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Liberal Discourse and the Hegemons Dilemma: A Realist-Constructivist Approach to the Study of U.S.-Latin American Relations

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation's approach starts from four basic premises. The first is that a Western power's interests in a liberal foreign policy course will exist alongside other interests of the state that casually conflict with its professed liberalism. The second premise is that, in order for the Western state to periodically pursue objectives that partially conflict with its professed principles, the state will present such objectives as liberal by understating the illiberal characteristics of foreign allies and overstating the undemocratic characteristics of rivals. The third premise is that, given the cultural authority of the state, its positions and narratives will have some distorting effects upon how the nation's news organizations depict the political life of countries governed by allies and rivals. The last premise is that such distorted media depictions will often make it difficult for citizens and elites to detect when and where the Western power is casually deviating from its professed liberalism in its external relations. In testing the study's hypotheses, the dissertation rigorously examines U.S. official and media discourses about Latin American allies and rivals in the post-Cold War era (1989-2009).

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Within liberal democracies, there is a common assumption that "attentive publics" have accurate perceptions of the political world. Western notions of the freedom of the press tend to foster the idea that the citizens and elites of liberal-democratic societies can look to private news organizations for objective political information. For example, the prominent international relations (IR) scholar Michael Doyle (2005: 464) posits that, within liberal-democratic societies, "the effective communication of accurate conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples" enables citizens and elites to recognize the regime types of foreign states and to judge such states accordingly.[1] Such a view holds that, unlike authoritarian or totalitarian societies, liberal-democratic societies provide attentive publics with information about the political world that is relatively unadulterated by the potentially distorting influences of an interested state (Kahl 1998).[2] This conception of liberal democracies suggests (i) that Western publics have access to the information they need to be able to rationally assess the politics of the world in accordance with their own values and (ii) that such publics can act upon the information available to them by using the institutional levers of their political systems to influence policy. A common corollary of this view is that liberal-minded publics and elites will use their knowledge of the world to promote the spread of liberal political institutions, in hopes of enabling foreign publics to also enjoy the fruits of liberal democracy.

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[1] Doyle (1983[a]: 230; 1986: 1161; 1997: 282; 2005: 464) makes the statement in four separate works.

[2] Kahl (1998: 139) suggests that, in liberal democracies, "the manifestations of liberalism in public and elite opinion should be relatively autonomous from the material and strategic interests of states as defined by neorealists."

Of course, the notion that Western publics and elites have ready access to accurate information about the political world is a proposition to be studied, not an axiom to be assumed. This study starts from the premise that the degree to which a society's ideas about the world are liberal depends largely upon how accurately the society's discourses portray the state of democracy abroad. Liberal ideas constitute not just a set of abstract beliefs about the value of individual rights, competitive elections, and constraints on executive power but also people's knowledge of the extent to which such rights and institutions are in evidence in different countries. Liberal foreign policies would involve the state's promotion of liberal institutions abroad, as well as the state's discouragement of political practices that are not conducive to the development of liberal political orders.[3] Thus, to determine whether Western publics could consistently pressure their states to adopt liberal foreign policies requires that we know something about the level of accuracy of the information that attentive publics receive about the political life of foreign peoples.

For the purposes of this study, arguments that stress the roles of liberal ideas in shaping the policy preferences of Western publics and the foreign policies of Western states will be referred to as "liberal-culturalist" arguments. Liberal-culturalist arguments have contributed to our understanding of how the liberal ideals of Western societies place some constraints upon the external behaviors of their states. To be sure, Western news organizations do provide reasonably accurate information about the political life of many foreign peoples, which can be of some use to liberal-minded publics and elites in their efforts to lobby Western leaders to adhere to their professed principles in their nations'

[3] In the words of Doyle (1983[b]: 344), a liberal foreign policy "must attempt to promote liberal principles abroad: to secure basic human needs, civil rights, and democracy."

external affairs. For example, a Western power's major news organizations are likely to present a significant amount of accurate reporting about the state of democracy in countries whose governments are neither rivals nor strategic allies of the Western power.

However, this study suggests that there are also some significant problems with liberal-culturalist conceptions of how Western societies deliberate about the political life of foreign peoples. The proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments assume that Western cultural elites are open to all information relevant to the question of how whether their state, its foreign allies and rival governments adhere to liberal-democratic norms (Doyle 1983[a]; Doyle 1983[b]; Doyle 1986; Owen 1994; Risse-Kappen 1995; Doyle 1997; Kahl 1998; Schimmelfennig 1998; Russett and Oneal 2001; Doyle 2005). Alternatively, this study suggests that, because a Western power's leading officials will tend to command considerable cultural authority on questions of foreign affairs, the nation's leading journalists will tend to be (i) more open to information that is reconcilable with official positions and narratives and (ii) less open to information that is not. The study's "realist-constructivist" approach suggests that, because the leading journalists of a Western power will often defer to the perspectives of leading officials, such journalists will tend to understate the illiberal characteristics of allied governments and to overstate the undemocratic characteristics of rival governments.

This study posits that the aforementioned discursive patterns are attributable to what I refer to as a "hegemon's dilemma." For the purposes of the study, a hegemon's dilemma is defined as a basic tension between a Great Power's perceived need to portray all its foreign policies as consistent with its professed principles and the fact that some of the state's immediate objectives are not always fully reconcilable with its professed

principles. In essence, the study's realist-constructivist approach starts from four basic premises concerning the ways that the hegemon's dilemma shapes *both* the foreign policy dispositions of a Western power and the discourses of its dominant culture. The first premise is that a Western power's interests in a liberal foreign policy course exist alongside other interests of the state that sometimes conflict with its professed liberalism.[4] The second premise is that, in order for the Western power to periodically take positions that partially conflict with its professed principles, the state will present such positions as if they are consistent with a liberal foreign policy course. The study suggests that the state will seek to conceal its periodic deviations from its professed principles by understating the illiberal characteristics of allied governments and overstating the undemocratic characteristics of rival governments. The third premise is that, given the cultural authority of the state, its positions and its narratives will have some distorting effects upon how cultural elites and major news organizations depict rivals and allies.[5] The last premise is that the media's partially distorted discourses about allied and rival governments will often make it difficult for the nation's citizens and elites to detect when and where the state is deviating from its professed principles in its external relations. Thus, implicit to the study's final premise is that the Western power's partially inaccurate discourses about the state of democracy in some countries will lessen pressure on the state to consistently adhere to its professed liberalism in its external

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[4] A Western power will be most inclined to adhere to a liberal foreign policy course when its leading officials (i) perceive that a liberal course is not at cross purposes with their other objectives and/or (ii) sense that a failure to adhere to their professed liberalism would be too obvious to conceal. Conversely, in cases in which the state perceives that casual deviations from a liberal foreign policy course will serve its immediate strategic and economic objectives, it will commonly stray from its professed liberalism (Erickson and Peppe 1976; Van Evera 1990; James and Mitchell 1995; Kim 2002; Rosato 2003; Lieven 2004; Kim 2005; Kim 2006; Downes and Lilley 2010; Kim 2010).

[5] In postulating that the cultural authority of the state has some distorting influences upon how cultural elites depict the political life of countries with allied and rival governments, the study exhibits some notable similarities to the works of Oren (1995; 2003).

relations (see Diagram 1A). In essence, the study posits that a Western power will have more leeway to casually stray from its professed principles than liberal-culturalist theorists suggest because the state often influences cultural discourse in such a way that its deviations from a liberal foreign policy course do not necessarily appear as such.

A Western power's casual deviations from a liberal foreign policy course will usually fit within three basic categories. The first such category includes the Western power's common indifference to the less liberal characteristics of strategic allies (Huntington 1999). As the late Samuel Huntington (1999: 45) observed, one reward the United States commonly grants to states that follow its leadership is "silence about deviations from U.S. norms." Such indifference tends to diminish pressure on allies to consistently adhere to liberal norms. The second main category of deviations entails the ambiguous signals that a Western power's officials sometimes convey to potential coup plotters abroad, whereby the Western state's postures cue actors that it might not actively oppose some coups against its elected rivals (Collins 2005; Vanderbush 2009; Thyne 2010). Such ambiguous signals constitute deviations from a liberal foreign policy course insofar as they increase the probability of some extra-constitutional alterations of power and thereby jeopardize the consolidation of liberal-democratic norms in certain regions of the world. The third type of deviations entails the periodic decisions of Western officials to acquiesce to —and even sometimes support— coups against elected rivals (Leogrande 2007; Vanderbush 2009; Emerson 2010; Joyce 2010; Langevin 2010).

This study suggests that a Western state's influence over its own society's discourses will commonly facilitate deviations from a liberal foreign policy course by largely obfuscating the existence of such deviations. In seeking to test the

aforementioned proposition, the study will firstly seek to determine whether official positions and narratives have caused major U.S. media to overstate the illiberal characteristics of rival governments and to understate the undemocratic characteristics of allied governments. Then, in **chapters four and five**, the study will further explore the question how U.S. discursive patterns are likely to have influenced the decisions of American officials about whether to adhere to or stray from their professed liberalism in U.S. relations with Latin American allies and rivals.

Introducing the theory

Given that a Great Power wields disproportionate clout in the international system, it will have a natural interest in the maintenance of its position of power, for power is the currency that states and their leading groups use in seeking to guarantee their own security, authority, and economic well-being (Russell 1938; Carr 1940; Goldfischer 2002). Thus, when the leading officials of a Western power perceive that casual deviations from their professed principles are vital to the maintenance of the state's power, they will often be tempted to casually stray from their professed principles. Of course, a Western power also has certain interests in adopting liberal foreign policies as a means of projecting an image of itself as a principled actor and thereby limiting resistance to its exercise of power abroad (Peceny 1999; Ikenberry 2000; Parish and Peceny 2002; Nye 2005; Slaughter 2007). Indeed, this study assumes not only that a Western power's officials have interests in preserving or augmenting the state's power but also that the state's ability to maintain or increase its power depends partly upon its capacity to project an image of itself as a consistent practitioner of its professed

principles (Nye 2005). The study thus assumes that a Western state's pursuit of power and security involves a constant balancing act between the perceived necessity of projecting a liberal image of itself and the state's impulses to stray from its professed liberalism where such deviations would serve its immediate strategic and economic objectives.

In other words, a Western power's interests in counteracting challenges to its political authority and/or in securing its economic objectives will sometimes conflict with its interests in adhering to liberal principles (James and Mitchell 1995; Lieven 2004; Downes and Lilley 2010). For example, many leading officials of a Western power will deem that the state has an interest in developing warm relations with some governments that violate liberal-democratic norms because some such governments assist the Western power in pursuing its economic objectives and/or in confronting challenges to its authority (Dalacoura 2005; Áviles 2006[a]; Downes and Lilley 2010). Likewise, some officials will at times perceive that the state has an interest in acquiescing to coups against elected rivals because such coups can sometimes remove challengers to the Western power's authority and prestige (Schmitz 1999; Schmitz 2006; Joyce 2010). Thus, the study's approach suggests that the tensions between a Western power's interests in liberal foreign policy-making and its interests in the maintenance of its power will lead to a bifurcated pattern of interest formation, whereby officials will commonly counsel (i) that the state adopt liberal foreign policies where such policies would not obstruct the pursuit of other key objectives and (ii) that the state casually stray from its professed liberalism where a strictly liberal approach might impede the state's ability to achieve its other immediate goals.

Of course, Great Powers will invariably have incentives to portray their foreign policies as perfectly congruent with their professed principles (Carr 1940; Morgenthau 1950; Barkin 2003; Oren 2003; Farrell and Finnemore 2013).[6] Great Powers will seek to project principled images of themselves because such images enable Great Powers to uphold national morale and to limit resistance to their exercise of power abroad by persuading domestic and foreign publics that their states do not exercise power arbitrarily and capriciously.[7] When a Western state's foreign policy objectives are not fully reconcilable with its professed principles, the state's efforts to portray such objectives as consistent with its professed liberalism will usually involve some degree of distortion of the political life of countries governed by allies and rivals.

This study suggests that the distorting effects of the hegemon's dilemma upon some official discourses will, in turn, have some distorting effects upon the broader culture's discourses as well. In partial deference to official positions and narratives, a Western power's leading news organizations will tend to be (i) more receptive to charges that rival governments violate liberal norms and (ii) less receptive to information that allied governments violate such norms. The study thus posits that major media will not

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[6] According to Morgenthau (1950: 62), the reasons that statesmen would tend to cloak their pursuit of power in a language of morality were as follows: "The nation which would dispense with ideologies and frankly state that it wants power and will, therefore, oppose similar aspirations of other nations, would at once find itself at a great, perhaps decisive, disadvantage in the struggle for power. That frank admission would, on the one hand, unite the other nations in fierce resistance to a foreign policy so unequivocally stated and would thereby compel the nation pursuing it to employ more power than would otherwise be necessary. On the other hand, that admission is tantamount to flouting openly the universally accepted moral standards of the international community and would thereby put the particular nation in a position where it would be likely to pursue its foreign policy half-heartedly and with a bad conscience. To rally a people behind the government's foreign policy and to marshal all the national energies and resources to its support, the spokesmen of the nation must appeal to biological necessities, such as national existence, and to moral principles, such as justice, rather than to power."

[7] Much in the same way that Ikenberry (2000) views the American state's acceptance of some multilateral constraints on its power as a condition for other nations' consent to its global leadership, this study assumes that a Western power has an interest in projecting a liberal image of itself for the purpose of garnering others' consent to its hegemonic position.

always provide attentive publics with the quality of information they would need to be able to employ consistently liberal forms of moral reasoning about foreign affairs. In other words, the realist-constructivist approach suggests that a Western power's cultural elites and attentive publics will be less reliable than liberal-culturalist theorists suggest in their ability to accurately identify the state of democracy abroad and to consistently pressure their leaders to adopt liberal foreign policies.

Clarifying what distinguishes the study's realist-constructivist approach from other theories

In clarifying the study's explanation of why a Western power is likely to stray from its professed liberalism more often than liberal-culturalist theorists suggest, it is important that we specify not only how the study's approach differs from other theories but also where it finds common ground with other approaches. The primary distinction between the study's approach and other theories is that a realist-constructivist one posits that the interests and professed principles of a Great Power will often *compete* in shaping how it approaches and deliberates about rivals and allies (Carr 1940). The study's primary critique of liberal-culturalist approaches is that they operate according to the flawed assumption that power factors do *not* compete with liberal and objective norms in shaping Western conceptions of the political life of countries with allied and rival governments.

Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that a realist-constructivist approach is not a pure antithesis to a liberal-culturalist one. This study acknowledges that, under conditions in which liberal foreign policies do not obstruct a Western power's pursuit of its other objectives, officials are likely to find value in a liberal foreign policy course, for such a course can help the Western power to project a liberal image of itself and to

thereby lessen resistance to its exercise of power abroad. In addition, the study suggests that Western officials will often be reluctant to deviate from their professed liberalism in particularly blatant ways out of concern that the costs of obvious deviations would outweigh the gains.

Moreover, even with respect to a Western power's relations with rivals and allies, the realist-constructivist and liberal-culturalist camps exhibit *some* points of agreement. The most influential proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments have acknowledged that Western officials are sometimes tempted to deviate from a liberal foreign policy course in their pursuit of strategic objectives (Doyle 1983[a]; Owen 1994; Russett and Oneal 2001). The debate between liberal culturalists and realist constructivists is not about whether Western leaders are sometimes tempted to stray from their professed principles but rather about how their political cultures mediate between the impulses of leading officials and the foreign polices of their states. Where the study's realist-constructivist approach differs from a liberal-culturalist one is in its postulation that the interests of Western officials in casually straying from their professed liberalism will commonly influence cultural discourse in such a way as to facilitate deviations from a liberal foreign policy course.

For purposes of simplicity, this study will commonly refer to the relationship between a Western power and another country as a "dyad," which is a concept that is commonly used to capture the most pertinent characteristics of the political and economic relations between two countries during a specified period (Rummel 1967). The study posits that, in dyads in which the perceived interests of Western officials create incentives for them to stray from their professed liberalism, such officials will commonly develop

positions and/or narratives that are intended to influence their own culture's discourses in such a way as to facilitate casual deviations from a liberal foreign policy course. Thus, with respect to the dyads in which a Western power's leading officials are tempted to stray from their professed liberalism, the debate between the realist-constructivist and liberal-culturalist camps centers around how the Western culture will respond to the positions/narratives that officials formulate in their preparations to deviate from a liberal foreign policy course. In contrast to liberal-culturalist approaches, the study firstly posits that the positions/narratives that the state adopts toward allied and rival governments have some distorting influences upon the dominant culture's discourses about the political life of certain countries. In turn, partially distorted cultural discourses about allies and rivals are likely to help accommodate the state's casual deviations from its professed liberalism in its relations with the countries in question. The key qualifier is that such cultural accommodation of the state's deviations usually requires that the deviations be somewhat subtle, for journalists' *partial* commitment to objective and liberal standards will place some limits on how blatantly the state can renege on its professed principles without eliciting negative publicity. Nevertheless, the study's central proposition is that the state's periodic interests in casually deviating from its professed liberalism will set in motion a process whereby official positions and narratives will prompt cultural elites to deliberate about rivals and allies in ways that facilitate the aforementioned deviations.

The study thus suggests not only that official cues cause media to overstate the undemocratic characteristics of rivals and to downplay the illiberal characteristics of allies but also that, in turn, such media bias diminishes the capacity of attentive publics to

develop an accurate sense of what a liberal approach to such governments would entail (see Diagram 1A). When mass media depict partially illiberal allies as committed democrats, attentive publics and elites will have less capacity to recognize that a genuinely liberal approach to such allies would require that the Western power be more scrutinizing of the allies' political practices. Likewise, when U.S. media exaggerate the degree to which elected rivals have violated liberal norms, attentive publics and elites will have less capacity to detect that U.S. acquiescence to a coup against such a rival government would typically be in breach of the state's professed liberalism.

Although this study primarily focuses upon the debate between realist constructivists and liberal culturalists, it is important to clarify that a realist-constructivist approach not only challenges liberal-culturalist arguments but also calls into question the adequacy of most contemporary "realist" theories. Just as it is problematic for liberal culturalists to assume that power factors do not compete with liberal and objective norms in shaping a Western society's worldviews, it is also problematic for neorealists to assume that liberal norms do not compete with narrow strategic considerations in influencing the foreign policy dispositions of a Western power. Most variants of modern realism suggest that a Western power will commonly stray from a liberal foreign policy course merely because its officials calculate that such deviations are necessary to counteract immediate challenges to its authority (Waltz 2000; Rosato 2003). Although such a formulation captures an important component of what motivates the external behaviors of a Western power, it fails to explain how Western states grapple with pressures from domestic constituencies and the international community to adhere to their professed liberalism in their external relations. By treating narrow strategic

objectives as the sole determinant of a Western power's approaches to its rivals and allies, neorealists ignore that a Western power also has interests in projecting a liberal image of itself (Nye 2005). Neorealist theory thus fails to account for how a Western power's interests in portraying itself as a principled actor will elevate the importance of official and cultural discourses. In dyads in which a Western power is inclined to stray from its professed liberalism in the pursuit of strategic and/or commercial objectives, the discursive realm plays an important role in determining what the costs of such deviations would be. If public discourse were to consistently convey accurate information about the political world and thereby shed light on a Western power's deviations from its professed liberalism, such deviations would carry significant "reputational costs" (measured in terms of the damage that such deviations would cause to the state's image as a principled actor in international affairs). Conversely, if a Western state could influence cultural discourse in such a way as to largely obfuscate its deviations from a liberal foreign policy course, it could significantly reduce the reputational costs of such deviations. Thus, when neorealists ignore the discursive realm and the interests of a Western power in projecting a liberal image of itself, they overlook how both play important roles in shaping the cost-benefit ratio of any given course of action vis-à-vis an ally or rival.

The centrality of casual (as opposed to blatant) deviations from liberal principles

A related problem with the neorealists' inattention to a Western power's interests in portraying itself as principled actor is that such inattention causes neorealists to overlook how the state's concerns about its image place certain bounds on how far it is willing to stray from its professed liberalism. A genuinely realistic theory of a Western power's external relations must explain not only how strategic and commercial interests

periodically cause the state to stray from its professed liberalism but also where the bounds of such deviations lie and what accounts for those bounds. The capacity of a Western power to conceal deviations from its professed liberalism is not limitless. In a world in which liberal-democratic norms and institutions are more pervasive than in the past, it is unlikely that a Western power could support wholesale reversals of democratic processes abroad without eliciting some negative publicity. Such blatant deviations from the state's professed liberalism would be difficult to conceal because many cultural elites would likely feel compelled to deliberate critically about obvious deviations so as to maintain some semblance of objectivity and ethical restraint. In turn, particularly obvious deviations could jeopardize the capacity of the state to uphold national morale and to limit resistance to its exercise of power abroad. Hence, this study suggests that the neorealists' inattention to a Western state's concerns about its image also disables them from properly theorizing the bounds within which a Western power is likely to operate. The study's realist-constructivist approach suggests that, in its relations with rivals and allies, a Western power will commonly perceive that it has interests in deviating from its professed liberalism *up to a certain point*. A Western power will usually be disinclined to stray beyond the point at which its deviations become too obvious to conceal, as its officials will typically perceive that the costs of particularly blatant deviations would outweigh the gains.

Thus, the study suggests that the primary ways that a Western power will stray from its professed liberalism will be somewhat casual (rather than blatant). Unlike blatant deviations from a liberal foreign policy course, casual deviations are somewhat difficult to detect. This study suggests that there are four central reasons why a Western

power can often conceal what is illiberal about its deviations from a liberal foreign policy course (and thereby render such deviations more casual in nature).

Firstly, it is often difficult to detect what is illiberal about a Western power's uncritical support of certain allies because the illiberal behaviors of allies are usually somewhat discreet insofar as their actions do not involve the outright elimination of the most rudimentary trappings of political competition (O'Donnell 1994; Áviles 2001; Áviles 2006[b]). Rather, the illiberal behaviors of allies will often involve less attention-grabbing breaches of democratic norms, such as a president's intimidation and/or repression of critics and/or certain violations of the separation of powers (O'Donnell 1994; Ferreira Rubio and Goretti 1998; Larkins 1998; Leogrande 2007; Richani 2007; Rojas 2009). As long as leading officials can point to the fact that an ally has not gone so far as to eliminate basic democratic institutions, media will typically defer to the state's narrative that the ally is committed to liberal norms (and thereby assist in obfuscating the partially illiberal nature of the Western power's uncritical support of some allies).[8]

Secondly, many Western cultural elites and publics will often have difficulty detecting what is illiberal about a Western power's approaches to its rivals because many elites and publics are largely predisposed to conceptualize the nation's rivalries in terms of an autocratic side (that of the rival government) and a democratic side (the Western power and the Western-backed domestic opposition to the rival government). The Western state's success in cuing major news organizations to exaggerate the illiberalism

[8] Moreover, even in the limited number of dyads in which a Western power does ally itself with definitively autocratic governments, such alliances might not always appear detrimental to the cause of political liberalism because the countries of autocratic allies often have little tradition of democracy. Journalists may be reluctant to suggest that some alliances with autocratic governments represent setbacks to democracy because there may not appear to be any democratic tradition to reverse in the countries in question.

of a rival will tend to spur the dominant culture to conceptualize the political life of the rival's country in ways that preclude serious consideration of whether Western officials might be violating liberal norms in their relations with the rival.

