations with Western industrialised powers, especially the USA, attracting foreign investment and aid, implementing a neoliberal economic model, avoiding active participation in overtly Third World-orientated multilateral organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and paying particular attention to foreign-policy questions important to the USA, such as illicit drug trafficking and immigration. Examples of pro-core regimes include those associated with Pinochet in Chile, Turbay in Colombia, Seaga in Jamaica, Fujimori in Peru, Febres Cordero in Ecuador and Salinas de Gortari in Mexico.

In contrast, an anti-core policy is manifest in what Drekonja-Kornat a decade ago called the ‘new’ Latin American foreign policy. It is orientated towards the Third World, promotes the New International Economic Order (NIEO), and seeks autonomy from the USA. Anti-core policy typically celebrates the Non-Aligned Movement, economic and political relationships with non-traditional trading and diplomatic partners, regional integration on political and economic matters, an Organization of American States (OAS) free from US hegemony and Cuba’s acceptance into that body. Frequently cited anti-core administrations include Velasco and García in Peru, López Portillo in Mexico, Betancur in Colombia, Bishop in Grenada, the first governments of Pérez and Caldera in Venezuela and Roldós in Ecuador.

While the distinctions in behaviour between these two foreign-policy orientations are often quite stark, it is important to note that pro-core and anti-core policy makers frequently share goals and behaviours on issues that are not ideologically charged, such as arms control, law of the seas, border disputes, and inter-regional contacts. Not all foreign-policy behaviours can be broken down into the pro-core and anti-core dichotomy. Nevertheless, the manner in which a regime decides to approach any of these issues may be determined by its pro-core and anti-core inclinations.

What explanatory factors emerge in the literature to account for these divergent foreign policy outcomes? An important point to make about the literature is that it pays more attention to explaining the behaviour of anti-core Latin American governments than pro-core ones. Explanatory variables can nonetheless be discerned to account for pro-core foreign policies as well.

**Explaining pro-core foreign policies.** Economic dependence and weakness, frequently exacerbated during times of crisis, are often cited as major sources of pro-core foreign policies. The logic behind this causal relationship is that economically dependent states will develop policies that accord with their patrons’ foreign-policy wishes. For example, Belaúnde’s and Fujimori’s strong relations with the USA are seen as a function of Peru’s heavy indebtedness to
and economic dependence on the USA. Similarly, when Ecuador’s President Hurtado promised that a regional conference on debt (called the ‘Conferencia Económica Latinoamericana’ or CEL) he organised would not develop into a ‘debtors’ cartel’, he was ensuring that his creditors and trading partners would not feel threatened or angry about the conference.

A second factor contributing to pro-core foreign policies is internal political turmoil. Related to this is a government’s need to consolidate its position within a politically divided policy. A pro-core reaction to domestic political instability is made more likely, some argue, when a government’s opponents are aligned with leftist and revolutionary forces. Bagley & Tokatlîan explain President Turbay’s strong relationship with the USA as an attempt to bolster his own regime at home during a period when Cuban-supported guerrillas thrived in Colombia. In Venezuela, the Betancourt Doctrine aimed to isolate Cuba within the Western Hemisphere and also served to consolidate Betancourt’s regime by focusing regional attention on democracy. This also endeared Venezuela to the USA. These examples conform with Steven David’s notion of ‘omnibalancing’, in which a Third World regime is expected to develop alliances with the adversary of those countries backing its strongest domestic opponents.

Leader ideology is another commonly cited variable explaining pro-core policies. When a leader is predisposed to agree with core positions, the country’s foreign policy is more likely to follow the core. This is thought to be particularly true in Latin America, where many executives remain powerful in foreign-policy decision making. Hence, leaders such as Ecuador’s Febres Cordero, Colombia’s Turbay and Jamaica’s Seaga maintained world-views that celebrated free markets, anti-communism and democracy, which helps to explain their pro-core foreign policies. Regime and party ideology are similarly used to explain pro-core foreign policies. For example, Muñoz argues that the ‘praetorian–ideological’ nature of the Chilean military government influenced its foreign-policy behaviour.

Direct and indirect pressure from core actors, especially from the USA, is credited with explaining pro-core policies in Latin America. It is argued that as the USA’s interest in an issue increases, so does the likelihood that the affected Latin American state will implement a pro-core foreign policy. Examples of this include a number of Colombian administrations’ compliance with US preferences on drug issues, Hurtado’s acquiescing to creditor preferences on the CEL held in Ecuador, and Ecuadoran President Durán Ballein’s changing his vote on the OAS Secretary General to the candidate preferred by Washington.

A related explanatory factor is national security, particularly as it is defined within a hegemonic hemispheric system. It is argued that Latin American leaders, strongly conditioned by a history of extensive US influence and intervention in the region, will view national security as independence and freedom from US interference. Ironically, that goal is best achieved by developing policies in accordance with US interests that do not provoke any anxieties in Washington. For example, in the Caribbean and Central America, the history of US influence, the states’ small status and the omnipresence of US security concerns combine to direct policy making in a pro-US direction.
Similarly, Drekonja-Kornat, a long time observer of Latin American international affairs, argues that Latin America can develop foreign policy as it wishes but only insofar as it does not threaten US interests.26

Two final explanatory factors emerge in analyses of pro-core foreign policies. One is attempts to achieve international prestige. For example, among Turbay’s reasons for developing a strong relationship with the USA was to earn him and Colombia a reputation within the hemisphere. As the USA was the hemispheric leader, Turbay felt he could increase his own and Colombia’s prestige by association with the hegemon.27 Another variable is public opinion, specifically that in favour of development. Here it is argued that voting publics understand that a positive relationship with core actors will bring investment, economic growth and, hopefully, development. Seaga’s reinserting Jamaica into a strong relationship with the IMF, the USA and other core actors is thus explained as a response to the public’s wishes to distance Jamaica from Manley’s anti-core programmes.28

Explaining anti-core foreign policies. The literature also provides a rich array of explanations for anti-core foreign policy behaviour. Economic weakness and dependence can be so severe as to necessitate policies aimed at breaking dependent ties, and therefore opposing the core.29 To varying degrees, this type of counter-dependent behaviour is visible in Peru under García, Mexico under López Portillo, Grenada under Bishop, and Jamaica under the first Manley administration.30 These governments aimed to increase national autonomy over economic decisions as part of an alternative development strategy.