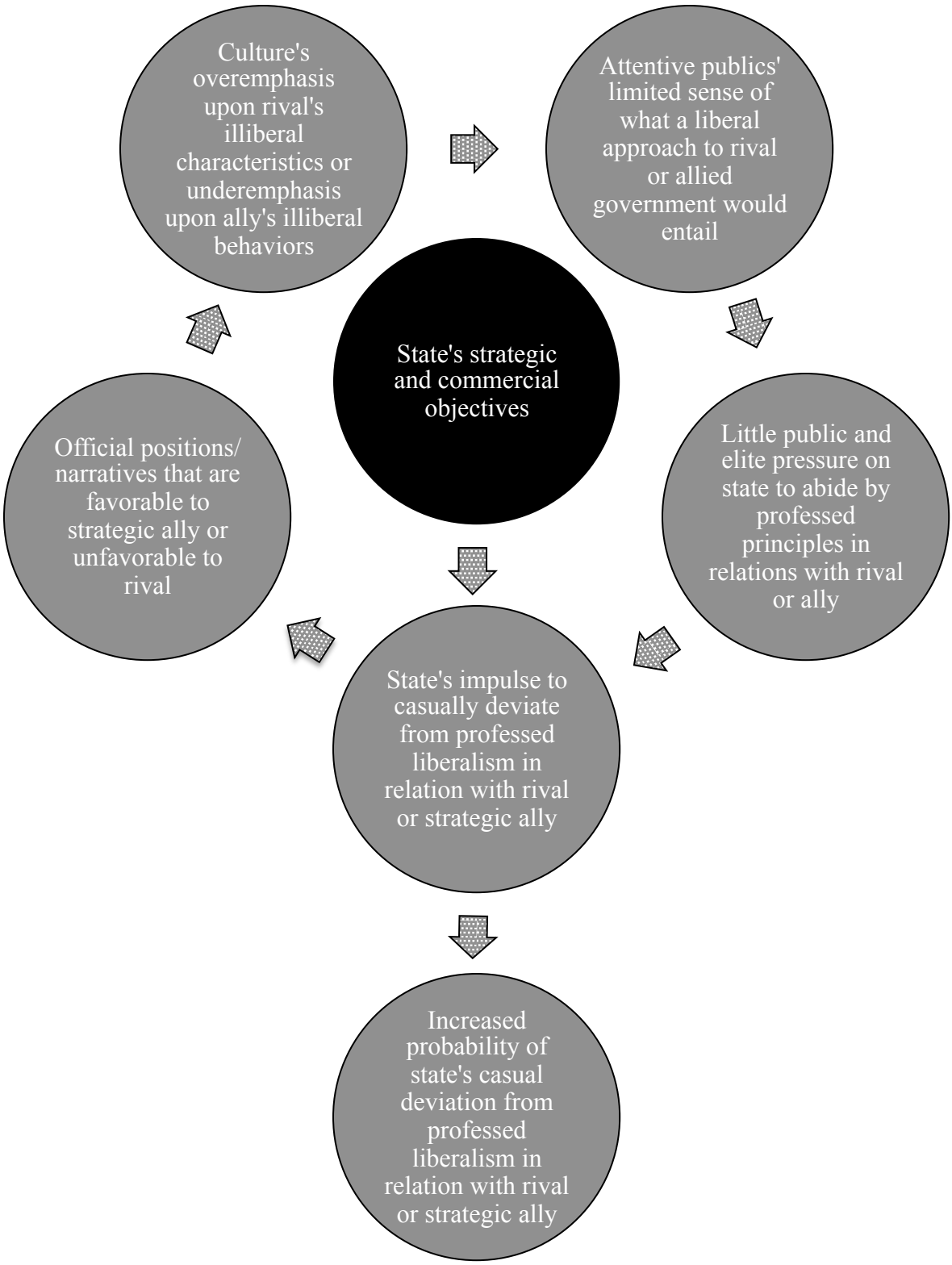
Two additional reasons why a Western power's periodic acquiescence to coups against elected rivals will not necessarily appear illiberal is that such acquiescence (i) does not *necessarily* constitute active complicity in coups and (ii) will typically be accompanied by the Western state's calls for an eventual return to some form of constitutional normalcy in the countries in question (Schmitz 1999; Parish, Peceny, and Delacour 2007; Joyce 2010). Western calls for an eventual return of constitutional governance will tend to lessen the perception that Western officials might have violated liberal norms in acquiescing to a coup in the first place. In all of the aforementioned sorts of dyads, the state's capacity to cue major news organizations to downplay the less democratic characteristics of allies and to exaggerate the illiberal characteristics of rivals will help obfuscate the Western power's deviations from its professed principles (and thereby render such deviations more casual in nature).

The central contribution of the study's realist-constructivist approach

In sum, the primary contribution of the study is to help explain the cycle — depicted in Diagram 1A— by which a Western power's casual deviations from its professed liberalism become a recurrent pattern in its relations with rivals and allies. To reiterate, a Western power's strategic and commercial objectives often temp it to casually stray from its professed liberalism in it relations with rivals and allies. In turn, the state's impulses to deviate from its professed liberalism in such dyads will set in motion a pattern whereby the state adopts positions and narratives that effectively cue major news

organizations to exaggerate the illiberal characteristics of rivals and to downplay the illiberal behaviors of allies. In turn, the state's success in cuing major news organizations to partially distort the political life of some foreign peoples will tend to reinforce the state's impulses to casually stray from its professed liberalism in its relations with rivals and allies. Once the state has managed to influence cultural discourse in such a way that a deviation will not necessarily appear as such, the reputational costs of such a deviation are significantly reduced. Thus, assuming that the perceived benefits of straying from a liberal foreign policy course are constant, the pattern whereby the state influences cultural discourse in such a way as to reduce the reputational costs of a prospective deviation will alter the cost-benefit ratio in favor of deviation. Hence, the realist-constructivist model predicts that a Western power's casual deviations from its professed liberalism will be considerably more common than liberal-culturalist approaches anticipate.

Diagram 1A. Realist-constructivist theory of how a Western state's interests (i) influence cultural discourse about rivals and strategic allies and (ii) reinforce the state's impulses to casually stray from its professed liberalism in relations with rivals and allies



In sum, the debate between the realist-constructivist and liberal-culturalist camps has important implications with respect to how often a Western power is likely act in accordance with its professed liberalism or casually stray from a liberal foreign policy course. The primary objective of this study is to determine which of the two camps' propositions tells us more about the role of culture in mediating between the impulses of leading officials and the foreign policies of the state. Is it true that, when the United States has casually strayed from a liberal approach toward its Latin American rivals and allies, its dominant culture has mostly accommodated such deviations by obfuscating their partially illiberal nature? Or is it the case that, when such deviations were in the process of occurring, mass media lived up to Doyle's (2005: 464) expectation that they would hold American leaders to "the principles they profess to be just" by deliberating accurately about the political life of the foreign countries in question? In seeking to answer the aforementioned questions, the study also seeks to provide us a more a realistic theoretical guide to how consistently (or inconsistently) a Western power's dominant culture will serve as a guardian of the nation's professed principles in its external relations.

U.S.-Latin American relations as a test case of the study's approach

The questions of which factors shape the foreign policy dispositions of Western powers and their discourses about the political world are very broad questions. It would be impossible to comprehensively address such questions in one study alone. Thus, this study addresses only the question of how the American state's interests and its professed principles influenced (i) its foreign policy dispositions toward Latin America and (ii) U.S.

media discourses about the region. Nevertheless, the purpose of the study is to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework that could also be tested against various theories of how other Western powers approach and deliberate about rivals and allies. Although the worldviews of other Western societies and the interests of other Western powers are not identical to those of the United States, there is evidence to suggest that American society is not the only liberal-democratic one whose conceptions of the political life of some foreign peoples have been partially distorted by the influences of its state's interests and narratives (Alexseev and Bennett 1995; Nossek 2004; Salter and Weltman 2011). Thus, this study's exploration into which factors shaped U.S. media discourses about Latin America and the American state's policy dispositions toward the region could conceivably serve as a model for similar kinds of hypothesis-testing about what accounts for other Western powers' foreign policy dispositions and their discourses about the political life of foreign peoples.

Towards a realist-constructivist approach to the study of U.S.-Latin American relations

In the post-Cold War era, the patterns we find in U.S.-Latin American relations and in U.S. cultural discourse about Latin America seem to bear out the validity of a realist-constructivist approach. On the one hand, the American state's interests in projecting an image of itself as a champion of "universal" principles has led it to a certain baseline commitment to the proposition that competitive elections and the existence of an executive, legislative, and judicial branch of government constitute the primary foundations of political legitimacy in the Western hemisphere (Sigmund 1993; Peceny 1999). On the other hand, U.S. support for the minimal trappings of democracy has not prevented the American state from casually straying from its professed liberalism where

it has deemed that it was in its interests to do so (Clement 2005; Leogrande 2007; Vanderbush 2009; Joyce 2010; Langevin 2010). Beyond its baseline commitment to promoting competitive elections and the minimal trappings of democracy, the American state's promotion of democratic norms and institutions has been erratic. Indeed, **chapter four** illustrates that, in their evaluations of the political life of Latin Americans, leading U.S. officials have not employed a consistent set of criteria as to what kinds of political behaviors constitute breaches of democratic norms. Rather, U.S. criticisms of some governments' breaches of liberal norms have been largely selective (Burron 2011). U.S. officials (and intellectuals with ties to the state) have been most inclined to call into question the democratic character of left-leaning and economically unorthodox governments that challenged the American state's political authority and its economic vision for the region (Clement 2005; Burron 2011). Conversely, **chapter four** will illustrate that, in several cases in which allied governments were in clear breach of some liberal norms, leading U.S. officials celebrated such governments as democratic allies for as long as such allies served the state's immediate objectives.

Of course, the most obvious indication that U.S. officials have not employed liberal standards consistently is that the state has not responded to all extra-constitutional alterations of power in the same way. Rather, the ways that the hegemon has responded to coups against elected leaders or elected legislatures have been largely contingent on what the hegemon has perceived to be in its interests. In the event of coups against leaders or legislatures that did *not* challenge the American state, the hegemon has worked vigorously to turn back such coups and has used its opportunities to do so to project an image of itself as a liberal hegemon (Halperin 1993; Parish and Peceny 2002; Parish et al

2007; McCoy 2012). Conversely, when there have been coups against elected leftists who have challenged U.S. authority, the hegemon has usually not acted with vigor to overturn such coups (Clement 2005; Collins 2005; Vanderbush 2009; Langevin 2010; Burron 2011). In other words, the professed principle that elected governments should be defended against coups has not consistently guided U.S. responses to them during the post-Cold War era. This study suggests that one important reason why the state has been able to periodically stray from its professed principles in its relations with Latin America is that leading U.S. officials have been able to influence cultural discourse in such a way as to largely obfuscate the less liberal elements of the state's approaches to the region.

How a process of liberal order-building would look

The fact that the American state has not employed a single set of standards in how it evaluates the political behaviors of different Latin American actors implies a system of signals and incentives that are not wholly consistent with the concept of liberal order-building (or with a liberal teleology more generally). If we start from the premise that, within any given regional order, a hegemon —or a group of powerful states— plays a central role in shaping the political norms and institutions of the region, then the criteria by which a hegemon evaluates the political behaviors of regional actors is an important factor in how the regional order is likely to evolve. The concept of liberal order-building presupposes that the leaders of a regional order develop a system of signals and incentives that encourages liberal-democratic political practices (Schimmelfennig 1998). One key to developing such a system would be that the leaders of the regional order serve as credible arbiters of what constitutes legitimate political practice. Regional convergence around some set of political norms would be more likely to occur if a

hegemon were to assist in providing clarity as to what the prescribed norms are and what the benefits of adopting them would be. If a hegemon were consistent in employing one broadly shared set of criteria in its evaluations of the state of democracy in the region, the region's leaders would have a clearer understanding of which kinds of behaviors are likely to draw scrutiny and which kinds are more likely to draw praise.

Of course, implicit in the importance of a regional hegemon is its disproportionate power and the unique influence that it derives from its capacity to exert power (Parish and Peceny 2002). Because there is an uneven distribution of power within any regional order, the question of whether the region can uphold certain political principles may sometimes hinge upon whether the hegemon is steadfastly committed to such principles. For example, a hegemon's firm commitment to defending elected governments against coups would likely be necessary to consolidate a liberal regional order, for a hegemon's capacity to employ significant economic leverage may sometimes be the only force powerful enough to turn back coups or to dissuade actors from attacking the constitutional orders of states.

The problem of a Western hegemon's competing interests

Given the importance of a Western hegemon in shaping a regional order, the competing interests of such a hegemon can create a number of obstacles to the consolidation of a liberal regional order. In its role as a regional hegemon, a Western power will have some economic and strategic objectives quite apart from its interest in appearing as a credible arbiter of legitimate political practice. The short-term strategic and economic objectives of a Western hegemon may often bias its evaluations of whether the political behaviors of different regional actors fall inside or outside the bounds of

regional political norms. A hegemon whose interests bias its public assessments of different governments' political practices will fail to provide clarity as to what the prescribed norms of the regional order are because such a hegemon's standards often shift from one country to another. In its relations with one country, the hegemon may praise an allied leader as a model democrat in spite of the leader's obvious breaches of liberal norms (Burron 2011). Conversely, an elected rival's periodic breaches of liberal norms may often elicit indignant statements from the hegemon's officials about a purported threat to democracy (Clement 2005; Boykoff 2009; Burron 2011). All else being equal, the lack of a consistent set of criteria on the part of the hegemon is likely to reduce the incentives for regional actors to adhere more closely to liberal-democratic norms. As long as the hegemon's regional allies perceive that their political practices will not come under the hegemon's scrutiny because the hegemon is biased in their favor, such allies will have less incentive to adhere more closely to liberal norms. Moreover, when rivals perceive that the hegemon has ulterior motives that cause it to place their political practices under a distorting microscope, rivals may also see little reason to adhere more closely to liberal norms, as they are not likely to foresee that their compliance with such norms would relieve them of the hegemon's bias against them.

Thus, when a Western hegemon's perceived interests begin to skew its assessments of what constitutes legitimate political practice, the hegemon will tend to lose some credibility as a fair and effective arbiter of political legitimacy in the region (Vanderbush 2009; Burron 2011). In turn, the reduced credibility of the hegemon is likely to make it more difficult to consolidate a liberal regional order. One reason (among others) that the "Collective Defense of Democracy Regime" of the Organization

of American States (OAS) has yet to be consolidated is that the lack of U.S. leadership in confronting some coups has raised the possibility that some prospective coup plotters may now anticipate that the regional hegemon would not actively oppose some coups (Clement 2005; Collins 2005; Vanderbush 2009; Joyce 2010; Langevin 2010). The failure of the American state to consistently uphold the principle that elected governments should be defended against coups is probably a barrier to developing regional consensus around other liberal norms as well. Many OAS member states will be reluctant to establish mechanisms designed to pressure fellow member states to institutionalize the separation of powers as long as they perceive that the regional hegemon could use such rules to rationalize its own inaction in the face of coups against elected leftists whom it accuses of concentrating power.

Of course, none of this is to suggest that liberal IR theory provides no guidance to a student of U.S.-Latin American relations, for it is true that the American state has retained its minimal commitment to the proposition that elections and the existence of the three branches of government are the primary source of legitimacy in the Western hemisphere. To reiterate, the study's realist-constructivist approach does not negate that a Western power's interest in projecting an image of itself as a liberal hegemon places some limits on how far it is willing to stray from its professed principles. Indeed, even in the recent cases in which the American state has jeopardized the consolidation of a liberal regional order by acquiescing to coups against elected leftists, the state has advocated new elections as a way to restore some semblance of political legitimacy and constitutionality where the coups occurred (Parish et al 2007; Joyce 2010).[9] Moreover, in

[9] As the British scholar Anatol Lieven (2004: 51-52) writes, "the American Creed… enforces at least a surface respect for democracy and self-determination" abroad.

the one case in which a prospective Latin American ally —Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori— temporarily shuttered his country's legislative and judicial branches, the American state pressured Fujimori's government to restore the most rudimentary trappings of constitutionality and the separation of powers (Halperin 1993; Parish and Peceny 2002). U.S. officials appear to have recognized that to acquiesce to Fujimori's "self-coup" on account of their common interests with his government would have been too glaring a departure from their professed principles.

Nevertheless, **chapter four**'s examination of U.S.-Latin American relations in the post-Cold War era will illustrate that the tensions between the interests and ideals of the regional hegemon have compromised its capacity to serve as a consistent promoter of liberal norms and institutions. In recognizing that the regional hegemon often has impulses to stray from its professed liberalism in its relations with rivals and allies, we must also recognize that liberal IR theorists cannot coherently subsume all the interests of a Western power into a liberal teleology. To the extent that some of the American state's perceived interests have periodically motivated it to jeopardize the consolidation of a liberal regional order, such interests do not fit within the liberal camp's near-exclusive focus upon a Western power's efforts to build liberal orders. The study thus suggests that, to adequately understand the foreign policy orientations of Western powers, we need a theory of how the interests and ideals of a Western power will interact and often compete in shaping *both* the foreign policy dispositions of the state and the discourses of the dominant culture.

Preview of how the United States approaches and deliberates about Latin America

For the realist-constructivist theorist, the tendency whereby some of a Western power's interests periodically cause it to stray from its professed principles cannot be properly understood in lieu of an examination of how the Western power's dominant culture will often accommodate the state's transgressions. The study's theory suggests that, in order for a Western state to be able to effectively deviate from its professed liberalism in its relations with rivals and allies, the state must influence cultural discourse about the political life of some countries in such a way that its deviations do not necessarily appear as deviations. To test such a proposition about how a Western power has influenced cultural discourse about rival and allied governments, this study rigorously analyzes how (i) leading news organizations portrayed the state of democracy in ten Latin American countries in the post-Cold War era and (ii) and how U.S. officials deliberated about and approached allies and rivals. The study thus examines whether the discourses of five major news organizations —*The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *ABC*, *CBS* and *NBC*— were not only influenced by liberal norms but also partially distorted by the interests of U.S. officials in supporting allies and counteracting rivals. In **chapters three and four**, I perform statistical analyses of coded news content to determine (i) whether the political systems of allied governments would come under less media scrutiny than standard measures of the countries' state of democracy could explain and (ii) whether the state of democracy in countries governed by rival leaders would come under greater criticism than conventional "polity scores" would predict.[10] The aforementioned

[10] Chapters three and four will seek to determine whether countries' annual polity scores on Polity IV's democracy-autocracy scale could explain media discourses about the state of democracy in different countries. Polity scores are a conventional procedural measure of democracy that places special importance on the degree of separation of powers and the level of institutionalization of electoral rules. To be sure,

statistical analyses are based upon content analyses of 2747 press reports and 1374 broadcast reports across a 21-year-period from 1989 to 2009. Upon finding that media downplayed the undemocratic characteristics of allied governments and disproportionately emphasized the illiberal characteristics of rival governments, **chapter four** compares media and official discourses about five countries across time in an effort to determine whether U.S. officials' interests were the key drivers behind the media's partially biased depictions. Lastly, I present evidence in **chapter four** and the concluding chapter that media distortions of the state of democracy in countries with allied and rival governments helped enable U.S. officials to eschew certain liberal principles in their approaches to a number of the countries in question.

Why discourse matters

If, as a realist-constructivist approach suggests, there are *systematic* patterns by which official and media discourses overstate the undemocratic characteristics of rival governments and understate the less democratic characteristics of allied governments, what types of behavioral incentives might we logically infer from such patterns? Recognizing that official and media discourses reverberate throughout their political cultures and that many foreign elites are also attentive to the discourses of Western

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some studies suggest that Polity IV's system of measurement has itself been tainted by the strategic interests of the American state (Oren 2003; Easterly, Satyanath, and Berger 2008). Oren (2003: 175-176) argues that "the understanding of 'democracy' that dominates disciplinary discourse today, finding rigorous expression in scientific data sets of 'regime types,' is the product of a subtle, complex and untidy historical process in which those dimensions of the concept on which America resembled its enemies were excluded and those on which America most differed from its enemies became privileged." According to Oren (2003: 176), "the procedural understanding of democracy prevailed less because of its theoretical superiority than because of the Cold War, which greatly tarnished the appeal of competing concepts." However, the purpose of this study is not to wade into a debate about the merits or demerits of Polity IV. Rather, the intent of the study is to initiate a discussion about whether the political culture of the United States provides attentive publics with the information they would need to be able to consistently think and act in accordance with *conventional* liberal-democratic criteria.

powers, this study suggests that some Western discursive patterns are likely to generate some problematic incentives for political actors. Below I specify what kinds of problems biased cultural discourses are likely to pose for the foreign relations of Western powers. Then, in the concluding chapter, I will review the aforementioned problems in light of the evidence presented and discuss some ways that the preeminent Western power could ameliorate some of those problems.

Previewing the problems with biased discourses about allied actors

To reiterate, when a Western power has a perceived interest in forming an alliance with a government that does not consistently adhere to liberal-democratic norms, one way the state will likely portray the relationship as consistent with its professed principles is to exaggerate the degree to which the ally is committed to liberal-democratic norms. But another reason why the state will be tempted to uncritically support such an ally is that officials are likely to be confident that their narratives will cue journalists to downplay the ally's less democratic characteristics (and thereby relieve officials of criticism for their support of the ally). In turn, the pattern whereby the state exaggerates the ally's democratic credentials and the media then downplay the ally's breaches of democratic norms can create another set of potentially problematic incentives for the ally itself. The ally may have less incentive to comply with democratic norms if it finds that its breaches of such norms elicit little if any scrutiny from the Western power. Moreover, the Western power's lack of scrutiny of the ally's behaviors could send a signal to other foreign political elites that an alliance with the Western power is a useful way to avoid scrutiny of one's political practices. In the concluding chapter, I make a case that it would be in the long-term interests of a Western power to avoid exaggerating the

democratic credentials of its allies so as to avoid conveying signals that could compromise efforts to strengthen democratic institutions abroad.

Previewing the problems with U.S. discourses about rival actors

As previously noted, when a Western power perceives that it has an interest in discrediting and isolating an elected rival, one way the state may try to rationalize its efforts to do so is to overemphasize the rival's undemocratic characteristics (Clement 2005; Boykoff 2009). But another reason why the state will be tempted to exaggerate a rival's illiberalism is that the state recognizes a pattern whereby leading journalists often defer to its narratives. As long as the state has some confidence that it can cue journalists to assist it in its efforts to isolate and discredit the rival, the state will likely find it tempting to exaggerate the rival's undemocratic characteristics. However, the patterns whereby the state exaggerates a rival's purported illiberalism and major media do the same can contribute to a process that poses some problems in the foreign relations of the Western power.

The primary problem with official and media exaggerations of a rival's breaches of democratic norms is that such exaggerations can exacerbate the level of political instability in the rival government's country (Clement 2005; Collins 2005; Vanderbush 2009). There is an important distinction between measured criticism of an elected rival's breaches of liberal norms and criticism that takes on such a degree of animus as to give the appearance that the Western power considers the elected rival to lack political legitimacy altogether. Measured criticism would involve recognition of not only the extent to which the rival government has violated liberal norms but also the degree to

which it has played by democratic rules.[11] In contrast, a sustained pattern of exaggerated depictions of an elected rival's breaches of liberal norms can contribute to a climate in which some actors may surmise that they can draw upon the exaggerated images to rationalize extreme measures against the rival government.