Interestingly, the reverse is also reported, ie economic prosperity is cited as a source of anti-core policies. Here the logic is that increases in relative economic strength provide Latin American states with leverage vis-à-vis the core and manoeuvring room within which defiance is possible. Eschbach explains López Portillo’s activism in Central America as a function of Mexico’s increased prosperity.31 Other examples include the first Caldera government’s Third World orientated foreign policy in Venezuela and Colombia’s leadership in Contadora during the Betancur years, both of which occurred during periods of domestic economic growth.32

Domestic political strife and the need to consolidate a regime’s power are also cited as factors leading to anti-core foreign policies. In Colombia, Betancur used Contadora, an anti-core initiative, to earn political leverage at home that strengthened his position in the peace negotiations with guerrillas.33 Argentina’s General Galtieri challenged Britain over the Malvinas in a desperate attempt to repair the damage to his regime brought on by a suffering economy and the political devastation of the Dirty War.34 An anti-core policy can also be used to placate domestic opposition critical of a regime’s economic dependence on and/or strong political relations with core actors. This has long been an explanation for anti-US Mexican foreign policy in the political realm, which is described as compensation for economic dependence on the USA.35 St. John employs this explanation to account for García’s anti-core foreign policies in Peru as does Milenky in explaining Perón’s extension of credit and trade to Cuba.
in 1973. In a similar vein, defiant foreign policies can be used to delegitimise pro-US domestic opposition to the regime. The leader, in advertising an anti-core foreign policy, may, for example, publicise financial and political ties domestic actors have with core actors such as investors, armies and political leaders. In this way, the policy maker can use an anti-core policy to pursue national autonomy and to undermine domestic opposition’s influence. Rodrigo Borja in Ecuador (1988–92), seeking to bolster the effects of his moderately anti-core foreign policy, commonly advertised the financial and ideological ties that his political adversaries had with the USA.

Leader ideology, when it advocates nationalism, a Third World orientation and other elements inconsistent with the ideological trends in the core, can also be a strong explanatory variable in an anti-core policy. Presidential ideology has been cited as an instigator in anti-core behaviour in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela, to name a few. Relatively, party and regime ideology can also tilt policy behaviour in an anti-core direction. In many Caribbean countries, Jamaica for example, strong ideological traditions among parties may overwhelm the power of individual preferences in foreign policy. Both supporters and detractors of Sandinista Nicaragua place high explanatory value on the party’s ideological roots in explaining its foreign policy behaviour. Party traditions within Venezuela’s social democratic party also dominate foreign policy positioning when its candidates are in power.

Consistent with political realists’ expectations, national security concerns can also be a motivation for an anti-core foreign policy. Sometimes the perceived interests of the Latin American state contradict and overwhelm the security interests of core actors. Security considerations led Mexico to pursue Central American peace plans that defied US interests in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Similarly, Costa Rican President Arias developed a peace plan for Central America that directly contradicted US goals of isolating Nicaragua and undermining rebels in El Salvador and Guatemala. Arias did so because concerns about regional instability and refugee flows were stronger than fears of US reprisals. Argentine President Alfonsín’s 1986 visit to Cuba was not intended as a snub to the Reagan administration, as many believed. Instead, Alfonsín sought to induce Castro ‘to call off the armed radical group in Chile that was attempting to undermine the military regime of Augusto Pinochet’ because Alfonsín considered the group’s activities a threat to Argentine national security.

A leader’s search for prestige may spur an anti-core foreign policy. In contrast to his predecessor, Turbay, Colombia’s Betancur used Contadora and other anti-core initiatives to gain regional prominence. Ecuador’s sponsorship of a debtors’ conference was aimed, at least in part, at gaining President Hurtado diplomatic prestige throughout the hemisphere.

Anti-core foreign policies may develop in response to national publics’ cries for development achieved independent of the core. Biddle & Stephens argue that Michael Manley’s establishment of a democratic socialist development strategy, which included distancing Jamaica from the USA and strengthening ties with Cuba, was a direct answer to the electorate’s frustration with dependent development. Newly-elected President Alfonsín took a hostile position towards
Northern creditors in 1983, a policy in part explained by its popularity with the Argentine public. Nicaragua’s foreign policy can be explained as part of a revolutionary mandate from the people to break neocolonial ties with core actors. A final set of variables the literature identifies as important in understanding anti-core foreign policies concerns the role of the USA. Numerous authors point to the end of the Cold War and the decline of US hegemony as factors that provide Latin America with more leeway to develop anti-core policies. This perspective assumes a dependency-based relationship between the core and periphery in which Latin American interests and preferences are expected to diverge from those of the USA. Otherwise, a decline in US hegemony would not necessarily lead to anti-core policies in Latin America.

A related variable concerns US decisions not to pressure a Latin American neighbour on a particular foreign-policy issue. In other words, it is argued, when the USA decides to ignore an issue, Latin American states can and will take advantage of that freedom and develop anti-core foreign policies. Mares, for example, argues that Mexico is more active (ie defiant) when the USA pays little attention to Mexican policy. One of the reasons the Ecuadoran government joined the Contadora Support Group in 1987 was because the USA did not oppose it. It is unlikely that Ecuador would have acted as it did if faced with US pressure.

A final explanatory relationship that concerns the US role in the region is that Washington’s recent emphasis on democracy has given Latin America some policy-making latitude. For example, Ecuador’s first post-military president, Jaime Roldós, developed a staunchly pro-Sandinista foreign policy. The USA was unwilling to intervene in this and other policies because it was lauding Ecuador for returning to the democratic fold. Overt interference in the policies of democratic states blemishes the US reputation for support of democracy in the region. The Chilean case also demonstrates this. Pinochet’s dictatorship was sufficiently prolonged and brutal to isolate Chile from international politics, and even eventually from US favour. Muñoz argues that Chile’s lack of democracy gave it virtually no room to manoeuver in international politics.

Discussion. The first analytical detail that emerges from this discussion of explanatory factors of pro-core and anti-core foreign policies is that many of the attributes are said to explain both types of behaviours. The explanatory factors discussed can be roughly divided into two categories: those that remain fixed and those that vary. In other words, there are some factors that, even though their status does not change, are associated with both pro-core and anti-core foreign policies. Economic weakness and dependence, for example, are associated with Latin American compliance with and defiance of core actors. On the other hand, there are other indicators which truly vary, and their variation can help explain whether a pro-core or anti-core policy will emerge. Leader ideology, which co-varies with changes in foreign policy, is an example of this type of variable.