While most social scientists would agree that almost all modern coups against democratically elected governments have been in violation of democratic norms, the fourth and fifth chapters will present evidence that a sustained pattern of exaggerating an elected government's undemocratic characteristics can increase the probability of an extra-constitutional alteration of power under certain conditions. Official and media exaggerations of a rival government's breaches of democratic norms can firstly send a signal to some of the domestic opponents of the rival government that they could garner significant Western sympathy for an extra-constitutional alteration of power (Collins 2005; Vanderbush 2009). Moreover, the pattern whereby the Western power cues mass media to overemphasize a rival's breaches of liberal norms can create some perverse incentives for the Western power itself. Despite the interests of U.S. officials in projecting a liberal image of the American state, there are clear indications that some segments of the state will tend to view a coup against an elected rival not in terms of the problems that the coup poses for the consolidation of liberal norms but rather in terms of what is to be gained from having one less rival to contend with.[12] Hence, when a Western power's news organizations largely defer to the state's narratives, this could

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[11] Measured criticism would also require recognition of the electoral mandate to which the rival can lay legitimate claim.

[12] One statement by Stephen Johnson reflects the prevalence of this perspective in U.S. foreign policy circles. At a moment when it appeared that the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chávez had been successfully overthrown on April 12, 2002, the former State Department employee and think tank analyst told the *Washington Post*: "Obviously, nobody's shedding tears up here." See "Chávez Provoked His Removal, U.S. Officials Say," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2002: A17.

conceivably embolden the state to send casual signals to prospective coup plotters that the Western power would acquiesce to some coups. The state will perceive less risk in accommodating extra-constitutional alterations of power if it senses that it can manage cultural discourse in such a way as to minimize the perception that such coups are undemocratic. In short, a pattern whereby official and media discourses systematically exaggerate the illiberal characteristics of elected rivals could help facilitate processes by which some actors continue to conceive of undemocratic coups as a viable way to counteract their political opponents.

In sum, while it is often tempting for a Western power to unleash a pattern of exaggeration of its rivals' breaches of liberal norms, this study suggests that such a discursive pattern can set in motion processes that ultimately jeopardize not only the consolidation of democracy abroad but also the credibility of the Western power.[13] When the problem is not merely that a Western power's interests lead to its partially biased cultural discourses about its rivals' behaviors but also that such bias can potentially exacerbate political instability in certain regions of the world, many foreign publics will

[13] The irony of U.S. positions toward its elected rivals is often lost on North American commentators. On the one hand, the United States often criticizes Latin American rivals for not being model democrats. On the other hand, American officials and commentators have sometimes incoherently argued that their elected rivals' periodic breaches of liberal norms justify U.S. acquiescence to —or even sympathy for— coups against the rivals in question. A notable example of such problematic logic was exhibited in a *New York Times* editorial at the time of a coup against Venezuela's Chávez government that subsequently failed. During the coup, the *Times* opined that Venezuelan democracy was "no longer threatened by a would-be dictator" as a result of a coup in which an unelected business leader was anointed president by the military high command. The *Washington Post* columnist Edward Schumacher-Matos expressed similar apologetics for the Honduran coup of 2009. When U.S. officials and cultural elites use charges of illiberal acts to rationalize U.S. equivocation in the face of egregiously undemocratic coups, many Latin Americans will come to look at the United States as an untrustworthy arbiter of legitimate political practice in the region (Vanderbush 2009; Burron 2011). Moreover, such contradictory U.S. position-taking is more likely to have an illiberal than liberal impact upon the political development of countries governed by rival leaders. When a rival government views denunciations of its political practices as a possible precursor to an extra-constitutional attack upon itself, the likely effect is not that the rival government becomes more respectful of liberal norms but rather that it develops a siege mentality, whereby it feels increasingly justified in restricting certain freedoms as a means of protecting itself against a possible coup. See "Hugo Chavez Departs," *New York Times*, 13 April 2002: A16; and "A Coup for Democracy?," *Washington Post*, 3 July 2009: A27; and "Inflaming Honduras," *Washington Post*, 26 July 2009: A15.

come to look with suspicion upon the Western power's criticisms of its rivals. Thus, in the concluding chapter, I make a case that, in the long term, it would be in the interests of both a Western power and the international community that Western officials take a more measured view of their rivals' behaviors and not succumb to the temptation of systematically exaggerating their illiberal characteristics.

A proposed road to sounder policy prescription?

The evidence that American cultural discourses often obfuscate the ways that the American state strays from its professed principles suggests that the problems that such deviations pose are difficult to resolve. As long as the dominant culture of the United States depicts the political life of foreign peoples in such a way that the American state's approaches to the outside world almost always *appear* consistent with its professed principles, there may be little impetus for U.S. publics and elites to consider how the state's behaviors sometimes hinder the consolidation of democracy abroad. Thus, I argue in the concluding chapter that, because the institutionalization of democratic norms is important to most political scientists, IR theorists should consider adopting more critical distance from the preeminent Western power and its major media in their efforts to determine how a Western power could play a more constructive role in helping to develop and consolidate democracy abroad. Without critically examining the Western power's most prominent discourses about the political life of foreign peoples, we are not likely to recognize how certain impulses shape discourse in ways that not only have some distorting effects upon popular perceptions but also generate some incentives that are not conducive to the consistent promotion of democratic norms.

In contrast to other contemporary IR approaches, a realist-constructivist approach clarifies not only why we cannot assume that a Western power behaves in strict accordance with its professed liberalism but also why we cannot presuppose that the nation's "free press" will consistently provide citizens with all the information they would need to determine how closely the state adheres to its professed principles in its external relations. More than just a diagnosis of certain problems, however, a realist-constructivist approach can also point us to how a Western power could act in ways that would ameliorate the biases of its discourses and thereby lessen the incentives for actors to deviate from liberal norms. In the study's concluding chapter, I will describe how the American state could conceivably engage rivals and allies in ways that would not only mitigate the biases of American discourse but also increase the prospects of developing and consolidating democratic institutions abroad.

CHAPTER TWO

Towards a Realist-Constructivist Theory and Methodology

The question of how liberal-democratic societies gather and process information about foreign countries and construct ideas about them has significant theoretical implications, for it can lead us to some important insights into how Western powers are likely to approach foreign affairs. Henry Kissinger once observed that "any foreign policy of the United States that is not based on public support, and above all on congressional support, does not have a firm foundation" (Schoultz 1987: 3). Kissinger's observation suggests that the nature of the information upon which elites and citizens base their opinions of the outside world has important implications with respect to which foreign policy proposals are likely to be politically viable (and which are not).

To the extent that elite and public perceptions of the political world influence foreign policy-making, the news media play an important role in shaping such perceptions. Scholarly research has indicated that both elites and citizens rely heavily upon mediated discourses for information about foreign affairs (Zaller 1992; Wanta, Golan and Lee 2004; Miklian 2008; Althaus et al 2011). Mutz (1992: 484) notes that, in studies of media "agenda setting," for example, "findings are often substantial when dealing with nondomestic issues, since most people must depend exclusively on news media for their information about international affairs." Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004: 364) find that people "mentally link" characteristics that media attribute to foreign states "to a similar degree in which the attributes are mentioned in the media." Baum and Groeling (2009: 2) sum up the role that media play in shaping the public's attitudes about foreign policy as follows:

> Citizens learn virtually everything they know about foreign policy from the mass media, whether through direct personal exposure or indirectly, via conversations with friends or family members who gained *their* information from the media. This makes understanding how the media select stories concerning foreign policy (the *supply* of information) central to any effort to account for public attitudes toward those policies (the *demand* for policy).

Foreign affairs reporting and the problem of information

Recognizing that the attentive publics of a Western power will be heavily dependent upon media for information about foreign affairs, this study calls into question the liberal-culturalist notion that media will consistently provide attentive publics with the quality of information they would need to be able to employ consistently liberal forms of moral reasoning about foreign affairs. Even if most attentive publics were to have liberal foreign policy preferences, the mere existence of such preferences would not tell us whether such publics have ready access to the kinds of information they would need to be able to think and act in consistently liberal ways. Rationalist theory suggests that, *if* a culture were to provide people with images of other countries' state of democracy that are proportionate to the different countries' varying degrees of adherence to liberal-democratic norms, elites and citizens would have the information they need to be able to consistently think and act in accordance with liberal foreign policy preferences. *If*, as Doyle predicts, a culture's most authoritative discourses were to consistently convey accurate information about the political life of foreign peoples, a rationalist approach would suggest that liberal-minded elites and citizens could (i) draw upon such discourses to roughly measure foreign countries' varying degrees of adherence to liberal-democratic norms; (ii) use the aforementioned measurements to formulate a rational ordering of preferences with respect to where the defense of liberal-democratic norms is most urgent; and then (iii) formulate strategies that are rooted in both their preference structures and

the perceived constraints of the broader strategic environment. However, *if* the dominant culture of a Western power were to discursively exaggerate its rivals' violations of democratic norms and to downplay its allies' illiberal characteristics, such tendencies would pose a number of problems for the proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments. Systematically biased discourse would disable many citizens from thinking and acting in consistently liberal ways, as it would distort their measurements of the different foreign countries' varying degrees of adherence to liberal-democratic norms. In other words, many peoples' perceptions of the degree to which some states are in breach of democratic norms would not consistently follow from an established set of measurements. Hence, the strategies that elites and citizens would develop in their intended defense of liberal norms would be shaped by partially biased information, meaning that their thoughts and actions would not be purely driven by their preferences and would be influenced by factors that have distorted their perceptions of the political life of some foreign peoples. Thus, in the event that the officials of a Western power were to stray from their professed liberalism in the nation's relations with some foreign countries, attentive publics and elites may lack the quality of information necessary to recognize such deviations and to lobby against them.

This study suggests that the problem with liberal-culturalist arguments is not that they assume that the citizens and/or elites of Western powers support liberal political institutions. Rather, the central problem with liberal-culturalist approaches is their tendency to conflate citizens' attitudes about their own countries' political institutions with their attitudes toward the external world. Even if we assume that the citizens and elites of a Western power support the idea of democracy promotion abroad, we are still

left with the possibility that the quality of information that people receive about foreign affairs is not sufficient to enable them to employ consistently liberal forms of moral reasoning about the political life of foreign peoples.

Much of existing research on U.S. media and politics suggests that there are significant differences between how media depict domestic politics and how they portray the political life of foreign peoples. Sparrow (1999) notes that, in domestic politics, there is often considerable contestation between U.S. political elites and that such contestation tends to cause U.S. media to present the varying perspectives of the contending actors. If, for example, an important group of U.S. political elites were to somehow threaten the United States' most hallowed political institutions, the threats would likely elicit considerable contestation among political elites and thus cause U.S. media to report on such threats from various angles. Conversely, on questions of foreign affairs, there is often a considerable degree of consensus among U.S. political elites (Hallin 1986; Bennett 1990; Zaller 1992; Sparrow 1999). Studies by Hallin (1986) and Bennett (1990) suggest that, when there is mostly consensus among political elites about the politics of a foreign country, such consensus will bring pressure on news organizations (and their journalists) to narrow the range of perspectives that they present about the country's politics. If, for example, there were a consensus among leading U.S. political elites in favor of an allied government, such consensus may cause major media to downplay the allied government's breaches of liberal norms by largely eschewing perspectives that lie outside the bounds of the elite consensus (Hallin 1986).

In other words, to the extent that strategic and commercial interests affect the degree of consensus among a Western power's political elites about the politics of certain

countries, such interests can also lead to a biased selection of the information that attentive publics receive about the political life of the countries in question. The possibility that some of the state's interests have distorting effects upon the information we receive about the political life of some foreign peoples calls into question the liberal-culturalist notion that we can stretch the concept of "liberal culture" to include *both* our culture's perspectives on domestic politics and its lens on the outside world.[14] While the range of information available to a Western power's citizens is likely to provide them the means to defend their own country's political institutions, some of the strategic considerations of the nation's political elites may have the effect of distorting the culture's perspectives on the outside world in ways that lessen people's capacity to engage in consistently liberal forms of moral reasoning about the politics of foreign countries. Thus, while the concept of liberal culture can be usefully applied in the study of domestic politics, its use in the study of international relations may serve as an idealized abstraction that obfuscates the extent to which strategic and commercial interests compete with liberal norms in shaping the dominant culture's lens on the outside world.

Constructivist theory and the concept of "liberal identity"

In theory, the construction concept of "liberal identity" carries with it fewer problems than the abstraction of liberal culture, for the concept of liberal identity does not imply that Western societies' perceptions of the state of democracy abroad are necessarily accurate.[15] This study suggests that a Western power's elites and citizens will

[14] Peceny (1999: 162) suggests that the promotion of democracy abroad has "deep roots in America's liberal culture."

[15] In using the concept of liberal identity, Peceny (1997: 416) acknowledges that Western societies' perceptions of the state of democracy abroad might not always be accurate when he writes that

sometimes identify the political systems of other states (and the foreign policies of their own state) inaccurately because some of the perceived interests of the Western power will have distorting effects upon some of the discourses that attentive publics draw upon in constructing their identities. In practice, however, some constructivists of the liberal-culturalist camp have used the concept of liberal identity in such a way as to imply that the identities of Western citizens and elites are rooted in quasi-perfect information about the political world and the role of their states within it (Risse-Kappen 1995; Schimmelfennig 1998). For example, Risse-Kappen's (1995: 505) claim that "the democratic character of one's domestic structures… leads to a collective identification process among actors of democratic states" presupposes that such actors have the information they need to accurately identify how democratic the different states' domestic structures are. Neither Risse-Kappen (1995) nor Schimmelfennig (1998) contemplate the possibility that the dominant culture of a Western power could systematically filter out information about some foreign countries' breaches of liberal norms and discursively exaggerate some other countries' violations.

Because such purportedly constructivist works simply assume that the discourses of Western societies are largely free of the potentially distorting effects of certain interests, a newly emerging realist-constructivist school has called into question whether such approaches are genuinely constructivist. Barkin (2010: 79) posits that constructivism is "to an important degree an inductive exercise" that bases its propositions upon "empirical research into the normative and discursive basis of social

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"actors' subjective judgments about the liberal status of potential allies or adversaries can often be more important than the concrete, objectively measurable characteristics of these states."

interaction."[16] According to Barkin (2010: 139, 143), any purported constructivism that simply "assumes liberal norms as objectively privileged in the construction of international politics" violates the constructivist commitment to "find out which normative and discursive structures predominate in a particular historical context." In keeping with Barkin's advocacy of a more inductive and realistic constructivism, this study suggests that sound theory-building about the role of cultural discourse in a Western nation's foreign relations requires rigorous analysis of the national media's depictions of foreign countries, as well as empirically-grounded theorizing about what shapes the media's depictions.

Towards a realist-constructivist approach to the study of press-state relations

This study's conception of the relationship between Western news organizations and the state is perhaps best summed up by Bennett and Livingston's (2003: 359) notion that a Western power's mass media are only "semi-independent" of the state. The study posits that, in the process of shaping public discourse about the political life of foreign peoples, leading reporters tend to play an intermediary role between the ideal of objective journalism and the positions and discourses of leading officials. On the one hand, journalists commonly identify with the ideal of objective journalism, according to which news organizations are to select the information they present on the basis of conventional standards of moral and practical relevance and to refrain from altering those standards from one case to another (Ryan 2001; Muñoz-Torres 2007). On the other hand, journalists who report for major news organizations will also commonly identify officials

[16] E. H. Carr (1940) also shared such a commitment to inductive methods and criticized the tendency of some intellectuals to simply assume that *only* totalitarian societies —not liberal-democratic ones— were subject to distorted information about foreign affairs.

of their own state —and intellectuals with ties to the state— as important authorities on the question of how to evaluate the political life of foreign peoples (Hallin 1986; Bennett 1990; Soley 1992; Alexseev and Bennett 1995; Eilders and Lüter 2000). The study thus suggests that the influence of official positions and narratives will often compete with the ideal of objective journalism in shaping Western reporters' depictions of the political life of some foreign peoples. Although official discourses are sometimes sufficiently measured to encourage objective assessments of the politics of some foreign countries, some of a Western power's strategic and commercial considerations will often cause leading officials to partially distort the political life of countries whose leaders are either allies or rivals. In turn, when official positions and narratives compete with the ideal of objective journalism in shaping reporters' news frames about the political life of some foreign countries, the influence of such positions/narratives will also have some distorting effects upon the media's depictions of the state of democracy in such countries.

The study's explanation of why leading journalists will often defer to official narratives is predicated upon scholarly analyses of (i) the cultural authority of leading officials, (ii) the national identities of Western societies, and (iii) the ways that Western journalists are commonly socialized into their profession (Hallin 1986; Bennett 1990; Soley 1992; Pedelty 1995; Gellner 1997; Sparrow 1999; Rosati 2000; Oren 2003; Kaufmann 2004; Lieven 2004; Cramer 2007; Inthorn 2007; Salter and Weltman 2011). Western officials play important roles in constructing culturally authoritative narratives about their nations' roles in the world, the nature of their foreign allies, and the nature of their rivals (Hallin 1986; Gellner 1997; Oren 2003). Because Western powers have deeply institutionalized forms of democracy, long-standing alliances among one another,

and a modern history of conflict with some powerful authoritarian states, the notion that Western powers promote democracy and resist autocracy has been central to the discourses of Western political and cultural elites throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries (Doyle 1997; Schimmelfennig 1998; Peceny 1999; Oren 2003; Lieven 2004; Inthorn 2007; Salter and Weltman 2011; Abalo 2012). Thus, when Western officials and cultural elites characterize the state's allies as democratic and its rivals as autocratic, such narratives tend to fit predominant Western conceptions of the normative fault lines of international relations (Lieven 2004; Salter and Weltman 2011; Abalo 2012).

Of course, some of a Western power's allies will indeed be committed democrats and some of its rivals will be autocrats. Nevertheless, when some of the interests of a Western power cause its officials to exaggerate the democratic credentials of allied governments or to overstate the undemocratic behaviors of rival governments, such narratives are still likely to resonate among significant segments of the society because the narratives cohere with prevailing national identities. As cognitive belief structures, national identities will often cause elites and citizens to embrace perspectives that are consistent with their preexisting belief structures and to resist information that does not fully cohere with such belief structures (Rosati 2000). If there were evidence that a celebrated ally of a Western power is not fully committed to liberal norms, such evidence would likely be dissonant with many cultural elites' identification of their state as a principled promoter of democracy abroad. Likewise, if there were information that a rival government is less autocratic than leading officials of the Western power suggest, such information would tend to conflict with the socially constructed belief that inter-state conflict can be understood purely in terms of the democracy/autocracy duality

(Abalo 2012). In other words, the mere existence of evidence that contradicts official narratives would not necessarily give journalists confidence that their presentation of the discordant information would always *appear* accurate to attentive publics and cultural elites whose belief structures and national identities are partially bound up with official positions and narratives.

Hence, this study suggests that the primary reason that Western journalists will often defer to official narratives in such a way as to partially distort the political life of some foreign peoples is that more accurate reporting about rival and allied actors would likely appear *less* objective to many cultural elites and attentive publics. In other words, news organizations are likely to downplay allies' breaches of democratic norms and to exaggerate rivals' violations not simply for the purpose of deferring to official narratives but because reporting that largely coincides with official discourses will tend to more closely fit Western preconceptions of allied and rival actors. Thus, the study assumes that the professional standing of leading journalists depends not on their capacity to always report according to an abstract standard of objectivity but rather on their ability to present stories that are most likely to *appear* objective to cultural elites and attentive publics whose national identities are partially bound up with official positions and narratives. In line with previous research, the study suggests that the process of socialization of Western journalists is one in which they have learned not only the standards of objective journalism but also how to make compromises between such standards and the perceived need to avoid challenging consensus positions among leading

political elites (Pedelty 1995; Sparrow 1999; Nossek 2004).[17] Because some of the interests of the state will have partially distorting effects upon official narratives about rival and allied actors, the process by which journalists seek to reconcile their news frames with official narratives will also have some distorting effects upon media depictions of the political life of some foreign peoples.

Two important qualifiers

To be sure, there are some important qualifiers to the proposition that journalists' efforts to reconcile their news frames with official positions and narratives will lead to partially ed depictions of the state of democracy in some foreign countries. The first key qualifier is that the theory predicts *only* that a Western power's news organizations will partially distort the political life of countries whose governments are rivals and allies. The theory does not predict that a Western power's media will distort the political life of countries in which the state has no pressing strategic or economic concerns. The concept of *an* official position or narrative implies that the interests of the Western power vis-à-vis a foreign actor are salient enough to generate considerable agreement among leading political elites that the actor is either an ally or a rival. The study thus assumes that only in cases involving alliances or rivalries will the interests of the state be sufficiently clear to generate unifying official positions and narratives that compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping (and partially distorting) their depictions of certain foreign countries. Conversely, when the Western power takes a relatively neutral position with respect to the politics of a foreign country, there will be a higher probability that media will accurately depict the political life of the country because there will be no official

[17] Pedelty (1995: 7) finds that, while foreign correspondents could never resolve the contradictions between the "rules of objective journalism" and the pressures to conform to official cues, such correspondents could manage such tensions through the "judicious use of news frames."

position or narrative that competes with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their depictions of the country's politics.

Likewise, the realist-constructivist approach does not predict that the journalists of a Western power will distort the political life of countries that elicit mixed signals from the state. Mixed official signals are indicative of (i) disagreement among the Western power's leading political elites over the state's approach toward a foreign country and/or (ii) official ambivalence about how to approach a foreign government due to competing tactical considerations. A foreign actor that elicits mixed official signals does not fall into the category of an ally or rival, as the Western power is torn between its different interests vis-à-vis such an actor and thus takes a more ambivalent position toward the actor in question. Mixed official signals about the politics of a foreign country will also increase the probability of relatively accurate reporting about the country's state of democracy because there is no unifying official narrative to compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their depictions of the country's politics.

The second qualifier is that the study's approach does not suggest that Western journalists will *never* present evidence that is dissonant with official positions and narratives. While the theory suggests that journalists typically have incentives to downplay perspectives that clash with official narratives and to favor those that cohere with official positions and discourses, the theorized relationship between official and media discourses is also contingent upon the plausibility of official versions of events. Of course, there are occasions in which the facts on the ground are so wildly incongruent with official narratives that the plausibility of such narratives is demonstrably low

(Bennett et al 2006). When the facts appear wildly incongruent with official positions/narratives, the discrepancy is likely to generate considerable cognitive dissonance among cultural elites and attentive publics and thereby threaten to overwhelm socio-cognitive tendencies to defer to official positions/narratives. Under such unusual conditions, the weight of evidence calling into question the accuracy of official versions may be sufficiently great that journalists would have difficulty maintaining the appearance of objectivity without acknowledging the discordant evidence (Bennett et al 2006).[18]

Thus, it is important to reiterate that there are some limits on how far a Western power could stray from its professed principles without attracting negative publicity. Particularly in a context in which a Western power has no pressing security concerns that it could use to rationalize blatant deviations from a liberal foreign policy course, the state's adoption of obviously illiberal foreign policies could jeopardize its capacity to uphold an image of itself as a principled actor. This study thus suggests that, in the post-Cold War era, the tensions between a Western power's interests and its professed principles will tend to play themselves out within certain bounds. While a Western power will not always perceive it to be in its interest to adhere to its professed principles, neither will it usually deem it to be in its interest to deviate so blatantly from a liberal foreign policy course as to elicit negative publicity and thereby jeopardize the desired image of itself. Thus, the modern tensions between a Western state's perceived interests and its professed principles will tend to manifest themselves in more casual ways, whereby the state's deviations from its professed liberalism will usually be subtle enough

[18] As E.H. Carr (1940: 184) noted, discourses must usually exhibit "some measure of conformity with fact" to achieve widespread credibility.

to enable the state to largely conceal such deviations via its influence over cultural discourse.