Four ‘fixed’ factors emerge from this review of the literature: 1) economic dependence and weakness; 2) domestic political turmoil and the desire
to consolidate a regime; 3) a leader’s desire for personal and national prestige; and 4) public opinion favouring development. That these weighty factors in the policy process lead to both pro-core and anti-core policies is not difficult to explain. Each is subject to a regime’s interpretation, which may vary with leadership and situational conditions. In other words, it is not surprising that ideologically distinct leaders would use completely different strategies to deal with, for example, economic dependence. Similarly, the regional power distribution or political-economic situation may guide the degree to which a regime seeks to acquiesce to or defy economic dependence. Milenky notes how Argentina takes an opportunistic approach, leading it to implement both pro- and anti-core policies:

Argentina wants to challenge the international political and economic status quo and to benefit from it. It seeks trade and investment from the industrial powers and then joins the underdeveloped nations to force changes in the rules. It seeks to be alternately or simultaneously Western and Third World …

In managing domestic political opposition, some leaders will pursue a bandwagoning approach, which aims to co-opt the opposition by developing good relations with its patron. So, for example, Colombian President Betancur developed a positive relationship with the Sandinistas in the 1980s in part to co-opt his leftist opposition. Other leaders will attempt to balance the opposition by allying strongly with the opponent of its patron. Betancur’s predecessor, Turbay, pursued this strategy when allying Colombia with the USA. Similarly, some leaders will find more prestige in a strong relationship with the regional hegemon while others prefer to make their mark among the region’s champions of a Third World view. Alone, these ‘fixed’ variables are of little general explanatory significance, but as is discussed below, they may interact with other factors in important ways.

More potentially powerful as explanatory factors then are the ‘true’ variables, which indeed change with variations in foreign policy behaviour. These include 1) the ideology of the leader/party/regime; 2) US pressure and influence; 3) the international distribution of power; and 4) national security. Of these, which are the most powerful in explaining variations in Latin American foreign-policy behaviour? The international distribution of power, which encompasses issues about the Cold War and its aftermath, is not very strong. While the end of the Cold War is oft-cited as creating an opening within which some Latin American countries will successfully develop anti-core policies, no-one argues that such a change in the international structure will necessarily generate this foreign policy outcome in Latin America. Indeed, many countries have not developed such policies. Recent events indicate that, even with the end of the Cold War, many Latin American countries are intensifying the pro-US components of their foreign policies. In the wake of the debt crisis and within the context of a global trend towards free markets, Latin American countries are scrambling to gain favourable access to US investment and markets. This is a trend with which the Latin American foreign-policy literature has yet to catch up. Hence, while the end of the Cold War and other changes in the global power structure may create an environment for certain types of policies, no causal relationship is visible.
National security is a ‘true’ variable in the sense that its definition varies and can help to determine the foreign-policy path a regime chooses to manage a national security problem. Critics of realist theory have long identified the pitfalls of using national security and national interest as explanatory variables in international behaviour. These terms’ definitions depend so heavily on the contexts—historical, contemporary, political, ideological—within which they are formulated that they lose their analytical power.\textsuperscript{61} The brief review here of the use of national interest reveals this same problem. Some regimes define it as ensuring the USA does not become concerned with events in Latin America, thereby inviting intervention, while others define it as opposing the USA on regional issues crucial to both the USA and Latin America. National security, then, appears not to be a very useful source of explanation for Latin American foreign-policy behaviour.

The remaining variables are US pressure and leader/party/regime ideology. How powerful is the presence or absence of US pressure in determining Latin American foreign policy? It can be argued that this variable necessarily interacts with the degree of economic vulnerability a state has to the USA the higher the degree of dependence, the more likely US pressure will succeed. Indeed, this appears to be the case. While there are some examples of states’ defying core interests even during economic crisis,\textsuperscript{62} the literature clearly shows this to be more the exception than the rule. It is even less likely to occur when economic conditions are exceptionally bad, as they were when Fujimori took power in Peru and quickly developed a pro-core foreign policy. Thus Heine argues that a key distinction to be made between continental and Caribbean foreign policies is that the latter are more subject to core pressure specifically because of their relatively high state of dependence.\textsuperscript{63} The literature suggests that, when the USA is committed to pressuring for its objectives, Latin America will usually comply. Andean cooperation with US drug programmes is indicative of this trend. It is therefore appropriate to note that economic dependence acts as a conditioning or intervening variable for the effects of US pressure, and not simply as a ‘fixed’ and therefore weak explanatory factor.

The ideological orientation of the policy maker or policy-making group emerges as the strongest predictor of policy, largely because it helps to determine the weight and direction of the causal relationship between policy and many of the other variables mentioned here. For example, a policy maker’s ideological orientation may govern the state’s willingness to defy core actors, its definition of the national interest, the development model to be pursued to meet public demands,\textsuperscript{64} whether it seeks prestige through status-quo or revisionist policies, and whether it will take a bandwagoning or balancing strategy over domestic conflict. The ideological distinctions between Betancur and Turbay in Colombia, for example, had a strong impact on Colombia’s alignment and prestige strategies.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, ideological differences distinguishing the Jamaican Labor Party and the People’s National Party, differences which have intensified since independence, account for the different foreign-policy orientations of the Seaga and Manley regimes respectively.\textsuperscript{66}

In sum, the literature on Latin American foreign policy reveals numerous variables that contribute to explaining the development of pro-core or anti-core
foreign policies. Observation and comparison of these factors suggests that leader/regime/party ideology is the strongest explanatory variable. It is followed in explanatory weight by pressure from the core, specifically from the USA, the effect of which is conditioned by the degree of a state’s economic dependence and weakness. Other variables, such as the national interest, the search for prestige and domestic political conflict also influence foreign-policy behaviour. But the direction in which they will lead foreign policy is not fixed and is often a function of the policy maker’s ideological orientation.

**Autonomous vs dependent**

A second cut discernible in the literature is the distinction between foreign policies that are developed autonomously and those that are dependent. The distinguishing features here are the extent to which a government is able to develop and implement policy without interference from international, usually core, actors. An autonomous regime makes decisions according to perceived national, political or personal interests while a dependent one acts in accordance with the wishes of foreign interests. Like the pro-core vs anti-core distinction, this cut is grounded in notions central to both political realism and dependency theory.

An immediate question that arises in discerning autonomous from dependent policy makers is how to determine if a regime that implements pro-core policies is doing so out of coercion or conviction. Some leaders and regimes are predisposed to develop pro-core policies and may do so ‘autonomously’. This matter is at the heart of the ‘compliance vs consensus’ debate in the field of dependent foreign policy. Many studies of Third World foreign policy, particularly those that employ UN voting data, assume that a pro-core vote by a Latin American state is an example of compliance, i.e. that the Latin American policy makers are subverting their own national interests to concede to core wishes. Bruce Moon argued that, more often than not, agreement between periphery and core in foreign policy was the result of consensus, not coercion. Ideological alignment between leaders in Latin America and the USA is common and a function of the fact that many Latin American leaders are educated in core countries and often profit from business ventures there. It is understandable, then, that they develop policy in accordance with core interests.

Given that a pro-core policy can result from both compliance and consensus, it is necessary to evaluate any policy within the full context of a policy maker’s history and the conditions under which the policy is developed. This type of information is often difficult to attain and accounts for the literature’s too frequent failure to make meaningful or reliable distinctions between compliance and consensus. What has emerged is a mindset that equates pro-core policies with a ‘dependent’ policy process. This is a problem with the current literature that must be corrected if the distinction between autonomous and dependent is to become analytically useful.

Similarly, those regimes that successfully implement anti-core policies are thought to be autonomous, often with too little consideration of how defiant they might have become if it had not been for core pressure. A quote from Valenta’s
study of Nicaraguan foreign policy under the Sandinistas is instructive here: ‘Though not a pawn of the USSR and Cuba, the FSLN leadership has not maintained a scrupulous equidistance from East and West as have some other non-aligned nations’. Valenta’s point is that while Nicaragua may not be a proxy state of the Communists per se, it cannot be categorised as fully autonomous because it has leaned towards the Communist camp. Such a claim has never been made about Colombia or Ecuador, also members of the non-aligned movement and certainly not countries that have kept a ‘scrupulous equidistance’ between the USA and the USSR. Like nearly all their neighbours, Colombia and Ecuador clearly lean towards the USA in economic and political relations. Nonetheless, when they develop policies that challenge the core, such as Contadora or the CEL, they are said to be acting autonomously. This demonstrates that states that defy the USA, even slightly, are likely to be labelled autonomous even though their policies may indeed be highly constrained. It also reveals that such generous considerations are unlikely to be extended to Cuba or revolutionary Nicaragua.

Keeping these weighty caveats in mind, whom does the literature identify as autonomous foreign policy makers? They include the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Ecuador’s Hurtado, especially in diplomatic policy, Brazilian regimes in general, Argentine and Brazilian leaders on nuclear weapons policy, Mexico’s López Portillo and De la Madrid, especially on Central American issues, Perú’s García, and Costa Rican President Arias. The dependent foreign policy makers, in contrast, include Seaga in Jamaica, Salinas in Mexico, Fujimori in Perú, and Ecuador’s Durán Balleño.

That these lists overlap so heavily with the anti-core and pro-core lists again points to the troubling feature of a literature that equates autonomous as anti-core. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the autonomy/dependent dichotomy will not yield useful analytical insights. As the following discussion reveals, the literature identifies a number of variables that appear to account reliably for autonomous and dependent foreign policies.

Explaining ‘autonomous’ foreign policies. Increased relative power capabilities are cited as an important component of an autonomous foreign policy in Latin America. Selcher, for example, explains Brazil’s autonomous foreign policy as a function of Brazil’s relative strength within the hemisphere. A number of factors that comprise power capabilities—geographic proximity to the USA, economic dependence and performance, physical size and level of development—have particular relevance for Latin America. Hence, Brazil’s large physical size and Colombia’s relatively sound economy have contributed to their autonomy in foreign policy.

The degree of core control over and interest in the foreign-policy issues of a particular state also contribute to autonomy. Mares explains that, throughout history, Mexican foreign policy has gained autonomy specifically when US interest in the region is low. Similarly, numerous authors explain that the weakening of bipolarity has decreased US interest and power in Latin America, giving the region more room for autonomous action. Interestingly, many such
claims were made years before the collapse of the USSR, in recognition of a presumed loosening of the bipolar system. Leader/regime/party ideology can also affect the degree of autonomy a foreign-policy maker seeks, and hence achieves. Braveboy-Wagner explains that, while in general Caribbean foreign policy is highly dependent, and therefore circumspect, some governments, such as those led by Manley in Jamaica and Bishop in Grenada, believe they can achieve greater autonomy.

Socialist states have perceived themselves as capable of overcoming the constraints and modifying some of the effects of history, geography, society, economic need and the influence of the international system in non-traditional directions. Thus there is centrality to the role of ideology in foreign policy. The act of trying increases the likelihood of success. The history of core influence, especially that of the USA over the region is cited as a source of autonomous foreign policies. It is argued that decades of US hegemony and intervention has generated a backlash among Latin American foreign-policy makers who seek autonomy to counteract the effects of history. This is especially true in Mexico, where the relationship with the USA is perhaps most immediate and certainly most overtly associated with foreign policy. Some autonomous foreign policies are explained as a function of the failures of dependent development. When strong economic and political ties with the core fail to bring development, states may seek greater autonomy as a path to greater prosperity. Manley’s drastic break with Jamaica’s past foreign-policy traditions is an example of this pattern, as is Betancur’s attempting a new approach in Colombia.

Finally, the literature cites some cultural and historical reasons, unique to the different countries, for Latin America’s pursuit of autonomous foreign policies. For instance, Brazilians’ sense of cultural and historical uniqueness from the rest of Latin America encourages their policy makers to pursue a foreign policy autonomous not only from the core, but from the rest of the region as well. Mexico has a strong tradition of foreign policy principles, grounded in the pursuit of self-determination, that guides its foreign policy.