The roles of the state's interests

Of course, given the importance that the study's approach attributes to how a Western power's interests influence *both* the state's foreign policy dispositions and the society's discourses about the external world, the realist-constructivist approach must be sensitive to (i) what the particular interests of the state are; (ii) how liberal norms also shape some of the interests of a Western power; and (iii) how the interests of a Western power and the liberal ideals of its society interact and often compete in determining what constitutes an ally or a rival. Consistent with a long line of research, this study suggests that a Western power's interests in counteracting challenges to its authority and pursuing its immediate commercial objectives will often be in tension with its interests in adhering to a liberal foreign policy course (Erickson and Peppe 1976; Little 1985; Little 1988; Rabe 1988; Van Evera 1990; James and Mitchell 1995; Rabe 1999; Schmitz 1999; Streeter 2001; Kim 2002; Kofas 2003; Rosato 2003; Lieven 2004; Kim 2005; Kim 2006; Prados 2006; Schmitz 2006; Grow 2008; Qureshi 2009; Downes and Lilley 2010; Kim 2010). The study posits that the primary way that a Western power's perceived interests will compete with its professed principles and partially distort its culture's worldviews will be via its calculations of what constitutes an ally or a rival. When a foreign government is not wholly committed to liberal norms but helps a Western power to secure its immediate strategic and/or commercial objectives, the Western state's officials may tend to overlook the foreign government's breaches of liberal norms and to celebrate

it as a democratic ally for as long as the government serves the state's immediate objectives. Conversely, when a foreign government is not definitively autocratic but threatens the prestige and/or the commercial interests of the Western power, the officials of the Western power may tend to cast the foreign government as an autocratic rival in an effort to counteract the perceived challenge that such a government presents. Thus, in a period in which different foreign governments are similarly inconsistent in their adherence to liberal norms, a Western state will likely cast such governments in varying ways because some foreign governments will serve the state's objectives, other such governments will impede its goals, and still others will be neither rivals nor allies.

Of course, the proposition that strategic and commercial interests compete with the professed principles of Western officials in shaping their discourses and foreign policies does not negate that liberal ideals also influence the state's external behaviors. Given the interests of Western powers in projecting images of themselves as principled promoters of democracy, Western officials will often be reluctant to publicly align themselves with definitively autocratic governments, particularly in regions where a democratic political tradition exists. Moreover, when conflicts of interest arise between a Western power and another state, the nature of the foreign state's political system will sometimes influence how the Western state seeks to resolve the conflict. A Western power will be more inclined to employ direct military force against autocratic rivals than against democratic ones because Western officials can often draw upon the liberal identities of Western societies in rallying support for military action against transparently authoritarian governments (Doyle 1983; Owen 1994; Risse-Kappen 1995; Russett and Oneal 2001).

However, the problem with IR approaches that focus almost exclusively on the democracy/autocracy duality is that such approaches ignore extensive evidence that the perceived interests of Western powers are not invariably congruent with the professed principles of Western leaders. An exclusive focus on the democracy/autocracy duality cannot explain why Western powers have only sometimes been firm in their opposition to extra-constitutional overthrows of elected governments and have at other times acquiesced to or even encouraged undemocratic coups against elected leaders who posed challenges to the prerogatives of Western officials.[19] A comprehensive theory of the foreign relations of Western powers must explain not only why Western states are more likely to fight autocracies than democracies but also why Western leaders sometimes develop warm relations with governments that do not consistently adhere to liberal-democratic norms.[20]

For the realist-constructivist theorist, there are two keys to explaining a Western power's inconsistent adherence to a liberal foreign policy course. The first key is to clarify the roles of ideals, interests and the tensions between them in defining the Western power's foreign alliances and rivalries. The second key is to illustrate how the society of a Western power will often have limited capacity to hold the state to its professed principles because the state has usually influenced cultural discourse about allies and

[19] In the modern diplomatic history of the United States, there have been several cases in which the American state has either acquiesced to or encouraged undemocratic coups against elected leaders who posed challenges to the prerogatives of the American state. See Erickson and Peppe 1976; Little 1985; Rabe 1988; Van Evera 1990; James and Mitchell 1995; Rabe 1999; Schmitz 1999; Kim 2002; Rosato 2003; Clement 2005; Kim 2005; Kim 2006; Prados 2006; Schmitz 2006; Grow 2008; Qureshi 2009; Downes and Lilley 2010; Joyce 2010; Kim 2010; and Langevin 2010.

[20] George Kennan (1985: 210) once observed the following: "Practices or policies that arouse our official displeasure in one country are cheerfully condoned or ignored in another. What is bad in the behavior of our opponents is good, or at least acceptable, in the case of our friends."

rivals in such a way that the state's deviations from its professed liberalism will not necessarily be apparent to the society.

How interests shape and partially distort discourse about Latin American political life

Given the realist-constructivist commitment to inductive methods, a realist-constructivist research program must include rigorous analysis of cultural discourse so as to test for not only the extent to which liberal norms shape such discourse but also the degree to which the state's strategic and commercial objectives partially distort cultural discourse. To reiterate, none of the study's critiques of liberal-culturalist approaches are intended to suggest that liberal norms and values do not play important roles in shaping a Western power's discourses and worldviews. There will likely be a significant amount of accurate reporting about the state of democracy in several Latin American countries because there are usually no official narratives to compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their news frames about governments that are neither rivals nor allies. However, there is also likely to be a significant number of countries in which a Western power has some pressing interests that give rise to (i) alliances or rivalries with the countries' governments and (ii) official positions/narratives that have some distorting influences upon how journalists report about the countries in question.

The interests that give rise to U.S. alliances and rivalries in the Americas

Before testing a set of hypotheses about whether U.S. media will understate the illiberal characteristics of allied governments and overstate the undemocratic characteristics of rival governments, I must clarify (i) how I define a rival and a strategic ally and (ii) how the state's interests determine what constitutes a rival or ally. The study

defines a strategic ally as a foreign actor that the state supports because officials deem that the political success of the actor would be critical to strengthening the authority and prestige of the state and/or helping it to achieve its commercial objectives. Conversely, a rival is a foreign actor that the state seeks to contain and oppose because the success of the actor would appear to jeopardize the authority and prestige of the state and/or impede its achievement of its commercial objectives. While liberal political norms play a role in U.S. alliance-building and rivalry formation, the strategic and commercial objectives of the state also shape U.S. alliances and rivalries in ways that sometimes conflict with the state's professed liberalism.

To be sure, in the absence of intense geostrategic competition among Great Powers, the American state will typically perceive it to be in its interest that its Latin American allies exhibit the minimal trappings of democratic governance. Indeed, in the rare case in which a Latin American state has not exhibited the minimal trappings of democracy in the post-Cold War era, this has been a source of friction with the hegemon, for the hegemon would have difficulty projecting an image of itself as a champion of liberal principles if it were to accommodate definitively autocratic regimes in the region. However, there is no evidence that U.S. officials consider it of pressing concern that their allies be paragons of democratic governance (Burron 2011). In fact, this study illustrates that some allies have been less compliant with democratic norms than some rivals. Thus, while there is evidence that the minimal trappings of democracy are a necessary condition for an alliance with the United States (and that the absence of such trappings is likely to be a source of tension with the hegemon), we must look beyond liberal political norms to adequately understand U.S. alliances and rivalries in the region.

U.S. alliances and rivalries with Latin American governments also have an important economic dimension. The late British IR theorist Peter Gowan (1999: viii) once noted that a central objective of Western powers was to open up developing economies to "the entry of products, companies, financial flows and financial operators from the core countries." Consistent with Gowan's thesis, this study suggests that U.S. interests in the economic penetration of Latin America will predispose leading officials to ally with "big-market reformers," by which I refer to governments of the region's most economically powerful countries that deregulate their nations' economies and open them up to greater trade, foreign investment, and external financial flows. The market transitions of the region's largest economies have been of obvious interest to U.S. officials, not only because Latin America's biggest economies offer the most opportunities but also because they have historically been the region's most closed economies.[21]

U.S. economic interests also contribute to rivalries with "left/unorthodox" governments, by which I refer to left-leaning and economically unorthodox governments whose policies serve as impediments to the free flow of trade and investment (Clement 2005; Vanderbush 2009; Burron 2011). In addition, a Western power's officials will often view left-wing insurgencies as threats to the Western power's commercial interests for two basic reasons. Firstly, such insurgencies can often disrupt the extraction of natural resources by way of sabotage and organized forms of violence, thereby increasing the costs of such extraction in the countries in which guerillas operate (Hristov 2009). Secondly, such insurgencies could pose wider threats to the commercial interests of

[21] Historically, the relatively large size of Mexico, Brazil and Argentina's internal markets have provided them some economic leverage to protect their domestic industries from U.S. competition and to thereby limit their cooperation with the United States (Gereffi and Wyman 1987; Phillips 2003).

Western powers in the event that they were to bring about social revolutions and/or to gain wider appeal in the developing world (Bodenheimer 1971; White 1998; Streeter 2009). In turn, U.S. fears of Latin American insurgencies have sometimes contributed to the development of strategic alliances with governments that are locked in conflict with such insurgencies (Leogrande 2007; Zuloaga Nieto 2007; Streeter 2009). Another important contributor to U.S. alliances with "counter-insurgent" governments is that U.S. officials can often look to such governments as reliable counterweights to left/unorthodox governments in the region (Zuloaga Nieto 2007).[22]

Of course, the economic interests of the American state are inextricably linked with its political interests, meaning that there is also an important political dimension to the American state's rivalries with left/unorthodox governments and its alliances with counter-insurgent governments. Largely owing to their antagonistic economic relations with Western powers, left/unorthodox governments will tend to band together to pursue greater independence from the hegemon and to counter-balance against American power by way of informal alliances with other rivals of the American state outside the hemisphere (Vanderbush 2009).[23] In other words, the American state's rivalries with left/unorthodox governments —as well as its opposition to left-wing insurgencies— are

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[22] In testimony before a House subcommittee in the summer of 2005, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega, asserted that, under the allied counter-insurgent government of Álvaro Uribe, Colombia remained "a vibrant democracy and a force for progress and stability in the Andes, serving as an important counterweight to less positive trends in the region." See "State Dept. Official Outlines U.S. Diplomacy in Latin America; Noriega cites efforts on CAFTA, Andean region, Colombia, Cuba," Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, 27 July 2005.

[23] The data on UN voting patterns indicates that left/unorthodox governments in Latin America are more inclined to oppose U.S. voting positions within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Over the period 2000 to 2009, the OAS member governments that fell within the most left-leaning quintile of the Wiesehomeier-Benoit (W-B) ideology scale were more inclined than other OAS member governments to oppose U.S. positions on the U.N. General Assembly votes that the U.S. State Department considered most important. See "Voting practices in the United Nations," 2000-2009, U.S. Department of State, http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/.

rooted not only in the potential impediments that left-wing actors pose to the state's economic objectives but also in the proclivities of left-wing actors to collectively challenge American political authority and prestige (Gleijeses 1983; Vanderbush 2009).

Thus, American alliances with counter-insurgent governments have also been rooted in the American state's interests in confronting the political challenges posed by left-wing insurgencies and left/unorthodox governments (Gleijeses 1983; Zuloaga Nieto 2007). Once the American state commits itself to providing a significant amount of assistance to a counter-insurgent government, such a commitment will tend to give U.S. officials a sense that a failure to effectively counteract the insurgency would be damaging to American prestige (Gleijeses 1983). Because the stakes for U.S. officials will tend to rise with the level of conflict and the degree of U.S. commitment, the American state is most inclined to enter into a strategic alliance with a counter-insurgent government when such a government is intensely engaged in fighting insurgents and receives sizable amounts of assistance from the United States.[24] Of course, once such a level of commitment is forged, U.S. officials are likely to look to the allied counter-insurgent government not just as a partner in the fight against guerrillas but also as a potential bulwark against left/unorthodox rivals in the region (Zuloaga Nieto 2007).

To be sure, there is another political dimension to the hegemon's alliances with counter-insurgent governments. In a post-Cold War world in which Latin Americans have the capacity to elect their governments, armed insurgencies have come to appear increasingly obsolete and undemocratic. Part of the reason that leading American officials can mobilize congressional support behind U.S. counter-insurgency assistance is

[24] Describing U.S. counter-insurgency assistance to the Salvadoran government in the early 1980s, the journalist Christopher Dickey (1983: 666) once wrote: "The more involved the United States became, of course, the more its prestige was on the line and the greater the need to become involved even further."

that armed insurgencies appear illegitimate in an environment in which political actors seem to have the capacity to compete peacefully through elections. However, while liberal norms have surely played some role in U.S. congressional support for counter-insurgent governments, this study suggests that liberal norms cannot adequately explain the nature of U.S. relations with allied counter-insurgent governments. While left-wing insurgencies have clearly violated liberal norms, allied counter-insurgent governments have also violated —and neglected to protect— the civil, political and social rights of citizens (Goodwin 2001; Áviles 2001; Áviles 2006[b]; Leogrande 2007; Richani 2007; Zuloaga Nieto 2007; Hristov 2009; Rojas 2009). However, instead of applying public pressure on allied counter-insurgent governments to adhere more closely to liberal norms, U.S. administrations have largely worked to relieve such allies of international pressure by presenting them as models of democratic governance (Burron 2011). Such U.S. position-taking suggests that the perceived interests of U.S. officials in (i) securing large congressional aid packages for allied counter-insurgent governments and (ii) propping up such governments as counterweights to regional rivals have superseded concerns about the governments' breaches of liberal norms (Leogrande 2007; Zuloaga Nieto 2007).

How the state's alliances and rivalries shape and partially distort media discourse

Assuming that the American state has pressing interests in adopting positions and/or narratives that favor allies and disfavor rivals, such positions/narratives are also likely to have some distorting effects upon media discourses about the political life of countries with allied and rival governments. The study suggests that, when U.S. officials depict big-market reformers and counter-insurgent governments as models of democratic governance, the cultural authority of the state will tend to cause major U.S. news

organizations to partially defer to such narratives and to downplay the less democratic characteristics of the allied governments in question. Similarly, the study suggests that, when the American state either exaggerates the illiberal characteristics of a left/unorthodox rival or simply signals that it defines the government as a rival, such positions/narratives will tend to cue major media to overstate the undemocratic characteristics of the left/unorthodox government. The study thus suggests that partially distorted media discourses about allies and rivals will make it difficult for U.S. elites and citizens to recognize when and where the state is deviating from its professed liberalism.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis to be tested concerns whether a Latin American government's status as a big-market reformer lessens the likelihood that media will call into question the government's commitment to democratic norms during a critical period of market transition. For the purposes of the study, a big-market reformer is defined as a government whose country's economic size is above the mean of the ten most populous OAS member states and whose nation's level of "economic freedom" rose dramatically during the government's time in office.[25] The big-market-reformer category thus aptly encompasses the kinds of market transitions that U.S. officials are likely to regard as particularly favorable to U.S. commercial objectives. The big-market-reformer variable enables us to determine whether media downplayed the less democratic characteristics of Latin America's three most economically powerful countries —Brazil, Mexico and Argentina— during such countries' critical periods of market transition. Of course,

[25] A dramatic increase in a country's level of economic freedom is defined as a one-point increase on the Fraser Institute's ten-point index or a ten-point increase on the Heritage Foundation's 100-point index.

strategic alliances with big-market reformers may last only so long as U.S. officials feel the need to help such governments consolidate their market transitions. The first hypothesis is predicated upon the assumption that U.S. officials will exaggerate the democratic credentials of a big-market reformer for a five-year period after its inauguration or for the full duration of its time in office, whichever is shorter. The first hypothesis suggests that the official narratives in favor of a big-market reformer will, in turn, cue major media to downplay its country's less democratic characteristics during the critical period of market transition.

> **Hypothesis I**: There will be a statistically significant tendency for reports to downplay the undemocratic characteristics of a big-market reformer during the five-year period after its inauguration or the full duration of its time in office, whichever is shorter.

The second hypothesis assumes that U.S. officials will seek to uphold the image of allied counter-insurgent governments so as to avoid political obstacles to the United States' continued aid to such allies and to prop them up as reliable counterweights to left/unorthodox governments.

Upholding the image of counter-insurgent governments will typically involve exaggerating their commitment to democratic norms. Given the concerns of U.S. officials about upholding American credibility and prestige, such officials are likely be most inclined to exaggerate a counter-insurgent government's democratic credentials when such a government (i) is intensely engaged in fighting insurgents and (ii) receives large amounts of economic and military aid from the United States. Assuming that media will tend to defer to official narratives about an allied counter-insurgent government, one would expect that media would also downplay the undemocratic characteristics of such a government.

> **Hypothesis II**: There will be a statistically significant tendency for reports to downplay the undemocratic characteristics of a counter-insurgent government that is intensely engaged in conflict and receives extensive U.S. aid.

The third hypothesis to be tested concerns whether a Latin American government's status as a left/unorthodox rival will affect the frequency with which media call into question the country's democratic status. A left/unorthodox government is defined as a government that (i) falls within the two most left-leaning quintiles of the Wiesehomeier-Benoit (W-B) ideology scale and (ii) whose country scored below 54 on the Heritage Foundation's economic freedom index during any year in which the government was in power for the full duration of the year (Wiesehomeier and Benoit 2009). The left/unorthodox category thus aptly encompasses the kinds of governments that U.S. officials typically deem hostile to the U.S. objectives of securing greater access to Latin American markets and preserving American power and prestige. Assuming that U.S. officials and/or quasi-official sources will adopt positions and narratives that are unfavorable to left/unorthodox rivals, the third hypothesis suggests that such positions/narratives will casually cue major news organizations to overstate the illiberal characteristics of left/unorthodox rivals.

> **Hypothesis III**: There will be a statistically significant tendency for media to exaggerate the degree to which a left/unorthodox rival is in breach of liberal-democratic norms.

If at least some of the factors identified in the latter three hypotheses were to independently affect the frequency with which media question a country's democratic status, such evidence would support the realist-constructivist thesis that U.S. discourses about the state of democracy in countries governed by allied and rival governments will be partially distorted. Such evidence would suggest that liberal-culturalist arguments pay insufficient attention to how the state's interests, positions and narratives shape cultural

discourse in ways that make it difficult for citizens and elites to detect when and where the state is deviating from its professed liberalism in its external relations. Conversely, if each country's levels of deviation from conventional democratic standards were the only independent variables to have statistically significant effects upon the media's depictions, the evidence would suggest that liberal-culturalist theorists are correct to treat the cultural and discursive realms as independent of the state's strategic and commercial interests.

Methods

In light of the cultural and political significance that scholars attribute to mass media, the media discourses to be examined will be drawn from two elite newspapers (the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*) and the country's three most highly viewed television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC). News reporting at the *Times* and *Post* is likely to be a useful gauge of how an important segment of the culture views Latin American affairs because the two elite newspapers influence the political perspectives of opinion leaders within the society as well as the news agendas of other major media (Page 1996; Sparrow 1999; Golan 2006; Boykoff 2009). According to Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet's (1948: 151) classical theory of the "two-step flow of communication," "ideas often flow *from* radio and print to opinion leaders and *from* them to the less active sections of the population." More recently, Golan (2006) found significant correlations between the *New York Times*' international news agenda and three television news programs' selection of international news stories. In addition, data from the last year of the period of study indicate that, among the websites of major U.S. newspapers, that of the *Times* had the highest online readership, while that of the *Post*

had the third-highest such readership.[26] Moreover, the *Times* and *Post* have increasingly taken on the role of newswires to smaller-market dailies, meaning that their reports are often republished in newspapers across the United States. As for the major broadcast networks, their depictions of Latin American politics will likely have a more direct impact upon broader public perceptions because their coverage reaches mass audiences. Among television networks, ABC, CBS and NBC's large audience shares give some cultural and political weight to their news programs' depictions of the state of democracy in Latin America (Webster 2005).

To test for the effects of the different variables on the different news organizations' depictions of the state of democracy in Latin America, I analyzed (i) random samples of 1000 *Times* reports and 1000 *Post* reports that made reference to any of the ten countries and the last name of its president from 1989 to 2009; (ii) all ABC reports that made reference to any of the ten countries and the last name of its president from 1989 to 2009; (iii) all CBS reports that made reference to any of the ten countries and the last name of its president from February 1, 1990 to 2009;[27] and (iv) all NBC reports that made reference to any of the ten countries and the last name of its president from 1997 to 2009.[28] The randomly sampled press reports were drawn from all *Times* and *Post* reports that (i) referred to any of the ten Latin American countries and the last name of its president in the two papers' news sections over the period of study; (ii) were

[26] In March of 2009, the *Times*' site had more than 20 million unique visits, which was more than double the number of such visits to the second-most popular newspaper site, that of *USA Today*. The *Post*'s site had more than nine million visits in March of 2009. See "EXCLUSIVE: Top 30 Newspaper Sites for March -- Seattle 'P-I' Sinks Without Print Boost," *Editor & Publisher*, 22 April 2009.

[27] Lexis-Nexis does not carry transcriptions of CBS broadcasts that aired prior to February 1, 1990.

[28] Lexis-Nexis does not carry transcriptions of NBC broadcasts that aired prior to 1997.

datelined from Latin America or the Caribbean; and (iii) were written by in-house correspondents or reporters on special assignment to the region.

In randomly sampling 1000 reports from each of the two newspapers, I cluster-sampled to ensure that the percentage of reports about each country year in the sample was commensurate with such reports' share of the total number of reports about the ten countries across the period of study.[29] Because one purpose of the study is to critically examine the purportedly objective norms of American news reporting, the study's analysis focuses only on how the *Times* and *Post*'s news sections —*not* their opinion or business sections— reported about the state of democracy in the ten most populous Latin American member states of the OAS. In addition, **chapter four** moves beyond the original samples of *Times* and *Post* reports to analyze (i) *all* of the two papers' news-section reporting about six different Latin American governments during their first three years in office and (ii) *all* of their news-section reporting about the Argentine governments of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. **Chapter four** thus includes analyses of 747 press reports that were outside the original samples of *Times* and *Post* reports. As I will clarify, the purpose of extending the analysis beyond just the original samples of press reports is to more rigorously test the study's explanations of the press' depictions of the state of democracy in countries whose governments are elected rivals or strategic allies.

Dependent Variable

I code each analyzed report according to whether the report carries an omnibus charge that the country is not fully democratic or that its government, ruling party or state

[29] The total number of *Times* reports about the ten countries across the period of study was 4416. The total number of *Post* reports was 2933.

apparatus seeks to concentrate power (see Table 2A). I thus first develop a comprehensive measure of how media depict the state of democracy that is sensitive to the ways that media have scrutinized the political life of different countries across time. The comprehensive measure is the primary measure of the dependent variable that will be employed throughout the study. However, because there may be differing perspectives about how to measure whether a report depicts a country as undemocratic, the study's regression analysis will alternate between the comprehensive measure and a truncated measure. The comprehensive measure is coded according to whether the report carries any charge that falls within the following categories:

1) Assertions that the topic country's government, ruling party or state apparatus acts undemocratically;
2) assertions that the topic country is still only in the process of becoming a democracy (which implies that the country is not yet fully democratic);
3) assertions that the topic country's president, ruling party or state apparatus wields extraordinary powers;
4) assertions that the topic country's government, ruling party or state apparatus is akin to the government, ruling party or state apparatus of a country with a polity score of zero or below.[30]

The purpose of the aforementioned measure is to indicate whether a report carries at least one claim that fits into at least one of the above categories of charges suggesting that the topic country is not fully democratic. If the report carries any such claim, the comprehensive dependent variable is coded 1. If the report carries no such charge, the variable is coded 0. However, because some might argue that categories two through four are not sufficiently explicit to be counted as charges that the country is not fully

[30] To properly code an assertion that the topic country's government, ruling party or state apparatus is akin to the government, ruling party or state apparatus of a country with a polity score of zero or below, I employ a strict definition of what such an assertion constitutes. If a report carries an assertion that the topic country's government or ruling party is merely allied with —or friendly with— the non-democratic country's government or ruling party, the assertion is not coded as suggesting that the topic country is not fully democratic. To be coded as an assertion that fits within the fourth category of charges, the assertion must explicitly liken or equate the topic country's government, ruling party or state apparatus to the government, ruling party or state apparatus of the non-democratic country.

democratic, I will also employ a truncated measure of the dependent variable that is coded according to whether a report carries a charge that falls within *only* the first category of the most explicit charges.