**Explaining ‘dependent’ foreign policies.** Low levels of relative power capabilities contribute to dependence in foreign policy. In the Caribbean, for example, states’ close proximity to the USA, strong economic dependence, small size and relatively low levels of development combine to give the region few power capabilities and therefore a heavily dependent foreign policy process. Another factor that has had a significant impact on Latin America’s relative power is the debt crisis. Not only did most of the region’s countries experience enormous increases in their debt burdens in the 1980s and 1990s, the vast majority of the borrowed money was owed to core countries, especially the USA. This contributes to a power differential between periphery and core that in turn influences Latin American foreign-policy behaviour. US activity and interest in the region is also cited as a contributing factor to dependent foreign policy. As is mentioned above, numerous authors cite a
weakening in bipolarity as a source of foreign policy freedom for Latin America. They also argue that the reverse is true; when US global power and influence are strengthened, Latin American foreign policy becomes more dependent. This implies that a concentration of power in US hands, which, arguably, is happening now within the economic system of the Western hemisphere, will make Latin American foreign policies more constrained despite the easing of the Cold War.

The ideology of the policy maker also contributes to the degree of dependence in foreign policy. Libby argues that Seaga’s pro-core ideology led him to marry Jamaican foreign policy to that of the USA. A similar argument is made about Ecuador’s Febres Cordero. His strong personal, political and business ties to the USA may have influenced his decision to develop a foreign policy that coincided ideally with US interests in Latin America.

Finally, Milenky argues that Latin American states lack all the features of sovereign nations. They are permeable to outside intervention and influence, have penetrable decision making and rely too heavily on foreign markets and investment for their development. As such, he argues, they are unable to develop foreign policy in an autonomous manner. While Milenky’s view was developed some 20 years ago, the features to which he points still aptly describe Latin America.

**Discussion.** An intriguing point about the ‘autonomous’ foreign policies is that, according to scholars, many of them apparently failed. Eschbach and Bagley & Tokatlian conclude that, respectively, Mexico’s and Colombia’s attempts at increased independence via foreign policy ended in reducing those countries’ autonomy vis-à-vis the USA. The USA succeeded in undermining the Contadora effort and the Arias peace plan, and Nicaragua’s attempt at an autonomous foreign policy was short-lived. Manley’s experiment with democratic socialism and a non-aligned foreign policy is widely considered a failure, not only because his policies were reversed by Seaga, but also because Manley himself did not continue on those paths once he returned to office in 1990. Grenada’s experiment with an independent foreign policy certainly failed. Braveboy-Wagner tries to explain why Caribbean governments’ attempts at autonomy often do not succeed. She argues that left-orientated governments succeed at getting international support for economic and social policies, but ‘this support has not proved sufficient to minimize external pressures, simply because for small states economic security rests heavily on bilateral political relations’. She goes on to argue that Caribbean governments have simply been unable to institute truly independent foreign policies and that ‘the primary reason for this failure has been the Caribbean socialists’ neglect of geopolitical realities—these governments have gone too far beyond the implied limits of political acceptability’. Braveboy-Wagner appears to place the responsibility for failed autonomy on the shoulders of the Caribbean leaders who are naive enough to attempt autonomy within a hemisphere clearly dominated by the USA. Others would argue that US lack of respect for Caribbean autonomy is the better explanation.
In evaluating the dependence/autonomy axis of foreign policy, it is important to separate policy development from policy success. It is nonetheless interesting to note the apparent low level of accomplishment these policy efforts have had. This suggests a potential problem in the literature. Above it was suggested that discussions of ‘autonomy’ and ‘dependence’ were heavily conditioned by considerations of anti-core and pro-core policies respectively. The fact that most of the ‘autonomous’ foreign policies failed points to a second difficulty in the literature: many studies seeking to explain autonomy in foreign policy focus more heavily on policy attempts at autonomy, rather than on achieved autonomy itself. Indeed, many of the presumably ‘autonomous’ foreign policies outlined in this review appear to have been rather dependent, as demonstrated by their failure rate.

Having observed these difficulties with the autonomy/dependence dichotomy, it is worthwhile to evaluate whether the variables described in the literature reveal any valuable underpinnings of theory. They do provide some promise. Recall that the pro-core/anti-core cut at Latin American foreign policy uncovered a number of variables which, even when their status remained unchanged, correlated with both pro-core and anti-core policies. The factors described in the autonomy/dependence section do not share that quality. In other words, this literature reveals more ‘true’ variables which co-vary with changes in the degree of autonomy in foreign policy. None of these factors explains both autonomy and dependence. For example, relative power capabilities and US interest and power emerge as independent variables for predicting autonomy or dependence. This is in contrast with economic dependence, for example, which predicted both pro-core and anti-core foreign policies.

Policy maker ideology also emerges here as a ‘true’ variable. The literature suggests that ideology influences the degree of autonomy a foreign-policy making body seeks, and sometimes achieves. This variable nonetheless remains troublesome for reasons outlined above. Because the literature too heavily equates ‘autonomous’ with ‘anti-core’, it is difficult to discern the effect of a pro-core ideology on foreign policy. As none of the regimes listed in the ‘autonomous’ group clearly advance a pro-core ideology, it is likely that the degree to which they seek autonomy may be undervalued. This is not the place to delve into the question of how to measure autonomy and dependence in foreign policy.\textsuperscript{104} That the question has gone under-treated in the literature limits the impact of findings relating policy maker ideology with autonomy and dependence.

Cognisant of these caveats, I find it possible to develop some tentative statements about which variables lead to autonomy and dependence in Latin American foreign policy. Keeping in mind the potential impact of leader/regime/party ideology, which may influence the degree of autonomy a government seeks, the autonomy of a policy-making body is a function of variables rooted in realist theory, such as relative power capabilities, the global concentration of power, and the behaviour of the hegemon. Additionally, states may strive for an autonomous policy because of historical circumstances, fail with dependent development and other place-specific factors that influence the details of individual countries’ foreign policies. When they do strive for autonomy, they often fail
because they are unable to overcome the influence of powerful international actors and because they lack the basic power-tools of independent nation-states.

\textit{Economic vs political}

Issue areas present a third cut at Latin American foreign policy that emerges from the literature. An issue area perspective divides Latin American foreign-policy behaviour roughly into two areas: economic and political-diplomatic (hereafter referred to simply as ‘political’). This dichotomy avoids a third issue area, military-security policy, which some foreign policy analysts have also deemed important.\textsuperscript{105} That the military/security area appears infrequently in examinations of Latin American foreign policy appears to be explained by two factors. First, Latin America is typically not considered an actor in the high politics of international warfare and security policy. With the obvious exception of the Falklands/Malvinas war, Latin Americans’ participation in inter-state wars has been mostly limited to small-scale incursions usually related to border disputes.\textsuperscript{106} The relative peacefulness of the region, at least among states if not within them, has diminished the attention paid to the military/security area. Second, because the Latin American foreign policy literature has paid so much attention to the relationship between core and periphery, it has tended to underemphasise the role of military/security concerns in Latin American policy circles. In other words, the main foreign policy issues between Latin America and the USA are usually not security-related \textit{per se}, at least not from the perspective of the Latin Americans. The issues relate to development, diplomatic policy, aid, debt and other issues. With the recent exceptions of Nicaragua, Grenada and Panama, few Latin American states see their relationship with core countries as one primarily turning on security interests. It should nonetheless be emphasised that military players remain powerful in the security realm of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{107} They have generally retreated, however, from overt intervention into other policy matters, including non-security-related foreign policy. Latin America’s democratisation is sufficiently consolidated to curtail the possibility of a military coup significantly. That the generals did not move to fill the power vacuum in Ecuador in early 1997 is evidence of this trend. In their retreat (or expulsion from) the halls of political power, military players have moved on to new and more circumscribed activities, limiting their influence in foreign policy.

A number of scholars has suggested that an issue-area approach will be useful for developing theory in Latin American foreign policy.\textsuperscript{108} A review of the literature demonstrates that highlighting the distinction between economic and political policy does yield some kernels of theory.

\textit{Explaining economic policy.} The dominant theme in studies that look at Latin America’s economic policy over time is that it has changed substantially. The 1970s and early 1980s saw statism in economic policy, which included restrictions on foreign investment, some nationalisation of foreign interests, orientation towards the NIEO and other Third World-orientated organisations, and high trade barriers.\textsuperscript{109} For example, the military government in Ecuador joined and soon
became a leader of OPEC. Jamaica under Manley established economic ties with Cuba and sought to weaken them with the USA. Chile’s Allende in the early 1970s was ousted, at least in part, because of his nationalist economic policies. García in Peru began his presidency by promising to make payments only on Peru’s public debt and only in amounts that would not exceed 10% of the total value of exports. Furthermore, he shunned the IMF. Similarly, Brazilian President Sarney declared a moratorium on debt service. In the 1970s Venezuela, particularly under Pérez, became a global spokesman for the NIEO and nationalised foreign oil companies working in the country. Until its reactivation in the 1990s, the Andean Pact, a subregional free trade organisation, mostly acted as a protectionist body to keep out Northern powers. There were, of course, exceptions to the general trend of nationalism in foreign economic policy. Some leaders, such as Pinochet in Chile, who eventually withdrew from the Andean Pact, and Turbay in Colombia, eschewed the notion of economic nationalism and pursued free market policies and strong relations with core actors.

In the 1980s and into the 1990s the trend shifted. Latin America abandoned much of its nationalist economic policies in favour of a stronger integration into the hemispheric and global economies. Seaga returned Jamaica to the embrace of the USA and the IMF. Fujimori did the same in Peru. Although Brazil’s economic relations vis-à-vis the USA were strained during the 1980s, Collor de Mello, inaugurated in 1990, quickly put Brazil on a path towards free markets and insertion into the global economy. This policy was continued under his successor, Itamar Franco, and even under Fernando Cardoso, the former academic, famous dependency theorist and exile during Brazil’s military dictatorship. Since the early 1980s Ecuador has seen a relatively consistent movement towards neoliberal policies. In Mexico the transition began under de la Madrid, who gave into austerity demands as a means of solving the debt crisis. It intensified during the Salinas years, during which the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed, and continues into the Zedillo sexenio. Regional trade organisations such as the Andean Pact and MERCOSUR that had acted as protectionist alliances in the 1970s are now being revitalised as free trade agreements.

What accounts for these disparate economic behaviours? There is a scholarly consensus that Latin America became weaker during the 1980s, particularly because of the debt crisis. The resulting economic vulnerability made it impossible for Latin American countries to resist the pressure for neoliberal policies emanating from the core. In many cases this pressure took the form of explicit conditions demanding austerity packages in exchange for debt restructuring agreements. In other cases the incentives came in the form of carrots, such as Reagan’s Caribbean Basin Initiative and Bush’s Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. These offered trade preferences and debt reduction, respectively, in exchange for cooperative countries’ developing neoliberal economic policies. Additionally, there is a consensus among some policy makers in Latin America that alternatives to the neoliberal model have been exhausted and have proven ineffective. The neoliberal approach, while flawed, is seen as the only remaining alternative.
It is important to note that in a minority of cases, economic vulnerability leads policy in the opposite direction, ie towards the development of a more nationalistic economic policy. For example, Alan García’s and Michael Manley’s economic policies are explained as a function of Peru’s and Jamaica’s economic weakness respectively.\textsuperscript{124} It is equally important to point out that, by the end of his regime, García had largely given in to core demands on economic policy,\textsuperscript{125} as did Manley towards the end of his first term and during his second term in power. Defiance of the hegemon on economic matters is more the exception than the rule, and is rarely maintained for a long period of time.

Two additional explanatory factors in Latin America’s economic foreign policy are leader/regime/party ideology and the notion that global leaders are experiencing the ‘end of history’. Coleman & Quiros-Varela and Snarr argue that development policy, intricately linked to the ideology of the policy makers, strongly determines the economic component of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{126} Hey argues that what variation was evident in Ecuadoran economic policy since the early 1980s is a function of ideological differences among leaders.\textsuperscript{127} The ‘end of history’ explanation, popularised by Francis Fukuyama,\textsuperscript{128} argues that Latin America’s shift towards economic neoliberalism is part of a global trend in which policy makers embrace free market economic policies as the most effective means of development. Accordingly, Latin American policy makers are simply taking part in a world-wide transition.

\textit{Explaining political policy.} Unlike economic policy, political policy shows few, if any, patterns across time in Latin America. Dominguez argues that the 1970s was a time of foreign policy ‘activism’, defined mostly as multilateral, anti-core initiatives such as support for the NIEO.\textsuperscript{129} He also argues that this subsided in the 1980s, even in usually activist countries like Cuba, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.\textsuperscript{130} However, there have always been numerous pockets of non-conformity. Colombia’s Turbay and Jamaica’s Seaga, for example, broke diplomatic relations with Cuba just when many other states were re-establishing them.\textsuperscript{131} Chile’s Pinochet certainly did not participate in ‘activist’ foreign policies and even withdrew from the Andean Pact because he thought it had become too political.\textsuperscript{132} Similarly, the 1980s, which Dominguez argues was a time of ‘passivism’ in Latin American foreign policy, saw the Contadora and Arias efforts opposing US policy in Central America and Cuban intervention in Africa. Types of political policy appear to be much more randomly distributed than types of economic policy.