The key to understanding both measures of the dependent variable is to recognize that the discursive frames that they count as claims that the topic country is not fully democratic are *omnibus* assertions that convey information about the *overall* state of democracy in the country. While the truncated measure accounts for only those assertions that most explicitly question a country's democratic status, the comprehensive measure also accounts for other omnibus assertions that suggest that the country is not fully democratic. Neither measure of the dependent variable accounts for discursive formulations that only implicitly convey information about a particular dimension of democracy (such as the level of fairness of the electoral process, the level of press freedom, or the degree of respect for human rights). Both measures of the dependent variable are restricted to omnibus assertions about a country's *overall* state of democracy because such assertions are likely to have the most salient effects upon public perceptions of a country's state of democracy.

Table 2A. Omnibus charges suggesting the topic country is not fully democratic

Category of Charges	*Terms and Discursive Frames Coded as Charges that Topic Country is not Fully Democratic*
1) Charges that the topic country's government, ruling party, or state apparatus acts undemocratically	Claims (1) that the topic country's president, ruling party or state apparatus is undemocratic, anti-democratic, authoritarian, autocratic, totalitarian, king-like, tyrannical, dictatorial, despotic, fascist, heavy-handed, iron-handed, hard-line or anti-republican; (2) that its president is a strongman or an emperor; and (3) that it has a one-party system, military rule, or one-person rule; (4) that there is a lack of democracy in the topic country; (5) that its level of democracy is limited or restricted; (6) that its democratic institutions are tarnished; (7) that its image as a democracy is faltering; (8) that democracy has yet to be established (or reestablished) in the country; (9) that democracy will be restored at a future date (thus indicating that democracy is not currently in effect in the country); (10) that there are not sufficient guarantees that the country's political process is democratic; (11) that the country's political system lacks openness; (12) that the topic country's government does not govern democratically; (13) that its president, ruling party or state apparatus erodes, undermines, weakens, destroys, cripples, endangers, resists, disrespects or pulls back democracy; (14) that its president, ruling party or state apparatus violates democratic principles; (15) that its level of democracy is deteriorating or has undergone a blow or attack; (16) that democracy has been defeated in the country; (17) that people are calling for democracy in the country; (18) that its president and/or members of the ruling party are traitors to democracy; (19) that the actions of its president, ruling party or state apparatus are inconsistent with democratic values; (20) that the government's commitment to democracy is in doubt or in question; or (21) that the democratic order is being broken.
2) Assertions that the topic country is still only in the process of becoming a democracy (which implies that the country is not yet fully democratic)	Assertions (1) that the topic country is moving toward democracy or is becoming more open and democratic; (2) that it is undergoing or needs to undergo democratic reforms; (3) that its leaders have to be more serious about democratization; (4) that it will reach a level of democratic normalcy in the future; (5) that it needs to become more democratic; (6) that there are calls for greater democracy in the country; or (7) that the country is still in the process of institutionalizing civilian rule
3) Assertions that the topic country's president, ruling party or state apparatus wields extraordinary powers	Claims (1) that the topic country's president or ruling party controls everything; (2) that its president, ruling party, or state apparatus exercises (or seeks to exercise) extraordinary powers, expanded powers, overwhelming powers, sweeping powers, broad powers, imperial powers, decree powers, absolute power, personal power, a grip or monopoly on power, an implacable hold on power, full powers over all aspects of official life, more and more power, or all the powers; (3) that its president or ruling party is abusing, accumulating, solidifying, consolidating, concentrating, amassing or usurping power; (4) that there are insufficient checks on the president's power; (5) that the president has presided over a coup; (6) that the country's president, ruling party or state apparatus engages in strong-arm tactics; or (7) that the topic country's government has suspended the constitution, is overreaching its constitutional powers, or threatens to suspend or circumvent the constitution
4) Assertions that the topic country's government, ruling party or state apparatus is akin to those of a country that has (or had) a polity score of zero or below	Assertions that the topic country's president, ruling party or state apparatus is akin to those of countries such as communist Cuba, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, or Mexico prior to 1994

First set of independent variables: The alliance/rivalry variables

As the three central hypotheses clarify, the primary intent of the study is to determine whether strategic alliances and rivalries —or what I refer to as the "alliance/rivalry variables"— have distorting effects upon how major media present the state of democracy in some countries. Thus, one purpose of the study is to determine whether a government's status as an allied big-market reformer will reduce the probability that a report questions the democratic status of the government's country during its critical period of market transition. To reiterate, a big-market reformer is defined as a government whose country's economic size is above average among the ten most populous OAS member states in Latin America and whose nation's "economic freedom" scores rose at least one point on the Fraser Institute's index or ten points on the Heritage Foundation's index during the government's time in office. The three countries that account for more than the mean level of gross regional product among the ten most populous Latin American member states of the OAS are Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. Among the three countries with the largest economies in the region, each had one government across the period of study that qualified as a big-market reformer.[31] In order to test the first hypothesis, I code each report according to whether the topic country is governed by a big-market reformer in the midst of its critical period of market transition at the time of the report's publication or airdate.

[31] Between 1990 and 1995, Argentina's economic freedom score rose 2.1 points on the Fraser Institute's economic freedom index. Between 1995 and 2000, Brazil's economic freedom score rose 1.4 points on the Fraser Institute's index. In addition, Mexico underwent significant market reform during Salinas' first full year in office in 1989 (Lustig 1998; Levy, Bruhn, and Zebadúa 2001). Since Mexico's economic freedom score did increase by 1.4 points between 1985 and 1990, I classify Salinas as a big-market reformer and code his first five years in office as a critical period of market transition.

To reiterate, the second hypothesis posits that, when a counter-insurgent government is intensely engaged in conflict and receives large amounts of U.S. aid, major U.S. media will tend to minimize their scrutiny of such an ally in deference to U.S. officials' exaggerations of the government's democratic credentials. Thus, in seeking to test the second hypothesis, I examine how the interaction between the level of intensity of a country's civil conflict and its share of U.S. economic and military assistance affected the probability that reports carried charges that the country was not fully democratic. To produce an interaction variable, I multiply each country's annual level of civil conflict (on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's three-point intensity scale) by a simple dummy variable indicating whether the country's share of U.S. economic and military assistance that year was above the mean among the ten most populous OAS member states (see Tables 2B and 2C). Thus, I code each news report according to (i) the level of intensity of civil conflict in the topic country, (ii) whether the topic country's share of U.S. economic and military assistance exceeded the mean within the region during the year in question, and (iii) the interaction between the two aforementioned variables.

Table 2B. Country's annual score on three-point scale of conflict intensity, according to Uppsala Conflict Data Program

	89	*90*	*91*	*92*	*93*	*94*	*95*	*96*	*97*	*98*	*99*	*00*	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Argentina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bolivia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brazil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chile	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1.24	.44
Ecuador	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Guatemala	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	.48
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.10	.30
Peru	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	.81	.68
Venezuela	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.05	.22

*The data on countries' levels of conflict intensity was acquired from the Uppsala Conflict Data program at http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/. The data came from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v.4-2013, 1946 – 2012.

Table 2C. Dummy measure indicating whether each country's annual share of U.S. military and economic assistance is above the mean among ten most populous OAS member states across the period of study, based on data from USAID's "Greenbook"*

	89	*90*	*91*	*92*	*93*	*94*	*95*	*96*	*97*	*98*	*99*	*00*	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Argentina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bolivia	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	.86	.36
Brazil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chile	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	.81	.40
Ecuador	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.10	.30
Guatemala	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.43	.51
Mexico	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	.24	.44
Peru	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	.86	.36
Venezuela	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*The data on U.S. economic and military assistance was acquired from USAID's "Greenbook" at http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/index.html.

In keeping with the third hypothesis, another intention of the study is to determine whether a government's status as left/unorthodox leader will affect the frequency with which reports carry charges that the leader's country is not fully democratic. To reiterate, a left/unorthodox government is a government whose president (i) falls within the two most left-leaning quintiles of the W-B ideology scale and (ii) whose country scored below 54 on the Heritage Foundation's economic freedom index during any year in which the government was in power for the full duration of the year (see Table 2D).[32] I code each report in the dataset according to whether the topic country had a left/unorthodox government at the time of the report's publication or airdate.

Table 2D. Presidents who are classified as left/orthodox over the period from 1989 to 2009, based on W-B ideology scores and countries' "economic freedom" scores

Left/unorthodox presidents	**Time in office during period of study**
Hugo Chávez (Venezuela)	Feb. 2, 1999 – Dec. 31, 2009
Nestor Kirchner (Argentina)	May 25, 2003 – Dec. 9, 2007
Evo Morales (Bolivia)	Jan. 22, 2006 – Dec. 31, 2009
Rafael Correa (Ecuador)	Jan. 15, 2007 – Dec. 31, 2009
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina)	Dec. 10, 2007 – Dec. 31, 2009

* The ideology scores were acquired from Andy Baker's departmental website at http://spot.colorado.edu/~bakerab/elections.html.

[32] Where the data on a president's ideology was missing (in the case of a president who came to office prior to 1992), I assumed the president had the same ideology score of his or her party's first presidential candidate in the post-1991 period or —in the event that no such data was available— his or her party's ideology score during the earliest recorded legislative election. To overcome the problem of missing data on some unelected presidents, a vice president-turned-president was assumed to have the same ideology score as the president he or she replaced.

The second set of independent variables: Levels and types of deviation from liberal norms

In seeking to test whether the alliance/rivalry variables have partially distorting effects upon media depictions of the state of democracy abroad, the study must control for the degree to which a country's level of violations of democratic norms affect the frequency with which reports carry assertions that the country is not fully democratic. I thus control for the degree to which a country's level of deviation from the optimal polity score (on Polity IV's 21-point democracy/autocracy scale) affects the media's depictions of its state of democracy. That is, I code each report in the dataset according to the topic country's level of deviation from the optimal polity score during the year of the report's publication or airdate (see Table 2E).

One additional possibility is that a country's authoritarian past will sometimes cause news organizations and/or their sources to question how deeply institutionalized the country's democracy is. A recent history of political autocracy (or "anocracy") could conceivably cause correspondents to sometimes report about certain purported vestiges of the old political order or to draw parallels to such an authoritarian past on account of the freshness of people's memories of it. To control for the possibility that a country's recent history of political authoritarianism will cause news organizations to more frequently report charges that the country is not fully democratic, I also code for whether the topic country was not democratic under a previous president at any point in the six years preceding the report's publication or airdate.[33]

[33] For a report's topic country to be classified as not having been democratic under a previous president in the six years preceding the report's publication or airdate, the country's polity score would have to have been below six (on Polity IV's 21-point democracy/autocracy scale) under a previous president within that period.

Table 2E. Country's level of deviation from optimal polity score, by country year*

	89	*90*	*91*	*92*	*93*	*94*	*95*	*96*	*97*	*98*	*99*	*00*	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Argentina	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.48	.51
Bolivia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1.38	.59
Brazil	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Chile	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1.33	.80
Colombia	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.52	.81
Ecuador	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	5	2.57	1.66
Guatemala	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3.67	2.42
Mexico	10	10	10	10	10	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4.86	3.61
Peru	3	2	2	13	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4.62	4.12
Venezuela	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	13	3.33	2.61

*The Polity IV data was acquired from the Center for Systemic Peace at http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm.

In addition, there are two reasons why we might expect that particularly stark symbols of authoritarianism in Latin American countries would bring media attention to such countries' breaches of democratic norms. Firstly, in a context in which the United States and most other OAS member states have pledged to support and uphold democracy in the region, any regional government's blatantly authoritarian actions or legacies would likely stand out as a test of the region's commitment to democratic principles. Thus, in the rare case that a Latin American leader has carried out a "self-coup" against an elected legislature or came to power by means of a military coup, the obvious fact that such a leader has operated outside of regional political norms would likely draw considerable media attention to his or her authoritarian legacy. Secondly, to the extent that U.S. officials have publicly criticized such blatantly authoritarian actions or legacies, we might expect that such official criticisms would further cue journalists to increase their scrutiny of the governments in question. Thus, to control for the possibility that the blatantly authoritarian legacies of certain leaders will spur official and media criticism of them, I categorize stories about presidents who had either come to power by military coup or had carried out a "self-coup" as those concerning leaders who had reversed democratic processes.[34]

We might also expect that, when a country's political opposition contests the results of a presidential election, recall referendum or executive-sponsored constitutional referendum, reports in the wake of the contested election would refer more frequently to charges that the country is not fully democratic. I thus control for whether the topic

[34] Because Chilean President Augusto Pinochet had taken power by way of a coup against Chile's elected president in 1973, stories about Pinochet during his final 15 months in power fall in this category. In addition, reports about Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and Guatemalan President Jorge Serrano after their "self-coups" against their countries' respective legislatures fit within the category.

country of a report has undergone a contested presidential election, recall referendum or executive-sponsored constitutional referendum in the three months preceding the report's publication or airdate.[35] Conversely, we might anticipate that, when a country's political opposition does *not* contest a new president's election, reports in the wake of the uncontested election would refer less frequently to charges that the country is not fully democratic. An uncontested mandate may tend to give a new president an aura of democratic legitimacy and thus cause media to temporarily downplay suggestions that his or her government violates democratic norms. I thus control for whether a report concerns a new president whose uncontested election occurred in the year preceding the report's publication or airdate.[36]

We might also expect that, during and immediately following a country's crisis of constitutional succession, reports would refer more frequently to charges that the country is not fully democratic. A crisis of constitutional succession is defined as a period during which a president has either resigned or been driven from office and there is a political conflict over who can constitutionally succeed the president. Such crises tend not only to elicit mutual recriminations among the contending political actors but also to raise doubts among political analysts about the strength of the country's democratic institutions. I thus code reports according to whether they appeared during the week-long period that

[35] Drawing upon election reports in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) website, I classify Peru's 1995 presidential election, the second round of Peru's 2000 presidential election, Venezuela's 2004 recall referendum and Mexico's 2006 presidential election as contested elections.

[36] Over the period study, all presidential elections except those specified in the previous footnote are classified as uncontested elections.

followed a president's early departure and encompassed the ensuing crisis of constitutional succession in the topic country.[37]

Another possibility is that, when states convene constituent assemblies to rewrite their constitutions, the particular configurations of power within such assemblies could affect the frequency with which media raise concerns about the quality of democracy in the country. Corrales (2009) finds that, when groups aligned with a country's president control a significant or overwhelming majority of seats in a constituent assembly, the assembly will tend to expand presidential powers in its rewrite of the constitution. Thus, a distribution of assembly seats that is more favorable to the executive may lead to greater media attention to concerns about a prospective expansion of presidential power. Conversely, a distribution of seats that is unfavorable to the executive would likely reduce such concerns and the frequency with which media make reference to them. Thus, this study firstly employs a measure to control for the possible effect of the configuration of power in a constitutional assembly during the nine months leading up to the culmination of a process to rewrite the topic country's constitution. I use Corrales' (2009) measure of how favorable or unfavorable the distributions of assembly seats were to the presidents of six Latin American countries during nine processes to amend or rewrite national constitutions (see Table 2F). In addition, I also employ the same measures in an attempt to control for how the distribution of power in a constituent

[37] Drawing upon reports in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, I classify four episodes during the period of study as crises of constitutional succession: (i) the political crisis in Guatemala immediately following president Jorge Serrano's resignation on June 1, 1993; (ii) the political crisis in Ecuador immediately following president Abdala Bucaram's dismissal on February 6, 1997; (iii) the political crisis in Ecuador immediately following president Jamil Mahuad's ouster on January 21, 2000; and (iv) the political crisis in Venezuela immediately following president Hugo Chávez's ouster on April 11, 2002.

assembly affected media depictions of the topic country's state of democracy in the three months following the ratification of a new constitution.

Table 2F. Corrales' (2009) measure of the power of Latin American presidents to shape new constitutions*

Country year in which constituent assembly was convened to rewrite nation's constitution	How favorable (+) or unfavorable (-) the distribution of assembly seats was to the president
Colombia 1991	-42.20
Peru 1993	+10.00
Argentina 1994	-24.20
Ecuador 1997	-40.00
Venezuela 1999	+86.26
Bolivia 2006	+7.4
Bolivia 2007	+84.9
Ecuador 2008	+22.0
Bolivia 2009	-20

*Corrales (2009: 40) refers to this as a measure of "table asymmetry."

Control variables

It is also important that we control for the location from which a *Times* or *Post* correspondent reported a story because this tends to be an indicator of how central the topic country's domestic politics are to the report in question. When a *Times* or *Post* correspondent reports on a country from elsewhere in the region, the story will tend to be less focused on the country's domestic politics and will thus be less likely to discuss the

country's state of democracy. Thus, to control for the likelihood that a report is not centrally focused upon the topic country's domestic politics, I code for whether a story is datelined from outside the topic country.

Lastly, we might also expect that the frequency with which reports carry charges that the topic country is not fully democratic will rise during presidential election campaigns. Given that the periods of presidential election campaigns involve contentious political debates, they are periods during which a country's political commentators may be more likely to raise questions about the country's state of democracy. Moreover, there are two plausible reasons why an incumbent president's bid for reelection might elicit media discussions of the country's state of democracy. Firstly, there has been some debate about whether consecutive reelection is conducive to the consolidation of democracy in Latin America (Carey 2003). Secondly, a reelection campaign may elicit more discussion about the standing government's record, meaning that any purported violations of democratic norms may become a more salient issue when an incumbent is in the race. Therefore, it is important to employ two control variables for periods leading up to presidential elections. Reports will be coded according to whether (i) the topic country's presidential election is less than a year away and no incumbent is in the race or (ii) an incumbent is up for reelection during the one-year campaign period.

Weighted probit regressions

In seeking to test the study's three hypotheses, I will firstly run a series of probit regressions and present the results of the regression analysis in **chapter three**. Because the total number of *Times* reports about Latin America is considerably greater than that of *Post* reports, an evenly split sample overrepresents the *Post*'s reporting and

underrepresents that of the *Times*. Thus, in the regression models, *Times* and *Post* reports are differentially weighted in accordance with their respective totals. Because there were 4416 *Times* reports about the ten Latin American countries in the period of study, each of the 1000 sampled reports from the *Times* was weighted as 4.416 reports. Because there were 2933 *Post* reports about the ten countries in the period of study, each of the 1000 reports from the *Post* was weighted as 2.933 reports. Moreover, because Lexis-Nexis does not carry transcriptions of *NBC* broadcasts that aired prior to 1997 and *CBS* reports that aired prior to February 1, 1990, the dataset of televised reports underrepresents broadcast reports from 1989 to 1996. I thus employ two weights to overcome the problem of underrepresentation of the earlier period's reports. I firstly weight each *ABC* and *CBS* report in the period from February 1, 1990 to 1996 as 1.5 reports to compensate for the missing *NBC* reports from the period. Secondly, I weight each *ABC* report about the period from January 1, 1989 to January 31, 1990 as three reports to compensate for the missing *NBC* and *CBS* reports during the first 13 months of the period of study. The weighting scheme is based on the observation that each of the broadcast networks reported on Latin America with similar frequency.[38]

To reiterate, the central purposes of the regression analysis will be twofold. One purpose of controlling for a large array of factors in the model is to determine whether we can illustrate beyond a reasonable level of doubt that strategic alliances *reduce* the probability that journalists will scrutinize the political practices of allies. If the alliance variables were to have statistically significant tendencies to reduce the probability that

[38] Over the period study, *ABC* broadcast an average of 26.24 reports about some of the ten Latin American countries per year. *CBS*'s yearly average was 25.05 reports. Lastly, in the 13 years for which *NBC* transcriptions were available, *NBC* broadcast an average of 24.92 reports about some of the ten countries per year.

reports would question the democratic status of countries governed by allied leaders, such tendencies would appear consistent with the proposition that media often defer to official narratives about allies and thereby downplay their illiberal behaviors. The other primary purpose of the regression analysis will be to determine whether the state's rivalries *increase* the probability that news reports present charges that left/unorthodox rivals are not fully democratic. The latter result would appear consistent with the proposition that the state's positions/narratives cue news organizations to overemphasize the illiberal characteristics of left/unorthodox rivals.

Beyond standard regression analysis

Of course, it is possible that a closer look at official and media discourses about different big-market reformers, counter-insurgent governments and left/unorthodox governments could point to a different set of causal mechanisms than the study's theory suggests. Thus, **chapter four** will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to cross-examine the study's theory and **chapter three**'s regression analysis and to compare the predictions of liberal-culturalist arguments to how the *Times* and *Post* depicted the state of democracy under four purported allies and four ostensible rivals. **Chapter four** will compare the strategic and commercial considerations of leading U.S. officials to their statements about eight Latin American governments and to how the *Times* and *Post* depicted the state of democracy under each government. The purpose of combining quantitative and qualitative methods will be to determine whether and how the alliance/rivalry variables and official positions/narratives influenced media depictions of the state of democracy under the eight governments. To analyze the pronouncements of U.S. presidents about different Latin American governments, I will rely largely upon the

archives of the University of California-Santa Barbara's *American Presidency Project*. In addition, I analyze the statements and paraphrases that the *Times*, *Post* and other news sources attributed to U.S. officials with respect to the governments in question.

Among the news coverage to be examined in **chapter four** is that concerning (i) South America's two big-market reformers (Brazil's Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Argentina's Carlos Menem); (ii) the two Colombian presidents (Andrés Pastrana and Álvaro Uribe) whose governments were the largest recipients of U.S. military and economic aid in a period of heightened civil conflict and the emergence of a left/unorthodox rival in neighboring Venezuela; and (iii) the two most left-wing presidents across the period of study (Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and Bolivia's Evo Morales).[39] In addition, the chapter compares the predictions of a liberal-culturalist model to how the *Times* and *Post* depicted the state of democracy under Argentina's left/unorthodox presidencies of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. To avoid any possibility of sampling error, **chapter four** will analyze (i) *all* of the *Times* and *Post*'s news-section reports about the first three years in power of Menem, Cardoso, Pastrana, Uribe, Chávez and Morales and (ii) *all* of the two papers' front-section reports about the Kirchner and Fernández de Kirchner presidencies up through the end of the period of study (December 31, 2009).