Are there any patterns in political policy? There is evidence to suggest that Andean policy makers have agreed to cooperate with the USA on illicit drug operations. These include Peru’s García and Colombia’s Betancur, both leaders who in other areas opposed much US policy.\textsuperscript{133} This suggests that a core country may successfully pressure Latin American states on policy matters it considers salient. However, the fact that many Latin American foreign-policy makers opposed US policy in Central America, clearly an issue of high salience to the USA in the 1980s, appears to undermine this hypothesis. The critical difference between drug and Central America policy may be money. When Colombia, Peru
and Ecuador agree to cooperate with US drug policy in the Andes, they receive aid. This indicates that core pressure may be most effective in changing political policy in Latin America when it is accompanied by financial carrots. Indeed, although Colombia first reacted to its 1997 decertification by the USA by halting coca eradication, this act of defiance was shortlived. Colombian drug squads quickly resumed spraying coca fields in accordance with US wishes and in part because drug-fighting funds from Washington depended on it.

A second, more long-term, pattern in political policy concerns regional foreign policy towards Cuba. With the exception of Mexico, Latin America joined with (and/or was coerced by) the USA to ostracise revolutionary Cuba from hemispheric political circles. This included countries’ breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba and denying it participation in the Organization of American States. This trend shifted in the 1970s and 1980s when, one by one, Latin American and Caribbean leaders re-established formal diplomatic relations with Cuba and began to lobby for its inclusion in the OAS. (Despite the fact that the vast majority of OAS members favour Cuba’s participation, the US-backed ban continues.) A third shift is seen in the 1990s. While Latin American foreign-policy makers continue to maintain that Cuba should be welcomed as a formal participant in hemispheric affairs, they also appear more willing to criticise Fidel Castro’s policies as anachronistic in a global political economy dominated by democracy and free markets. Cuba was the only Latin American country excluded from the 1994 ‘Summit of the Americas’ held in Miami. The event’s host, President Clinton, took advantage of the opportunity to vilify Castro as the only socialist dictator in the region and therefore undeserving of taking a seat at or sharing in the spoils of the Summit table. The region’s heads of state did not make an issue of Cuba’s exclusion and instead celebrated the plans for a future region-wide free trade agreement.

These patterns are more the exception than the rule in political policy. Most evident is a wide variation in substance and process in political policy across time and space. Different countries and regimes pursue different types of political policies, with little evidence that a common theme guides their foreign policy behaviour in this area. What explanations does the literature provide to account for this diversity? A myriad of factors is mentioned. One strong one is the use of foreign policy for political purposes. Numerous authors indicate that foreign policy becomes a political tool for Latin American leaders to appease or undermine political opponents. In Mexico, for example, foreign policy is used to appease domestic critics of the PRI who claim the party has wedded Mexico too closely to the USA. Similarly, President Febres Cordero’s trip to Cuba, the first by an Ecuadoran president since the Cuban revolution, placated leftist critics who argued Febres Cordero was a pawn of Washington.

Other explanatory factors include leader/regime/party ideology, a country’s foreign policy traditions, its political culture, and its policy-making institutions. All of these vary throughout the region and can be used to explain differences in political policy. Ecuador’s traditional adherence to non-interventionist principles, for example, in part explains the country’s failure to become more involved in the Central American conflicts of the 1980s. Ebel, Taras & Cochrane argue that Costa Rica and Venezuela share a political culture that is
characterised by Western democratic values.\textsuperscript{141} They accordingly explain these countries’ foreign policy behaviour in the same terms. Myers explains Brazil’s political relations with Latin America partly as a function of Brazilians’ sense of future greatness and uniqueness within the region.\textsuperscript{142}

Explanations for political behaviour vary widely, and often take the kitchen sink approach discussed above. As the dependent variable (behaviour) is so heavily differentiated, so are the possible independent variables explaining it. Everything becomes a potential explanatory factor. The fact that relatively little theoretical work underpins much of this research limits the degree to which scholars rank variables in a theoretically meaningful way.

Discussion. Is the economic/political distinction useful for developing theory in Latin American foreign policy? The above discussion reveals that many more factors help to explain political policy than economic policy. This indicates that Latin American policy makers are more constrained in the economic realm than in the political–diplomatic realm. An alternative way to conceptualise this point is that economic policy behaviour is less sensitive to changes in the independent variables that have a strong impact on political behaviour, such as leader/regime/party ideology, domestic political circumstances and a country’s political history. Instead, economic policy is developed within a hemispheric distribution of power that is usually stacked against Latin America. More often than not, Latin Americans toe the economic line of the USA when they have weak relative economic power capabilities, making these a potent variable in explaining foreign policy in the economic realm.

The political–economic axis thus reveals the following tentative conclusion: in general, political policy is subject to a myriad of explanations whereas economic policy is explained by the differential in relative economic power capabilities between core and peripheral actors within the hemisphere. Pressure from the core, particularly when tied to financial resources (as in drug policy) or to trends within the region (as in Cuba policy), also appears to be important in determining both political and economic policy. This analysis points to the potency of conceptual variables fundamental to both political realist and dependency theories, variables such as the regional distribution of power, relative power capabilities and hegemonic pressure. That these variables hold most true for the economic realm is also consistent with realism and dependency, which would hold that the hegemon would succeed in the areas most important to it. Increasingly, the USA appears to value Latin American economic behaviour over political activities, making it more likely to ‘tolerate’ defiance in diplomacy in exchange for compliance in financial matters.

Conclusions

A literature review focusing on the causal factors scholars point to in explaining Latin American foreign policy reveals a number of elements that will be important in developing theory in this area. A first conclusion is that Latin American foreign policy remains in essence about dependence. All three of the
 cuts explored here tap into the region’s weak economic and political status on a hemispheric and global scale. The pro-core vs anti-core and autonomous vs dependent axes categorise Latin American foreign policy according to its relationship vis-à-vis the core. Similarly, analysis of the economic–political dichotomy reveals that Latin America experiences decreasing foreign policy latitude as its economic vulnerability to core actors increases. This enduring constraint, (dependence) continues to operate even in a post-cold war world in which the USA arguably has less interest in keeping its dependencies in line.