The choice of which reporting and which official discourses to analyze in **chapter four** is primarily intended to determine (i) whether the first, second, and third hypotheses hold across different cases and (ii) whether there is strong evidence of the theorized

[39] According to the Wiesehomeier-Benoit (W-B) ideology scale, Chávez and Morales were the most left-wing leaders among the ten most populous Latin American member states of the OAS across the period of study. To view the ideology scores, see Andy Baker's departmental website at http://spot.colorado.edu/~bakerab/elections.html.

relationship between official positions/narratives and the media's depictions of the state of democracy in the countries in question. By comparing official positions/narratives, media discourses, and the predictions of a liberal-culturalist model, we will firstly seek to determine whether official positions/narratives cued the press to underemphasize the less democratic characteristics of South America's two most economically powerful countries in their critical periods of market transition.[40] We will then seek to determine whether official positions/narratives also cued the press to downplay Colombia's less democratic characteristics under two counter-insurgent governments that received extensive U.S. military and economic aid. In addition, **chapter four** will seek to determine whether official positions/narratives cued the press to overemphasize the less democratic characteristics of Venezuela and Bolivia in the early years of South America's two most left-wing leaders. Lastly, in applying the aforementioned methods to the study of official and media discourses about the Kirchner couple's presidencies, the intent is to further cross-analyze the study's explanations of why U.S. officials and the press would approach left/unorthodox governments in the ways they do.

Cross-examining the predictions of two liberal-culturalist models

To compare the predictions of liberal-culturalist arguments to how leading newspaper reporters depicted the state of democracy under eight Latin American governments, **chapter four** will generate two liberal-culturalist models' predictions and compare them to the frequency with which reports carried charges suggesting that each country was not fully democratic. If we were to assume that cultural discourse conveys consistently accurate information that is free of the potentially distorting influences of the

[40] Although reporting about Mexico's market-reforming administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari was also central to the initial regression analysis, I excluded it from this chapter's analysis because Salinas took office shortly before the beginning of the period of study.

state's strategic and commercial interests, we would expect that a model that accounts for countries' levels of deviation from liberal-democratic norms and ignores the alliance/rivalry variables would accurately predict how media portray the state of democracy in countries governed by allies and rivals. Thus, to generate the predictions of a liberal-culturalist argument, I will begin by running a probit regression of a liberal-culturalist model, using as my dependent variable the comprehensive measure of how each press report in the dataset depicts the topic country's state of democracy. The first liberal-culturalist model includes all the variables tested in **chapter three**'s probit regressions *except* the alliance/rivalry variables. Having run a model that excludes the alliance/rivalry variables, we are able to generate a liberal-culturalist model's predicted probabilities that each press report will carry a charge that calls into question the quality of the topic country's democracy.[41] In effect, the predictions of the liberal-culturalist model are designed to simulate what "objective" press reporting about each country's state of democracy would look like by conventional liberal-democratic standards. I then compare the predictions of the liberal-culturalist model with the actual frequencies with which press reports carried charges calling into question the quality of democracy in countries governed by allies and rivals.

To perform a robustness check of the comparisons between the predictions of a liberal-culturalist model and the press' depictions of the political life of different countries, I run an additional probit regression of a second liberal-culturalist model that uses the truncated measure of how each report in the dataset depicts the topic country's state of democracy. Having run the second liberal-culturalist model, we will be able to

[41] I used Stata 13 to run the probit regression of the liberal-culturalist model. I then used Stata's *predict* utility to simulate the model's predicted probabilities.

generate the model's predicted probabilities that each report will carry a *highly explicit* charge calling into question the topic country's democratic status and then compare the model's predictions with the actual frequencies with which such charges appeared in news reports about the eight presidents. The aforementioned robustness check will enable us to further cross-examine not only liberal-culturalist approaches but also the study's realist-constructivist approach. Lastly, **chapters four and five** will draw upon the findings of the study to further explore the question of how U.S. discursive patterns appear to have influenced the decisions of American officials about whether to adhere to or deviate from their professed liberalism in U.S. relations with Latin American allies and rivals.

CHAPTER THREE

Introducing the statistical evidence

While regression analysis alone cannot illustrate the causal mechanisms by which different variables influenced the media's depictions of a country's state of democracy, it does enable us to establish (i) which variables are significantly correlated with media depictions of the state of democracy in a country and (ii) whether the depictions are in the predicted direction. The primary intent of this chapter will be to provide an overview of not only the regression analysis that is relevant to the first, second and third hypotheses but also the statistical evidence with respect to other variables in the model. Although regression analysis alone cannot illustrate the causal mechanisms by which the alliance/rivalry variables influenced the media's depictions, the *combination* of this chapter's regression analysis and the following chapter's more diverse methodological approach will constitute a rigorous test of the study's realist-constructivist approach.[42]

The statistical results appear consistent with the study's expectations that the alliance/rivalry variables will have significantly distorting effects upon how media depict a country's state of democracy (see Tables 3A and 3B). In each of the models that analyzed all the sampled press reports, we find that there were statistically significant tendencies for the press to underemphasize the less democratic characteristics of countries governed by allied big-market reformers and counter-insurgent governments (see Table 3A). While the alliance variables did not have significant effects in both broadcast models, their coefficients were in the predicted (negative) direction in those

[42] In moving beyond mere regression analysis, **chapter four** will seek to (i) illustrate the causal mechanisms by which different variables influenced the media's depictions of a country's state of democracy and (ii) test whether the first, second and third hypotheses hold *across different cases*.

models as well (see Table 3B).[43] We also find that a topic country's status as having a left/unorthodox government is significantly correlated with the probability that both press reports and broadcast reports would overemphasize its undemocratic characteristics (see Tables 3A and 3B).

The statistical evidence suggests that media also operated under some societal pressure to follow certain liberal and/or objective norms. Media were not generally accommodating to Latin American presidents who had reversed democratic processes. Rather, the statistical evidence suggests that leaders who had taken power by extra-constitutional means or who had carried out a "self-coup" while in office came under heavy media scrutiny (see Tables 3A and 3B). Thus, it seems likely that major U.S. news organizations —in conjunction with some significant segments of Congress— have placed some pressures on the American state to distance itself from Latin American leaders who have reversed democratic processes (Whitehead 1975; Sigmund 1993; Schmitz 1999). Moreover, a country's level of deviation from the optimal polity score and/or its recent undemocratic past had statistically significant effects upon the probability that a press report would carry a charge that the topic country was not fully democratic (see Table 3A).[44] Consistent with the proposition that there are usually no official narratives to compete with the objective and liberal norms of journalists in shaping their news frames about governments that are neither rivals nor allies, there was some reasonably accurate reporting about the state of democracy in several Latin American countries.

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[43] Because of the missing broadcast data, including the missing NBC reports from prior to 1997 and the missing ABC reports from prior to February of 1990, we can only roughly estimate the effects of the alliance variables on the broadcast networks' depictions of the state of democracy abroad.

[44] Although the aforementioned variables did not have significant effects in both of the broadcast models, the coefficients were in the same (positive) direction in all models (see Tables 3A and 3B).

Nevertheless, this chapter's findings pose some significant problems for liberal-culturalist theorists. A comprehensive theory of the role of culture in shaping a Western power's foreign policy dispositions must be able to explain not only how the dominant culture is likely to view leaders who have plainly reversed democratic processes but also how it is likely to view rivals and allies who neither adhere strictly to liberal norms nor definitively overturn democratic institutions. For society to consistently pressure the state to adopt liberal approaches to its rivals and allies, it would need ready access to reasonably accurate information about not only the extent to which such rivals and allies have violated liberal norms but also the degree to which they have played by democratic rules. However, in light of the statistical evidence that major news organizations downplayed the less democratic characteristics of allies and exaggerated the illiberal characteristics of rivals, there is reason to doubt that American society provides citizens with the quality of information they would need to be able to consistently pressure the state to adopt liberal foreign policies. Thus, although increased cultural criticism of conservative former coup leaders has been an important development, it falls short of confirming the liberal-culturalist proposition that Western publics have ready access to the quality of information they would need to employ consistently liberal forms of moral reasoning about foreign affairs. The chapter's regression analysis suggests that the American state has had more leeway to casually stray from its professed principles than liberal-culturalist theorists suggest because the state's alliances and rivalries have often influenced cultural discourse in such a way that the state's deviations from a liberal course do not necessarily appear as such.

Results with respect to the first hypothesis

As predicted, the statistical evidence indicates that the topic country's status as a large country in the midst of a period of market transition had a consistently negative and significant effect upon the probability that a press report carried a charge that the topic country was not fully democratic (see Table 3A). Table 3A illustrates that, when we compare a weighted model that uses the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable to another weighted model that uses the truncated measure, we find that the negative effect of being a large country in the midst of a market transition is more significant in the former model ($p < .01$) but also significant in the latter ($p < .05$). Although the correlation was not significant in the broadcast models, it was in the predicted negative direction in each (see Table 3B). Consistent with the first hypothesis, the evidence indicates that media downplayed the less democratic characteristics of large countries in the midst of critical periods of market transition. Thus, there is ample evidence to suggest that the dominant culture of the United States has accommodated alliances with big-market reformers by downplaying their less democratic characteristics.

Results with respect to second hypothesis

Partially consistent with the second hypothesis, the interaction between the level of intensity of a country's civil conflict and its share of U.S. economic and military assistance had statistically significant effects upon the press' depictions of its state of democracy (see Table 3A). Although the effect of the allied counter-insurgent variable was not significant in the first broadcast model, it was significant in the second model and was in the predicted negative direction in each (see Table 3B). While the evidence does not clarify the causal mechanisms by which media came to downplay the less

democratic characteristics of allied counter-insurgent governments, it does suggest that we cannot rule out the theory that U.S. officials helped prop up some counter-insurgent governments as counterweights to the Left by casting them as democratic and thereby cuing major news organizations to downplay their less democratic characteristics. The following chapter will further cross-examine the second hypothesis by more thoroughly examining the relationship between official positions/narratives and media depictions of the political life of Colombia under two allied counter-insurgent governments.

Results with respect to the third hypothesis

As predicted, the topic country's status as having a left/orthodox government had a consistently positive and significant effect upon the probability that a report carried a charge that the country was not fully democratic (see Tables 3A and 3B). In other words, the statistical evidence indicates that news reporting significantly exaggerated the degree to which left/unorthodox governments were in breach of democratic norms. With respect to press reporting, Table 3A's comparison of a weighted model using the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable to another weighted model using the truncated measure reveals that the positive effect of left/unorthodox status is highly significant in both models ($p < .001$). Likewise, in both models concerning broadcast news, the left/orthodox variable had a highly significant effect upon the probability that a televised report would call the country's state of democracy into question ($p < .001$). To reiterate, the regression analysis does not clarify the causal mechanisms by which print and broadcast news organizations came to exaggerate the illiberal behaviors of some left/unorthodox governments. Nevertheless, the evidence seems consistent with the proposition that U.S. officials seek to isolate at least some left/unorthodox governments

by signaling that they are rivals and thereby cuing major news organizations to disproportionately focus upon such governments' purported breaches of democratic norms.

Results with respect to leaders who had reversed democratic processes

All models indicate that a leader who had taken power by coup or launched a "self-coup" in the midst of his presidency came under heavier media scrutiny than the country's level of deviation from the optimal polity score could explain (see Tables 3A and 3B). Thus, left/unorthodox rivals were not the only category of leaders who came under disproportionate criticism. Indeed, Augusto Pinochet and Alberto Fujimori —two conservative leaders who reversed democratic processes at certain points in their political careers— came under heavy media scrutiny, even after they had presided over the restoration of some rudimentary democratic institutions.

There are likely to be two central reasons why conservative former coup leaders came under special scrutiny. Firstly, the symbolism of having been the leader of a coup that overturned democratic institutions is likely to have caused journalists to categorize such a figure as authoritarian. In turn, the authoritarian categorization would largely preconfigure journalists' descriptions of the leader. Journalists appear to have characterized leaders who had reversed democratic processes not merely on account of their current political practices but also in recognition of the authoritarian legacies of their coups. Secondly, because the leading officials of a Western power seek to project a liberal image of the state, they will tend to either join in criticizing leaders who have reversed democratic processes or refrain from publicly aligning themselves with such leaders. Since the state itself is not typically willing to risk its own image by publicly

defending leaders who have overturned democratic institutions, there is typically no official positions/narratives that might counteract journalists' tendencies to categorize such leaders as authoritarian.[45] The evidence of heavy media scrutiny of conservative former coup leaders is consistent with the proposition that, in the post-Cold War era, the dominant culture of a Western power will not be generally inclined to promote alliances with leaders who have been tainted by their past involvement in blatant setbacks to democracy.

Other independent variables and control variables

With respect to other variables, the configuration of power in a constituent assembly during the nine months leading up to the culmination of a process to rewrite the topic country's constitution is positively and significantly correlated with the probability that a press report questioned the topic country's state of democracy (see Table 3A). Although the correlation was not significant in the broadcast models, it was in the predicted positive direction in each (see Table 3B). Thus, the evidence suggests that, in a period in which a constituent assembly was rewriting a country's constitution, a distribution of assembly seats that was highly favorable to the executive led to greater media attention to concerns about a prospective expansion of presidential power.

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[45] It should be noted, however, that there was one notable exception to the rule. The model suggests that the primary reason why Fujimori came under less media scrutiny than Pinochet was that there was one critical period in which U.S. officials did publicly align themselves with Fujimori. In the midst of Fujimori's four-month standoff with guerrilla hostage-takers at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima in 1996-97, both U.S. officials and U.S. media downplayed his less democratic characteristics. Peru's hostage crisis was somewhat unique in that U.S. officials clearly viewed the crisis as an immediate threat to U.S. interests. From the perspective of U.S. officials, the crisis threatened to embolden insurgents elsewhere to use hostage-taking as a means of challenging U.S. interests. Official U.S. backing of the Peruvian government's unyielding approach to the guerrilla hostage-takers seems to have cued U.S. news organizations to downplay Fujimori's breaches of democratic norms during the crisis. However, in other periods of Fujimori's presidency when U.S. officials did not publicly align themselves with him, media were more likely to depict him as authoritarian. See "Crisis in Peru," ABC *Nightline*, 18 December 1996; and "Peruvian Guerrillas Hold Hundreds Hostage; Ambassadors Among Those Detained; Rebels Demand Comrades' Freedom," *Washington Post*, 19 December 1996: A1.

For the most part, the effects of other control variables were in the predicted direction as well. As anticipated, a press report's status as being datelined from outside the topic country is negatively correlated with the probability that the report questioned the topic country's state of democracy (see Table 3A). The negative effect of a press report's external dateline is consistent with the proposition that a report written from outside the topic country is likely to be less focused on the country's domestic politics and thus less attentive to its state of democracy. In all the models concerning the press, the negative effect of a report's external dateline was highly significant ($p < .001$).

There were only two control variables that did not appear to have any significant effect on the probability that a report questioned the topic country's state of democracy. While the effect of the "honeymoon" period following a new president's uncontested presidential election was invariably in the predicted negative direction, it was not statistically significant in any model that analyzed the whole dataset (see Tables 3A and 3B). Despite the expectation that an uncontested election would give a new government a temporary aura of democratic legitimacy and thus cause media to temporarily downplay suggestions that the government violated democratic norms, there was limited evidence of such a pattern. There is also little indication that the distribution of power in a constituent assembly significantly affected media depictions of the topic country's state of democracy in the three months following the ratification of a new constitution.

The similarities and differences between press reporting and broadcast news

In comparing press reporting to broadcast news, the evidence suggests mostly similarities but also one notable difference in how they depicted the state of democracy in Latin American countries. To reiterate, one noteworthy similarity is that the authoritarian

legacies of some leaders and countries strongly influenced how both newspapers and broadcast networks depicted the state of democracy in such countries, consistent with the expectation that liberal and objective norms do play significant roles in the social construction of Western worldviews. However, the other key similarity between the press and television is that they both significantly exaggerated the illiberal characteristics of left/unorthodox rivals. Moreover, while the effects of the alliance variables were not consistently significant in the broadcast models, they were in the same predicted direction as those of the press. Given that ABC, CBS and NBC rely largely upon major newswires and newspapers for the information they report, it was perhaps natural that the two leading newspapers' conflicting mix of liberal norms and interest-based biases would largely manifest itself in how the broadcast networks reported on Latin America as well.[46]

With respect to the differences between press reporting and broadcast news, there was one that stood out. Namely, presidential campaign periods had contrasting effects upon how the press and the broadcast networks depicted the state of democracy in Latin American countries. While the press models indicate that a country's presidential race *increased* the probability that a press report would carry a charge that the country was not fully democratic, the broadcast models indicate that such campaign periods *decreased* the probability that a televised report would call into question the topic country's state of democracy (see Tables 3A and 3B). The different conditions under which television journalists and press correspondents reported about Latin American politics appear to have had contrasting effects upon how the two types of journalists reported about

[46] For information about the broadcast networks' reliance upon the foreign affairs reporting of newspapers and newswires, see Golan (2006) and Moisy (1996).

countries that were in the midst of presidential races. During a country's presidential race, a press correspondent who reports from the country can quote and paraphrase citizens and analysts about the heated debates surrounding the campaign. A press correspondent is thus more likely to relay charges of undemocratic behavior during a presidential race. Conversely, a television journalist who reports from the United States under tight time constraints will rarely be able to interview, quote or paraphrase sources about a foreign country that is in the midst of a presidential race. Television reporters must typically rely upon their own unsourced narratives in reporting about the country, meaning that they may tend to present more banal information about the country so as not to appear to take side in the debates surrounding its presidential race.

The difference in the conditions under which television reporters and press correspondents operated is also likely to explain why —in contrast to press correspondents— television reporters did not present particularly explicit charges that actors were behaving undemocratically during their countries' crises of constitutional succession (see Tables 3A and 3B). Given that broadcast reporters typically had to rely upon their own unsourced narratives, they seem to have shied away from presenting charges that could be interpreted as contentious in their reporting about countries that were in the midst of crises of constitutional succession. The aforementioned difference in the conditions under which broadcast and print journalists reported is also likely to explain why, in contrast to press reports, television reports did not refer more frequently to charges that topic countries were not fully democratic in the wake of contested elections (see Tables 3A and 3B).

Table 3A. Weighted probit results, probability that press report would carry charge that country was not fully democratic, 1989-2009

Variable	Regressions using comprehensive measure of dependent variable			Regressions using truncated measure of dependent variable		
	Times and *Post* (N=2000)	*Times* (N=1000)	*Post* (N=1000)	*Times* and *Post* (N=2000)	*Times* (N=1000)	*Post* (N=1000)
H1: Country has large economy that is undergoing period of market transition	-.49 (.16)**	-.41 (.24)	-.64 (.25)*	-.40 (.19)*	-.25 (.26)	-.69 (.30)*
H2: Level of US aid to country*Intensity of country's civil conflict	-.49 (.19)*	-.51 (.26)*	-.42 (.25)	-.50 (.23)*	-.49 (.28)	-.54 (.32)
Level of U.S. aid to country	-.01 (.12)	-.00 (.16)	-.06 (.16)	-.04 (.13)	.09 (.18)	.01 (.19)
Intensity of country's civil conflict	.12 (.12)	.12 (.18)	.11 (.18)	.12 (.14)	.19 (.20)	.02 (.22)
H3: President is left-leaning, economically unorthodox (left/unorthodox)	.74 (.14)***	.67 (.18)***	.90 (.19)***	.60 (.16)***	.58 (.20)**	.57 (.23)*
Country's level of deviation from optimal polity score	.06 (.02)***	.06 (.03)*	.06 (.03)*	.05 (.02)*	.05 (.03)	.07 (.03)*
Country governed by leader who had reversed democratic processes	1.42 (.19)***	1.28 (.26)***	1.68 (.25)***	1.33 (.21)***	1.33 (.27)***	1.39 (.28)***
Country was not a democracy under previous government within past six years	.56 (.11)***	.52 (.15)***	.66 (.17)***	.56 (.13)***	.59 (.17)***	.50 (.20)*
Period following contested presidential election or referendum	1.18 (.34)***	1.10 (.40)**	1.43 (.51)**	1.28 (.33)***	1.44 (.41)***	.96 (.47)*
Country was in crisis of constitutional succession	1.40 (.40)***	1.15 (.44)**	1.91 (.59)**	1.54 (.36)***	1.14 (.45)**	2.40 (.60)***
President's leverage in effort to rewrite constitution during proposed rewrite	1.39 (.40)***	.87 (.77)	1.83 (.60)**	1.38 (.44)**	.20 (.84)	2.45 (.64)***
President's leverage in rewriting constitution as predictor of depictions after ratification	.35 (.52)	.92 (.66)	-.48 (.67)	.37 (.55)	1.15 (.67)	-1.97 (1.68)
"Honeymoon" period for newly elected president whose election was not challenged	-.22 (.13)	-.13 (.17)	-.40 (.20)*	-.31 (.17)	-.21 (.20)	-.54 (.26)*
Presidential campaign period without incumbent in race	.24 (.10)*	.36 (.14)*	.02 (.15)	.27 (.11)*	.41 (.15)**	.01 (.18)
Presidential campaign period with incumbent in race	.26 (.17)	.28 (.21)	.23 (.22)	.48 (.17)**	.46 (.22)*	.56 (.24)*
Report datelined from outside topic country	-.62 (.12)***	-.65 (.16)***	-.61 (.15)***	-.60 (.14)***	-.52 (.18)***	-.80 (.20)***
Constant	-1.50 (.09)***	-1.48 (.12)***	-1.54 (.13)***	-1.75 (.10)***	-1.73 (.13)***	-1.78 (.15)***
Log Likelihood	2812.79***	-397.37***	-353.33***	2207.88***	-324.06***	-249.22***

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3B. Weighted probit results, probability that broadcast report would carry charge that country was not fully democratic, 1989-2009

Variable	Regression using comprehensive measure of dependent variable *ABC, CBS*, and *NBC* (N=1374)	Regression using truncated measure of dependent variable *ABC, CBS*, and *NBC* (N=1339)
H1: Country has large economy that is undergoing period of market transition	-.77 (.45)	-.68 (48)
H2: Level of US aid to country*Intensity of country's civil conflict	-.78 (.54)	-2.17 (.95)*
Level of U.S. aid to country	-.36 (.26)	-.18 (.27)
Intensity of country's civil conflict	.38 (.28)	.25 (.43)
H3: President is left-leaning, economically unorthodox (left/unorthodox)	1.05 (.19)***	1.24 (.30)***
Country's level of deviation from optimal polity score	.03 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Country governed by leader who reversed democratic processes	2.14 (.38)***	3.17 (.82)***
Country was not a democracy under previous government within past ten years	.40 (.22)	.74 (.33)*
Period following contested presidential election or referendum	-.33 (.42)	-.26 (.41)
Country is in crisis of constitutional succession	.26 (.28)	-- (see note)
President's leverage in effort to rewrite constitution during period before end of process	.60 (.91)	1.35 (.85)
President's leverage in rewriting constitution as predictor of depictions after ratification	-.50 (.50)	-.54 (.44)
"Honeymoon" period for newly elected president whose election was not challenged	-.30 (.31)	-.47 (.34)
Presidential campaign period without incumbent in race	-.05 (.23)	-.91 (.51)
Presidential campaign period with incumbent in race	-.44 (.20)*	-.61 (.25)*
Constant	-2.15 (.17)***	-2.61 (.34)***
Log Likelihood	-352.49***	-233.69***

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Standard errors in parentheses. None of the 35 televised reports about countries that were in the midst of a crisis of constitutional succession presented a highly explicit charge that the country was in breach of democratic norms. STATA thus classified the crisis variable as a "perfect predictor" and dropped the variable and the 35 reports.

Discussion

In sum, the statistical evidence suggests that major U.S. news organizations have played somewhat of a Janus-faced role in the post-Cold War era. On the one hand, a series of strategic and commercial interests appear to have competed with liberal norms in shaping how cultural elites depicted the state of democracy in countries governed by rivals and allies. In turn, partially distorted discourses about allies and rivals are likely to have compromised the capacities of citizens and elites to be able to consistently pressure the state to act in liberal ways. Thus, to the extent that a realist-constructivist model correctly predicts such a pattern of partially distorted discourses about rivals and allies, it can also predict that a Western power will have more leeway to casually deviate from its professed liberalism than liberal-culturalist approaches suggest.

On the other hand, the dominant culture of the United States was critically disposed toward conservative former coup leaders, which is an indicator that its worldviews in the post-Cold War era have been more liberal than in the past (Lafeber 1972; Schmitz 1999; Grow 2008). Indeed, heavy media scrutiny of leaders who had reversed democratic processes is likely to have contributed to some strengthening of liberal norms in the hemisphere by signaling that such reversals would come with significant reputational costs (as well as some risk of isolation). In the post-Cold War era, a Western power appears less inclined to *blatantly* deviate from its professed liberalism, partly because Western media would likely be somewhat critical of alliances with governments that had reversed democratic processes.[47]

[47] However, one question for further research is whether media have downplayed the less democratic characteristics of governments that reversed democratic processes but enjoyed the open support of leading U.S. officials. It would be interesting to compare, for example, how the press portrayed Pakistan

Overall, the evidence appears largely consistent with the expectations of the study's realist-constructivist approach. While major news organizations were not poised to accommodate blatant deviations from a liberal foreign policy course, they are likely to have facilitated casual deviations from the state's professed liberalism by downplaying the illiberal behaviors of allies and exaggerating those of rivals. The following chapter will draw further upon (i) content analysis, (ii) regression analysis and (iii) the positions and interests of the American state in explaining how strategic and commercial interests came to shape U.S. officials' public positions toward allies and rivals and, in turn, influenced how media depicted their countries' state of democracy.

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relative to the other countries of Central Asia in the period when the Bush Administration supported the military government of Pervez Musharaff.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cross-examining the realist-constructivist critique of liberal-culturalist approaches

To make a strong case that a theoretical critique of one approach in favor of another one represents a significant contribution, the author(s) of the study should be able to affirmatively answer four key questions. The first question concerns whether the critiqued approach is an established one that has significant influence among scholars and/or the broader society. If liberal-culturalist approaches were to have little if any influence (and few prospects of gaining it), one could not sustain that a critique of such approaches adds much to the discussion, for there would not be much point in critiquing arguments that were already roundly discredited and/or ignored. The second (and most obvious) question concerns whether the critique of an approach has empirical merit. One could not offer a serious critique of a theory in the absence of factual evidence to sustain it. The third question concerns whether there is anything original about the study's critique. It would be difficult to sustain that a study makes a theoretical contribution if its critique of existing theory had already been amply presented elsewhere. The fourth (and final) question concerns whether the alternative theory overstates its case. It could be that a realist-constructivist approach elucidates certain problems with liberal-culturalist ones but overcompensates in its attempt to correct for those problems and thereby introduces significant new blind spots of its own. The formulation of an alternative, realist-constructivist theory might not appear worthwhile until such time as scholars could show that the alternative approach does not significantly overstate its case.

In this chapter, I will address the first three questions with respect to the study at hand, while leaving the last question to be addressed in the concluding chapter. In

answering the first question, the chapter will seek to establish that the proposition under critique —the liberal-culturalist proposition that Western conceptions of political life of foreign peoples are free of the potentially distorting influences of the strategic and commercial interests of Western powers— has significant influence within the IR sub-field. I then seek to answer the second question by means of two sets of comparisons. I compare what a liberal-culturalist approach predicts to how leading U.S. newspapers portrayed the state of democracy under (i) South America's two big-market reformers of the post-Cold War era, (ii) the two counter-insurgent governments that received the most U.S. assistance in the period of study, (iii) one "first-generation" left/unorthodox government that came to power in 1999; and (iv) three "second-generation" left/unorthodox governments that came to power after 2002. I also compare the reporters' depictions of the eight governments to how leading U.S. officials responded to each government's rise.

Contrary to the notion of a definitively independent press, the chapter's analysis suggests that, when the perceived interests of the American state motivated it to signal that a foreign government was either an ally or a rival, press reporting about the government tended to significantly distort the political life of the country in the direction predicted. It should be noted, however, that the evidence also indicates that the third hypothesis oversimplifies the relationships between the American state and left/unorthodox governments by treating the left/unorthodox characteristics of governments as singularly determinant of rival status. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the left/unorthodox characteristics of a new government did not, in and of themselves, determine its status as a rival. Rather, the number of left-leaning

governments in the region at the time of the left/unorthodox government's rise seems to have been pivotal in shaping how the American state initially conceived of its relationship with a left/unorthodox government. This chapter's analysis thus seeks to correct for the over-simplicity of the original model by accounting for how the Left's prevalence or lack thereof in the region's executive branches affected the strategic calculations of U.S. officials about how they would initially approach a newly elected left/unorthodox government. Once we control for how the strength or weakness of the region's Left affected U.S. grand strategy, we find that the evidence is consistent with the central propositions of the study insofar as it illustrates that the American state's interests, positions and narratives strongly influenced how the press depicted the political life of countries governed by left/unorthodox leaders.

On the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter and the previous one, I submit that the central problem with Doyle's (2005: 464) assumption that Western media present "accurate conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples" is that such an assumption is rooted in a false binary. In effect, Doyle (2005) assumes that, if narrow strategic and commercial calculations do not *wholly* determine the worldviews of Western societies, then it must be that the state's interests have no distorting effects upon Western conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples. The problem with such binary logic is that it ignores a third, more plausible hypothesis: that Western worldviews are *neither* independent of their states' strategic and commercial interests nor merely derivative of them.

In answering the third question, I submit that the originality of the study's critique of liberal-culturalist approaches lies in its elaboration of why Western worldviews could

be neither consistently independent of the state's strategic and commercial interests nor merely derivative of such interests. To be sure, there are two central reasons why a Western power's worldviews could not be merely epiphenomenal to the narrow strategic and commercial considerations of its state. Firstly, in the event that an ally of a Western power were to completely reverse its country's democratic processes, the Western state would likely have difficulty managing discourse in such a way as to obfuscate the blatantly authoritarian nature of the ally's behavior because the obviousness of the setback to democracy would place pressures on journalists to acknowledge it (and thereby maintain some semblance of objectivity).[48] Secondly, in the Western power's relations with governments that are neither allies nor rivals, its interests are usually not clear enough to generate unifying official positions and narratives that compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their depictions of the governments in question. Nevertheless, the strategic and commercial interests of a Western power are likely to have significantly distorting effects upon the society's conceptions of the political behaviors of two specific subsets of actors: rivals and allies who neither adhere consistently to liberal norms nor definitively overturn democratic institutions. As long as leading officials can point to the facts (i) that such allies have not overturned democratic institutions and (ii) that such rivals have not strictly adhered to liberal-democratic norms, leading officials will usually be able to cultivate widespread agreement among political elites in favor of the allies and in opposition to the rivals. In turn, relatively high degrees

[48] The fact that some of the American state's most glaring deviations from a liberal foreign policy course have come under the scrutiny of major U.S. news organizations illustrates the dubiousness of the proposition that a Western state exercises total control over public discourse about foreign affairs (Whitehead 1975; Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2006). In fact, the American state's inability to *completely* control public discourse helps explain why it will often be reluctant to carry out *blatantly* illiberal foreign policies.

of elite consensus about who constitutes a rival and who constitutes an ally will tend to cue the press to reconcile their news frames with the society's predominant belief structures about allied and rival actors. Since the predominant preconceptions of allies and rivals are that the former are democratic and the latter are autocratic, the press operates under significant pressures —from *both* the state and the society— to reconcile its news frames with existing belief structures by exaggerating the rivals' illiberal characteristics and downplaying the allies' illiberal behaviors.

In sum, while IR theorists can legitimately assume that Western societies have relatively accurate conceptions of the political life of *some* foreign peoples, they cannot legitimately assume that a Western state's strategic and commercial interests have no distorting effects upon the society's conceptions of the political life of countries governed by allies and rivals. Just as it is erroneous for "realists" to assume that Western worldviews are merely epiphenomenal to the strategic prerogatives of Western states, so too is it fallacious for liberal-culturalist theorists to presuppose that Western societies' conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples are free of the potentially distorting influences of their states' interests. As this chapter will seek to illustrate, the central problem with assuming that Western societies communicate accurate conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples is that such an assumption causes liberal-culturalist theorists to significantly overestimate the degree to which Western publics or elites can pressure their states to adopt liberal foreign policies. Ironically, liberal-culturalist theories are less of a guardian against the state's deviations from a liberal foreign policy course than their proponents suggest because liberal-culturalist theories divert our attention from how information bias facilitates many such deviations. However, to

present a solid case that a realist-constructivist critique of liberal-culturalist approaches merits our attention, I must first establish that liberal-culturalist approaches have exerted significant influence within the IR sub-field.

The influence of liberal-culturalist approaches

The evidence that the propositions that this study critiques have significant influence within the IR sub-field can be deduced from two central observations. The first observation is that, since 1983, there has been a high rate of citation of IR works that either explicitly assume or implicitly presuppose that Western societies or elites deliberate accurately about the political life of foreign peoples (Doyle 1983[a]; Doyle 1986; Owen 1994; Risse-Kappen 1995; Doyle 1997; Russett and Oneal 2001). For example, *Scholar Google* indicates that the article in which Doyle (1983[a]: 230) originally posited that Western societies communicated "accurate conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples" is among the four most frequently cited articles in the 42-year history of *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.[49] In addition, Sigelman (2006) reported that Doyle's 1986 article in *American Political Science Review* —which also posits that Western societies have ready access to accurate information about the political world— was the 16th most cited article in the 100-year history of the prestigious journal. Doyle's scholarship also influenced the seminal work of Russett and Oneal (2001), some of whose postulations implicitly presuppose that Western conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples are free of the potentially distorting influences of their states' strategic and commercial

[49] Doyle's (1983[a]) first article in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* had such an impact on the IR sub-field that Robert Keohane (1989: 11) —long the most influential IR theorist in the United States— once cited that article *alone* in affirmation of his "own view" of whom democracies would be more inclined to fight and whom they would be at peace with.

interests.[50] Moreover, *Scholar Google* reports that Owen's 1994 article in *International Security* —which assumes that the "liberal ideas" of Western "liberal elites" are free of the potentially distorting influences of "power factors"— has been cited in over 600 publications. The second relevant observation is that, within the IR sub-field, there has been very little scrutiny of the aforementioned works' assumption that Western cultural discourses are free of the potentially distorting influences of the strategic and commercial interests of Western states.

To understand why the proponents of liberal-culturalist approaches have often assumed that the interests of Western states do not have distorting effects upon the ideas of Western publics or elites, we must first understand the crux of the historic "battle of the paradigms" in the IR sub-field. In the 1980s, the neorealist view that states' behaviors in the international system were fundamentally security-driven (as opposed to value-driven or institution-driven) was highly influential among American scholars of IR. Neorealists theorized that the decisions of states about which other states they would ally with and which other states they would seek to contain and deter (through military preparedness or war) were primarily driven by their calculations of what would best preserve or increase their own power and security in the world (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 1985; Walt 1987). Alternatively, the proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments suggested that the decisions of Western officials about which other states they would ally with and which other states they would fight were primarily driven by their societies' liberal values (Doyle 1983[a]; Doyle 1986; Owen 1994; Risse-Kappen 1995;

[50] Russett and Oneal's (2001: 62) assertion that the citizens of a liberal democracy "differentiate between democracies and autocracies as potential targets of military action" seems to presuppose that the information available to citizens is sufficiently unbiased to enable them to accurately assess the levels of democracy or autocracy in foreign countries.

Doyle 1997; Kahl 1998; Schimmelfennig 1998; Doyle 2005). However, scholars of the realist tradition had long challenged liberal-culturalist arguments by arguing that states often cloaked their quest for power and/or security in a language of universal justice (Carr 1940; Waltz 2000).[51] In turn, two influential liberal theorists —Michael Doyle and John Owen— deduced that one effective way to bolster the liberal-culturalist case in the face of such a realist rejoinder would be to boldly propose that the liberal worldviews of Western societies or elites operated independently of narrow strategic considerations in shaping the foreign policies of liberal democracies (Doyle 1983[a]; Doyle 1986; Owen 1994; Doyle 1997; Doyle 2005).

For the proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments, there were two advantages to offering the ideal-type proposition that strategic and commercial interests had no distorting effects upon Western conceptions of the political life of foreign peoples. Firstly, such a proposition suggested that neorealists could not validly dismiss Western worldviews (and their effects upon the foreign policies of Western states) as merely epiphenomenal to the strategic interests of Western states. For liberal-culturalist theorists, the other advantage of such a proposition was that neorealists would have difficulty contending with an argument about the political cultures of Western societies because the neorealist research program had been designed to avoid domestic-level analysis (on the grounds that international relations were primarily driven by the

[51] For example, Waltz (2000) suggests that liberal democracies sometimes redefine rival states as insufficiently democratic for the purpose of rationalizing bellicose positions that are more rooted in security concerns than in differences about political values. Casting doubt upon the notion that the motives of Western officials can be easily gleaned from their pronouncements, Waltz (2000: 10) writes: "A liberal democracy at war with another country is unlikely to call it a liberal democracy."

distribution of power *between* states rather than the political cultures and institutions *within* them).

Thus, Doyle's assumption that Western societies had ready access to accurate information about the political world served as a useful tool in the efforts of liberal-culturalist theorists to displace neorealism from its semi-paradigmatic position in the sub-field. As long as liberal-culturalist theorists could assume that attentive publics and/or elites accurately conceived of the state of democracy abroad, such theorists could argue that attentive publics and/or elites commanded the information they needed to be able to assess the political world in strict accordance with liberal values. Owen's (1994: 93, 100) argument that the liberal ideas of "liberal elites" served as an "independent variable" in shaping the foreign policies of Western states was a logical extension of Doyle's assumption that Western societies had ready access to accurate information about the political world. Doyle's assumption opened the way for Owen (1994) to argue that liberal elites' conceptions of the state of democracy abroad were free of the potentially distorting influences of "power factors" and thus had a purely liberal impact upon the state's foreign policies.

The influence of liberal-culturalist works has been further illustrated by the dearth of scholarly critiques of the proposition that this study calls into question. Few scholarly works have scrutinized Owen's (1994) suggestion that the liberal ideas of liberal elites operate independently of narrow strategic considerations in shaping the foreign policies of liberal democracies. More strikingly, 30 years have passed without *any* apparent scholarly discussion of the fact that Doyle's influential liberal-culturalist model *explicitly* assumes that Western societies have ready access to something approaching perfect

information about the political life of foreign peoples. Of course, the fact that there has been essentially negligible discussion of the aforementioned assumption does not signify that many IR theorists would not question the assumption. Nevertheless, given the absence of debate about the aforementioned assumption, one could logically infer that an important segment of the contemporary IR sub-field has viewed Doyle's reliance upon such an assumption as uncontroversial.

The realist-constructivist critique and the question of its empirical soundness

In view of the fact that the assumption of accurate information has been a core theoretical assumption of some influential liberal-culturalist works, there is good reason to assess whether or not the assumption has empirical merit. In the social sciences, part of the process of theoretical development involves empirically examining the assumptions upon which existing theories are based and offering the necessary correctives to such theories in the event that their underlying assumptions are shown to be flawed. Thus, the question to which we now turn is whether this study's critique of some liberal-culturalist approaches is empirically sound.

In presenting additional empirical evidence about which forces shaped official and cultural discourses about the political life of Latin Americans, this chapter has three central objectives. One is to compare liberal-culturalist predictions to how two leading U.S. newspapers —the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*— depicted the state of democracy under two big-market reformers, two allied counter-insurgent governments, and four left/unorthodox governments. Another objective is to determine whether official positions/narratives appear to have cued the press to underemphasize the illiberal

behaviors of allies and to overemphasize the undemocratic characteristics of rivals. And the third objective is to determine whether official positions/narratives were largely rooted in the strategic and commercial interests of the Western power in question.

The chapter thus intersperses descriptive analyses of the interests, positions and narratives of leading U.S. officials with statistical analyses of how the U.S. press depicted the state of democracy under each of the eight governments and how such depictions compared to the predictions of two liberal-culturalist models. Using the same measures of the dependent variable, I compare the predicted probabilities of two liberal-culturalist models to the frequency with which reports carried omnibus charges suggesting that a country was not fully democratic. While the first liberal-culturalist model employs the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable, the second liberal-culturalist model employs the more narrow measure (which is merely the measure of whether a report about the topic country carried an *explicit* charge that its government, ruling party or state apparatus acted undemocratically).

Table 4A. Weighted liberal-culturalist models, using both comprehensive and truncated measures of dependent variable

Variable	*Times* and *Post,* using comprehensive measure of dependent variable (N=2000)	*Times* and *Post,* using truncated measure of dependent variable (N=2000)
Country's level of deviation from optimal polity score	.06 (.01)***	.05 (.02)**
Country governed by leader who reversed democratic processes	.94 (.15)***	.90 (.17)***
Country was not a democracy under a previous government within past six years	.36 (.09)***	.41 (.11)***
Period following contested presidential election or referendum	1.26 (.33)***	1.35 (.32)***
Country is in crisis of constitutional succession	1.70 (.37)***	1.80 (.35)***
President's leverage in effort to rewrite constitution during process	1.81 (.41)***	1.75 (.45)***
President's leverage in rewriting constitution as predictor of unfavorable depictions after ratification	.91 (.50)	.83 (.55)
"Honeymoon" period for newly elected president whose election was not challenged	-.18 (.13)	-.27 (.16)
Presidential campaign period without incumbent in race	.20 (.09)*	.26 (.10)*
Presidential campaign period with incumbent in race	.38 (.16)*	.57 (.16)***
Report datelined from outside topic country	-.38 (.10)***	-.42 (.13)**
Constant	-1.41 (.07)***	-1.67 (.09)***
Log Likelihood	-2982.99***	-2306.80***

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Standard errors in parentheses.

To reiterate, the predictions of the liberal-culturalist models are designed to simulate what "objective" depictions of each country's state of democracy would look like by conventional liberal-democratic standards. Upon running probit regressions of the two liberal-culturalist models that (i) account for the countries' levels of deviation from liberal political norms and (ii) ignore the alliance/rivalry variables, I generate the models' predicted probabilities that each report would carry at least one charge that calls into question the quality of the topic country's democracy. By comparing official positions and narratives to the media's depictions and to the predictions of the liberal-culturalist models, we are able explore whether official positions/narratives appear to have caused major media to overstate the illiberal characteristics of rival governments and to understate the undemocratic characteristics of allied governments.

Cross-examining the first hypothesis: Official positions/narratives and media discourses about big-market reformers

In the 1990s, there was some variation in the degree to which Latin America's different big-market reformers adhered to democratic principles. Although Argentina in the early 1990s met minimal democratic standards, the country's president —Carlos Menem— relied extensively upon decree power to overcome legislative resistance to his program of deregulating the country's economy and privatizing state enterprises (O'Donnell 1994; Ferreira Rubio and Goretti 1998; Larkins 1998; Skene 2003). Alternatively, the Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso secured more modest market reforms while operating within a more democratic framework that involved

considerable negotiation with other branches of government (Power 2010).[52] Yet two things that Cardoso and Menem shared in common were that both received (i) accolades from leading U.S. officials and (ii) generous treatment from leading U.S. newspapers. Consistent with the first hypothesis, an analysis of official and media discourses about Menem and Cardoso's early presidencies provides some evidence to suggest causal relationships between U.S. commercial interests, official narratives in favor of big-market reformers, and the press' tendency to underemphasize the less democratic characteristics of large countries that are in critical periods of market transition.

During the periods of market transition in the region's largest economies, the Bush and Clinton Administrations tended to either exaggerate the democratic credentials of big-market reformers or to simply avoid discussing their countries' less democratic characteristics.[53] For example, President Bush's claim in 1991 that Menem was "one of the hemisphere's strongest defenders of democracy" was inconsistent with subsequent scholarly accounts of the ways that the Argentine president circumvented some checks on his power (O'Donnell 1994; Ferreira Rubio and Goretti 1998; Larkins 1998; Skene

[52] In the words of Power (2010: 227), Cardoso rejected former president Fernando Collor's "neoliberalism by imposition" in favor of "a reform program negotiated in concert with state governors and Congress."

[53] See George H. W. Bush: "Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico," *The American Presidency Project*, 3 October 1989; George H. W. Bush: "Question-and-Answer Section With Reporters in Montevideo, Uruguay," *American Presidency Project*, 4 December 1990; George H. W. Bush: "Question-and-Answer Section With Reporters in Buenos Aires, Argentina," *American Presidency Project*, 5 December 1990; George H. W. Bush: "Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for President Carlos Menem of Argentina," *American Presidency Project*, 14 November 1991; William J. Clinton: "Statement on the Meeting of the United States-Mexico Binational Commission," *The American Presidency Project*, 21 June 1993; William J. Clinton: "Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Carlos Saul Menem of Argentina," *American Presidency Project*, 29 June 1993; William J. Clinton, "The President's News Conference With President Carlos Saul Menem," *American Presidency Project*, 29 June 1993; and William J. Clinton, "Interview on CNN's 'Global Forum With President Clinton'," *American Presidency Project*, 3 May 1994.

2003).[54] The discrepancies between Menem's political behavior and official U.S. descriptions of his first term can best be understood as a result of the commercial interests of the American state. In essence, U.S.-Argentine relations in the early Menem years constituted a case of the hegemon's dilemma. As President Bush clarified during his visit to Argentina in 1990, his administration saw Argentina's "moves toward privatization and open markets" as of prime importance.[55] However, the economic reform program that U.S. officials advocated was not fully achievable via conventional democratic procedures, as there was significant opposition to many of Menem's proposals within Argentina's Congress (Skene 2003). Thus, U.S. officials were left with a choice between prioritizing certain economic prerogatives or promoting a liberal-democratic process of power-sharing between the Argentine presidency and the country's legislative branch. U.S. officials' decision to give priority to Menem's market reform program inevitably entailed (i) tacit support for the Argentine president's heavy reliance upon decree power and (ii) official obfuscation of Menem's deviations from democratic norms. In other words, U.S.-Argentine relations in the early Menem years demonstrate how U.S. commercial interests can have some distorting effects upon the ways that U.S. officials deliberate about the political life of a country that is in the midst of a critical period of market reform.[56]

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[54] See George H. W. Bush, "Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for President Carlos Menem of Argentina," *American Presidency Project*, 14 November 1991.

[55] See George Bush: "Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Buenos Aires, Argentina," *American Presidency Project*, 5 December 1990.

[56] Like the Bush Administration before it, the Clinton Administration exaggerated Menem's commitment to democratic norms. Toward the end of Argentina's critical period of market transition, President Clinton claimed on CNN that Menem had "maintained a strict adherence and support to democratic principles." See William J. Clinton, "Interview on CNN's 'Global Forum With President Clinton'," *American Presidency Project*, 3 May 1994.

In turn, the enthusiasm with which U.S. officials praised big-market reformers appears to have diminished the prestige press' ability to soberly assess the kinds of problems that Argentines and Brazilians faced in seeking to consolidate democratic institutions. While the first liberal-culturalist model predicts that between 14 and 15 of the 160 press reports about Menem's first three years would carry an assertion that Argentina was not fully democratic, content analysis reveals that only eight such reports conveyed such an assertion. Likewise, whereas the first liberal-culturalist model predicts that approximately seven of the 63 press reports about Cardoso's first three years would carry a claim that Brazil was not fully democratic, only one such report conveyed such an assertion. Two-tailed t-tests indicate that the differences between the predictions of the liberal-culturalist model and the actual frequencies with which reports questioned the democratic status of Brazil and Argentina under the two big-market reformers were statistically significant (see Figure 4A).