My analysis of the many factors contributing to Latin American foreign policy suggests that leader/party/regime ideology and pressure from the core are the strongest variables in determining foreign policy. Pressure from the core most often occurs in the economic arena, which is also the realm of Latin America’s greatest vulnerability. This means that economic policy is more subject than political policy to core pressure. Realist variables, those that are featured in traditional power-politics discussions of foreign policy and international relations, also play an important role. These include a country’s power capabilities and the global or hemispheric distribution of power. In addition, researchers also point to countries’ idiosyncratic features, such as history, geography and diplomatic traditions, in explaining foreign policy. These idiosyncracies, however, should not play more than a small part in the development of a general theory, as they are by definition place-specific characteristics.

A notable observation here is that bureaucratic features, an important set of variables in studies of Western industrialised foreign policies, are mostly missing in analyses of Latin American foreign policy. Except in the larger, more developed states such as Brazil and Chile, most Latin American foreign policy bureaucracies are deemed too unprofessional, underskilled and subject to capricious acts of the leadership to merit their own entry in a model of foreign policy behaviour. As diplomatic academies continue to grow and professionalise, and where personalism loses out to institutional norms, bureaucratic variables may gain greater standing in the Latin American foreign policy literature.

Identification of the potent explanatory factors is but the first step in developing a theory of Latin American foreign policy. The next step is to recognise that the variables indicated here are not autonomous of one another. Indeed, many of the readings cited in this article point to the interrelated nature of the many determinants of policy. Certainly, leader/party/regime ideology does not develop in a political or economic vacuum. Leaders and the parties and governments they head develop ideology at least in part in response to domestic political demands and international power relationships. To that extent, the ‘leader ideology’ notion in the extant Latin American foreign policy literature is sorely underdeveloped. To be sure, many Latin leaders have charismatic and strong personalities, and frequently seem to scorn the effects of domestic and international pressures. But the development of ‘ideology’ cannot escape external pressures. One indicator of this in Latin America is the so-called ‘Washington Consensus’, in which the region’s leaders are said to have abandoned protectionist and state-orientated models and instead now agree on a neoliberal approach to economic development. Similarly, if Dominguez is correct that the region’s leaders have together undergone a transition from statism to free-markets in economic
policy,\textsuperscript{145} then there is something other than simple ‘leader ideology’ at work in determining leaders’ approaches to policy. There seem to be trends, independent of individual proclivities, that influence leaders’ preferences.

In the same vein, ‘pressure from the core’ is partly a function of the ‘international distribution of power’. The power of the USA in Latin America, for example, is not independent of its relationship with other core countries, even though the USA has remained the regional hegemon throughout this century. The relationship between the global system and the influence of core countries requires more attention. Numerous authors have pointed out that the end of the Cold War is expected to bring a reduction in the influence of the USA over the Western Hemisphere. Recent literature, however, indicates that the reverse may actually be true. In combination with economic crisis in the region, the absence of a second superpower has actually increased the power of the USA over Latin America, particularly in economic policy.\textsuperscript{146} The external influence on a Latin American country’s foreign policy is a function of domestic and international variables, as well as of the interplay between them.

These observations suggest that the next step is to develop an integrated theory which not only includes the many explanatory factors, but considers their relative weights and their effect on one another. The review of scholarship on Latin American foreign policy undertaken here points to a number of elements that such a theory should include. The disjointed nature of the current literature too easily allows us to miss the interrelated nature of the elements of foreign policy.

What might such an integrated theory assert? If this study is to go beyond the ‘kitchen sink’ approach it criticises, then it should speculate on which of the variables are primary. The preceding analysis allows for the suggestion that some of the variables identified may be more important than others. Although leader.party.regime ideology appears strong, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that it is indeed conditioned by domestic and international pressures. The question then becomes, which is primary, the domestic or the international? The evidence presented here strongly favours the international. While domestic political pressures frequently played a role in influencing foreign policy, the strength and, more importantly, the direction of that influence varied widely. This was less true in the case of core pressure on Latin American policy makers. Recall that, since the 1980s, international variables had an important effect on channelling the region’s economic policy towards neoliberalism, suggesting that core pressures overwhelmed or modified the effects of leader preferences and domestic politics. When the core deems a policy area salient, it is likely that core pressure will affect Latin American foreign policy in the desired direction. This is not to say that a myriad domestic and other variables do not influence policy. Instead, it suggests that on certain crucial issues Latin America is likely to behave in a pro-core direction. Indeed, an integrated theory would expect that core pressure would achieve its policy results through manipulating other factors such as leader.party.regime preferences or the domestic political climate. It is also important to remember that these salient issue areas may constitute only a small part of a country’s total foreign policy.

This article provides a theoretical context on which future empirical analyses
of Latin American foreign policy may be based. Theoretically grounded empirical analyses are required if progress in this field is to be made. Future research should ask, for example, whether or not international variables do have more influence than domestic and personal factors. If so, under what conditions does this situation occur? What is the level and direction of the interaction among variables? This article has provided a start at developing theory in Latin American foreign policy upon which future theoretically informed empirical research can build.

Notes

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1 In this paper, the term ‘Latin America’ refers to the entirety of the Western Hemisphere south of North America. It therefore includes Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean Islands and South America.


5 Jorge I Domínguez, ‘The foreign policies of Latin American states in the 1980s: retreat or refocus?’, in Samuel Huntington, Joseph Nye & Richard Cooper (eds), Global Dilemmas, pp 161–98 Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1985; and Mares, ‘Mexico’s foreign policy as a middle power.


9 Jeanne A K Hey, Theories of Dependent Foreign Policy and the Case of Ecuador in the 1980s, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995.


11 Some comparative studies do relate empirical findings to theory. See, for example, Lincoln & Ferris, The Dynamics of Latin American Foreign Policies; Toro Hardy, Venezuela; Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, ‘The political economy of Colombian–US narcodiplomacy: a case study of Colombian foreign policy decision-making, 1978–90’, unpublished PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1990; and Hey, Theories of Dependent Foreign Policy and the Case of Ecuador in the 1980s.


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THREE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A THEORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Theories of Dependent Foreign Policy

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