To be sure, President's Clinton's celebration of Cardoso's commitment to liberal-democratic principles had been closer to the mark than U.S. leaders' portrayals of Menem's behaviors.[57] Nevertheless, a comparison of the predictions of the first liberal-culturalist model to how official and media discourses depicted the state of democracy in Argentina and Brazil indicates that official celebrations of Menem and Cardoso coincided with the press' tendency to downplay not only Menem's breaches of democratic norms but also Brazil's less democratic characteristics.[58] Independently of Cardoso's

[57] During Cardoso's first visit to Washington as the newly elected president of Brazil, President Clinton noted that Cardoso had been a "fighter for democracy throughout his life." See William J. Clinton: "The President's News Conference With President Fernando Cardoso of Brazil," *American Presidency Project*, 20 April 1995.

[58] It should be noted, however, that the difference between the prediction of the *second* liberal-culturalist model and the frequency with which the press presented explicit charges that Argentina under Menem was not fully democratic is not statistically significant (see Figure 6A in the appendices).

commitment to democracy, Brazil during Cardoso's early years had some problems that social scientists would not typically associate with an advanced level of democratic development. For example, the persistence of quasi-slavery in the countryside and the fact that Brazil had no formal prohibition on police torture at the beginning of Cardoso's term suggested that Brazil was still in the process of developing liberal-democratic legal institutions (Chase 1999; Pereira and Ungar 2004; Ahnen 2007). Although press reports occasionally alluded to the aforementioned problems, no *Times* or *Post* report explicitly framed such problems as possible evidence that Brazilian democracy had yet to be fully consolidated.[59]

Likewise, despite the fact that Menem's heavy use of decree power began from the outset of his presidency, it was not until the third year of his first term that a *Times* report finally suggested that the Argentine president's frequent use of decree power might be damaging to democracy.[60] Moreover, the prestige press seemed reluctant to raise the issue of Menem's encroachments upon the independence of the judiciary. During Menem's first year in office, he moved to expand the size of Argentina's Supreme Court from five to nine justices so as to be able to appoint several new justices and to thereby exert great influence over the Court (López 1997; Larkins 1998). However, the first of

[59] In August of 1995, the *Times* published a report about the persistence of slave-like labor conditions in the Brazilian countryside. The *Times* also reported in May of 1996 that police torture in Brazil was still among the human rights problems that were "not considered crimes at all." See "Of Modern Bondage – A special report; Brazilian Chained to Job, and Desperate," *New York Times*, 10 August 1995; and "Brazil's President Offers Plan to Curb Human Rights Abuses," *New York Times*, 17 May 1996: A11.

[60] On November 2, 1991, the *Times* paraphrased political analysts as saying that Menem's use of decree power was "weakening the democratic process in Argentina and creating a highly autocratic executive branch with almost no checks." See "Argentina Deregulates Its Economy," *New York Times*, 2 November 1991: Section 1, Page 3.

the prestige press' reports about Menem's "packing" of Argentina's Supreme Court did not appear until more than a year-and-a-half after the Court's expansion.[61]

The fact that correspondents frequently reported from Argentina but largely avoided discussion of Menem's early breaches of liberal norms suggests that U.S. officials' strategic alliance with Menem played an important role in deflecting the prestige press' attention from the Argentine president's less democratic behaviors. The evidence appears consistent with the proposition that journalists would downplay an ally's breaches of democratic norms because reporting that underemphasized the ally's illiberal behaviors would more closely conform to U.S. preconceptions of allied actors. Placed into comparative perspective, the press' reluctance to discuss the less democratic characteristics of large market-reforming countries suggests that journalists' proclivities to defer to official narratives restricted their openness to information that did not cohere with such narratives.[62] Because journalists and editors had been socialized to largely reconcile their news frames about rivals and allies with official positions/narratives, news frames about the early Menem and Cardoso years seldom diverged from the official narratives that Argentina and Brazil constituted model democracies.

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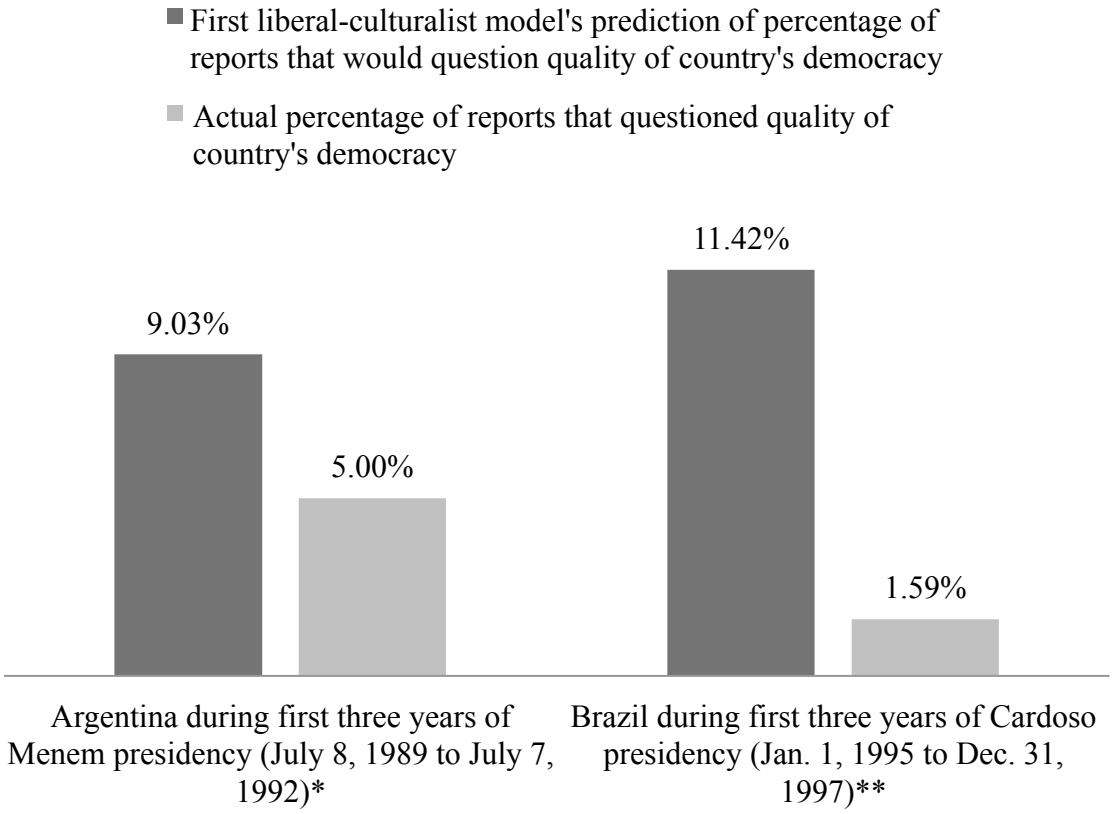
[61] Argentina's Senate approved the expansion of the country's Supreme Court and Menem's appointments to the newly expanded Court in April of 1990 (López 1997). However, it was not until December 15, 1991 that the *Times* first reported that Menem had "arbitrarily decided to expand the number of judges on the Supreme Court" during his first year in office. It should be emphasized that the *Times* and *Post*'s delayed and infrequent attention to Menem's early breaches of liberal norms cannot be explained by any purported disinterest in Argentine politics. The two newspapers' correspondents frequently reported from Argentina during Menem's first three years in office (see Figure 4A). See "Justice Proves Sluggish in Argentine Scandals," *New York Times*, 15 December 1991: Section 1, Page 19.

[62] News personnel were clearly cognizant of the fact that leading U.S. officials celebrated the politics of Menem and Cardoso. Less than a year-and-a-half into Menem's first term, the *Times* reported that President Bush "praised the leadership of Mr. Menem." Similarly, the *Times* reported early in Cardoso's presidency that, "From the [Clinton] Administration's point of view, Mr. Cardoso has done all the right things since coming to power…" See "Argentina Hailed by Visiting Bush," *New York Times*, 6 December 1990: A15; and "Mending Ties, U.S. Praises Brazil Leader," *New York Times*, 21 April 1995: A8.

Figure 4A. Comparing predictions of first liberal-culturalist model with percentage of press reports questioning quality of democracy under big-market reformers (using comprehensive measure of dependent variable)



* A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Argentine democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .05$). Among the 160 reports about Argentina during the period, 92 were published in the *Times* and 68 in the *Post*. If we look at the *Times* reports alone, however, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that questioned the quality of Argentine democracy during the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. 6.52 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 2.94 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Argentine democracy, according to the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Brazilian democracy and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Of the 63 reports about Brazil during the period, 41 were published in the *Times* and 22 in the *Post*. 2.44 percent of the reports in the *Times* and none of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Brazilian democracy in the period. One-third of the reporting about Cardoso's first three years in office fell within the last three months of that period, during which Cardoso was up for reelection. In periods when presidents are up for reelection, reports have a higher probability of calling the country's state of democracy into question, which is the primary reason why the first liberal-culturalist model predicted that reporting would be slightly more critical of Brazil's state of democracy than Argentina's. Interestingly, however, none of the 21 reports about Cardoso that fell within the election year carried charges calling into question the quality of Brazilian democracy.

Cross-examining the second hypothesis: Official positions/narratives and media discourses about the Pastrana and Uribe governments

The second hypothesis suggests that we should expect the prestige press to underemphasize the more illiberal characteristics of Colombia under Pastrana and Uribe in much the same way that the *Times* and *Post* downplayed the less democratic traits of Argentina and Brazil under Menem and Cardoso. In essence, the theory behind the second hypothesis is a two-step theory of how U.S. officials and major U.S. media would shape American cultural discourse about the political life of Colombians. Firstly, in light of the U.S. policy shift toward a high level of military and economic assistance to Colombia following the 1998 election of Pastrana, the theory suggests that U.S. officials would work to uphold the image of Colombian governments. For leading U.S. officials, the primary purpose of projecting a positive image of allied counter-insurgent governments would be to help such governments garner the support of U.S. cultural elites, attentive publics and Congress. The cultivation of public and congressional support would be central to assisting allied Colombian governments in their battles with left-wing insurgents and in their disputes with Venezuela's Chávez government, a left/unorthodox rival of the United States. Such public relations work on behalf of allied counter-insurgent governments would thereby help sustain the credibility and prestige of the American state once it had forged an alliance with the Colombian state. Official exaggerations of Colombia's democratic qualities would help leading U.S. officials to avoid political obstacles to continued U.S. aid to the Colombian state and to prop up allied counter-insurgent governments as reliable counterweights to an emerging Left in the region. The second part of the theory suggests that U.S. newspapers would

commonly defer to the official positions/narratives and thereby downplay Colombia's breaches of democratic norms.

Consistent with the theory behind the second hypothesis, the evidence suggests that the strategic interests of the American state strongly influenced official narratives about the state of democracy in Colombia. Indeed, Colombia presented U.S. officials with another case of the hegemon's dilemma. The Colombian military had a poor human rights record at the same time that the rule of law within the country was precarious (Leogrande and Sharpe 2000; Áviles 2001; Goodwin 2001; Áviles 2006[b]; Leogrande 2007; Richani 2007; Hristov 2009; Hunt 2009; Rojas 2009; Pearce 2010). Although Colombia had the institutional trappings of democracy (insofar as there was significant separation of powers), the country also exhibited an abnormally high level of impediments to the abilities of citizens, journalists and activists to freely exercise the kinds of rights that one would associate with a modern form of democracy (Áviles 2001; Áviles 2006[b]; Zuloaga Nieto 2007; Rojas 2009). Some indications of the Colombian state's failures to protect the civil and social rights of citizens are that Colombian journalists and trade unionists were killed at some of the highest rates in the world during the period of study (Livingstone 2003).[63] Naturally, leading U.S. officials had no perceived interest in bringing attention to the Colombian state's failures to protect the civil and social rights of citizens, for such scrutiny would have likely complicated efforts to secure greater congressional aid for the Colombian state and to prop it up as a regional

[63] The Committee to Protect Journalists listed Colombia as one of the ten worst places to be a journalist in 2002. See "Attacks on the Press 2002: Colombia," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 31 March 2003. In 2010, the International Trade Union Confederation reported that "Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for those exercising the right to freedom of association" and that "Colombia accounts for 63.12% of the trade unionists murdered over the last decade around the world." See "ITUC responds to the press release issued by the Colombian Interior Ministry concerning its survey," *International Trade Union Confederation*, 11 June 2010.

counterweight to an emerging Left. Thus, leading officials opted for a course of praising the Pastrana and Uribe governments and largely obfuscating the Colombian state's less democratic characteristics.[64] In essence, the threats that U.S. officials perceived from left-wing guerrillas and left/unorthodox governments in the region appear to have motivated officials to ally themselves with Pastrana and Uribe and divert attention from the less democratic characteristics of the Colombian state.

Although the threats posed by Colombia's guerrillas soon abated, the other perceived threat from an emerging Left in the wider region appeared to motivate the Bush Administration to align closely with the Uribe government (Leogrande 2007; Zuloaga Nieto 2007). Indeed, the nature of the alliance between Bush and Uribe would not be fully comprehensible in the absence of a larger regional challenge from an emerging Left. Without the emergence of left-leaning governments in the region, Bush's closeness with Colombia's controversial president would have likely raised more questions from congress and the press about the Bush Administration's commitments to democracy promotion. Uribe had a highly controversial political history, firstly as a Colombian Senator with alleged ties to the Medellin drug cartel and then as a state governor with known ties to groups accused of having committed widespread human rights abuses.[65] Uribe also contributed to a climate of intimidation of many of his domestic critics, both

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[64] President Clinton's admonition that "we are called upon to stand for democracy under attack in Colombia" was exemplary of how the immediate strategic objective of defending the Colombian state prompted leading officials to exaggerate its adherence to democratic norms. Likewise, after Uribe was elected in 2002, leading Bush Administration officials were quick to embrace him as a close ally and "friend of freedom." See William J. Clinton: "Remarks at the Council of the Americas 30th Washington Conference," *American Presidency Project*, 2 May 2000; and George W. Bush, "Remarks Prior to Discussions with President Álvaro Uribe of Colombia and an Exchange With Reporters," *American Presidency Project*, 25 September 2002.

[65] See "'91 U.S. Report Calls Colombian Leader Ally of Drug Lords," *New York Times*, 2 August 2004: A6; "A Hawk's Candidacy Gains in Besieged Colombia," *New York Times*, 30 May 2001: A1; and "Hard-Liner Elected in Colombia With Mandate to Crush Rebels," *New York Times*, 27 May 2002: A1.

before and during his presidency (Ayala Osorio 2006).[66] However, in the context of the emerging political challenges to American prerogatives in Latin America, Bush's closeness with Uribe becomes more comprehensible. One *Times* report suggested that Bush embraced Uribe because he sought "a reliable ally" in a region rife with "anti-American sentiment."[67] Consistent with the theory behind the second hypothesis, Bush could look to Uribe as a reliable counterweight to the region's emerging Left because Uribe depended upon U.S. favor to continue acquiring the assistance he needed to effectively combat the guerrillas. Moreover, under the conditions of the time, Bush had relatively little reason to be concerned about domestic criticism of his relationship with Uribe. With the temporary rise of Chávez's regional influence, most leading congressional Democrats deemed it inexpedient to criticize Bush's relations with Uribe, for such criticism would risk the counter-accusation that Democrats were seeking to abandon one of the few reliable allies the U.S. had left.[68]

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[66] When Uribe emerged as the frontrunner for Colombia's presidency in 2002, a number of prominent Colombian journalists who were critical of Uribe's past came under death threat. Although Uribe himself was never directly implicated in the threats against critics, his public denunciations of particular Colombian journalists often prompted anonymous threats against the figures in question. Of course, Uribe and the paramilitary groups that initially supported his presidency were not alone in threatening the freedom of expression, as the country's left-wing insurgents were also implicated in intimidating and attacking journalists. Nevertheless, some of Uribe's own actions contributed to a pattern whereby Colombian journalists commonly engaged in self-censorship as a means of avoiding reprisals (Ayalo Osorio 2006). In 2005, the American journalist Chip Mitchell noted that "Colombia may be unique in the extent to which its press censors itself in fear of physical reprisals." See "Destacado columnista huye del país," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 29 March 2002; "Attacks on the press 2002: Colombia," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 31 March 2002; "Local press under siege amid escalating violence, CPJ finds," *Committee to Protect Journalists* 26 April 2002; "Threatened on all sides, Colombia's news media muzzle themselves," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 29 October 2005; "Attacks on the press 2003: Colombia," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 11 March 2004; "Attacks on the press 2005: Colombia," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 16 February 2005; "The Hands That Feed," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 29 October 2005; and "A Reporter on the Lam in Latin America," *Miami New Times*, 18 October 2007.

[67] See "Bush, in Colombia, Promises More Aid," *New York Times*, 23 November 2004: A3.

[68] That such counter-accusations would likely be in store for prominent congressional critics of Uribe could occasionally be gleaned from the editorials of the *Washington Post*. For example, a July 2003 editorial stressed that Uribe had become "the Bush administration's strongest Latin American ally" and that congressional critics of increased military assistance to the country had been "wrong." A review of

Of course, the study's realist-constructivist approach suggests not only that strategic prerogatives would generate considerable consensus among leading political elites in favor of the Pastrana and Uribe governments but also that such consensus would cue journalists to underemphasize Colombia's less democratic characteristics. And indeed, the evidence is clear that the prestige press downplayed Colombia's breaches of liberal norms during Pastrana and Uribe's first three years in office. As in the case of the reporting about Menem and Cardoso, the percentage of press reports that called into question the quality of Colombian democracy under Pastrana and Uribe was markedly lower than what the first liberal-culturalist model predicts (see Figure 4B).[69] Whereas the model predicts that that approximately 20 of the 201 press reports about Pastrana's first three years would carry a claim that Colombia was not fully democratic, content analysis indicates that only seven such reports conveyed such an assertion. Likewise, while the first liberal-culturalist model predicts that approximately 12 of the 122 press reports about Uribe's first three years would present claims that Colombia was not fully democratic, only seven such reports carried such assertions. Two-tailed t-tests indicate that the differences between the predictions of the liberal-culturalist model and the actual

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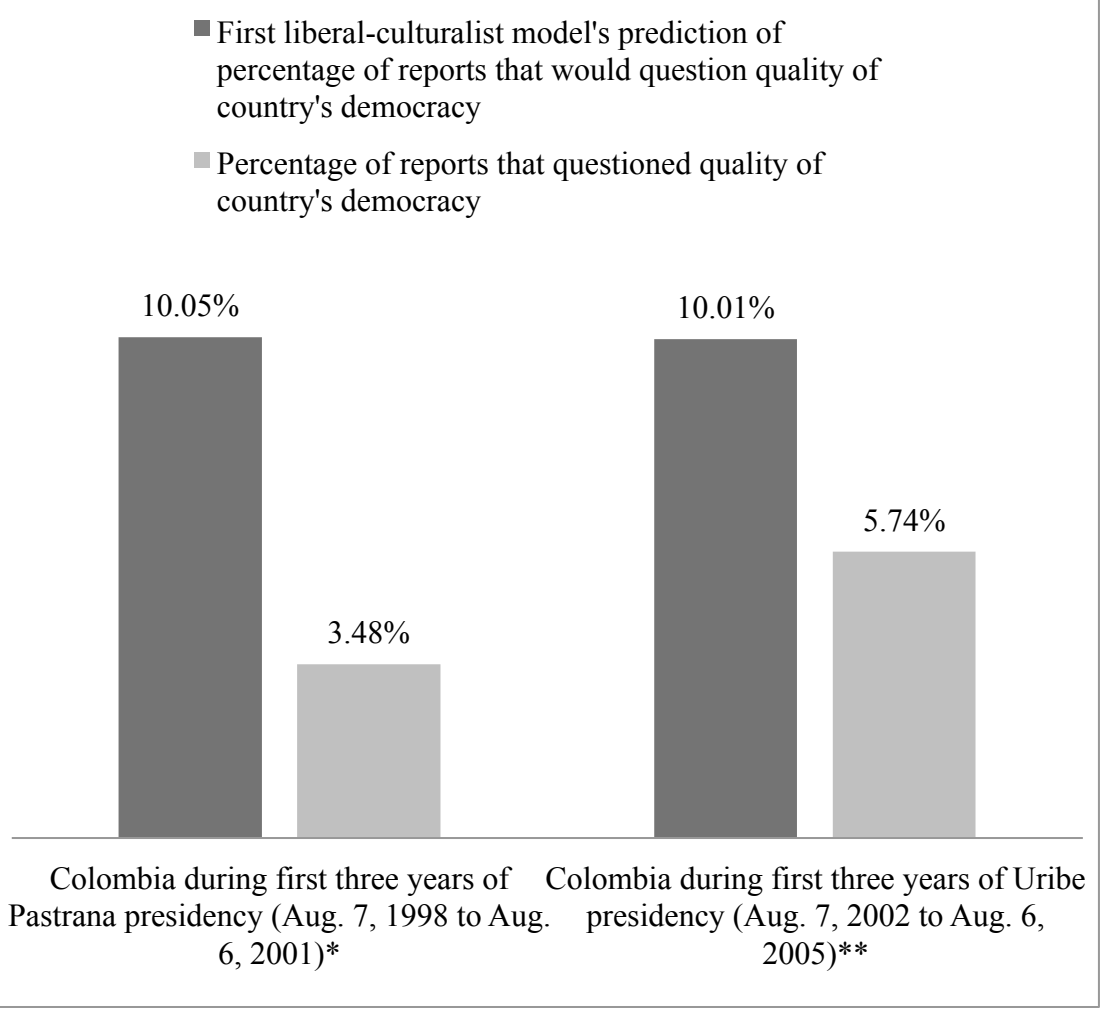
Federal News Service transcripts of congressional hearings suggests that, amidst the strategic environment within which the U.S. congress operated in the early Uribe years, the perceived necessity of cultivating a regional counterweight to Chávez rendered congressional Democrats more reticent about Uribe's less democratic characteristics. A statement by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) seemed to typify the Democrats' general reluctance to scrutinize the Bush Administration's praise of Uribe. Given that Dodd had a long history of challenging Republican Administrations on questions of human rights, one might have expected that he would raise concerns about Uribe's past in Senate hearings. Instead, Dodd's only comment about Uribe in a subcommittee hearing was that he was "encouraged" by the new Colombian leader and was merely concerned that the situation in the country "seemed to have deteriorated a bit" insofar as the level of violence had increased during Uribe's first year in office. See "Colombia's Results," *Washington Post*, 13 July 2003: B06; and "Hearing of the Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps and Narcotics Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," *Federal News Service*, 3 June 2003.

[69] It should be noted, however, that, if we look at *Times* reports *alone*, the difference between the percentage of such reports that questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Uribe's first three years in office and the predicted percentage of the liberal-culturalist models is not statistically significant (See Figures 4B and 6B).

frequencies with which reports questioned the democratic status of Colombia under the two allied counter-insurgent governments were statistically significant (see Figure 4B). In other words, judged against the liberal-culturalist model's estimation of what an objective portrayal of Colombia's state of democracy would have looked like during Pastrana and Uribe's early presidencies, the *Times* and *Post*'s reporting about the country was not particularly objective. The tendency of the prestige press to downplay Colombia's more illiberal characteristics was exemplary of how the dominant culture of the United States would commonly obfuscate the ways that the American state casually deviated from its professed liberalism in its relations with strategic allies.

In sum, the correlation between official narratives and media depictions about Colombia's state of democracy suggests that journalists tended to succumb to official and cultural pressures to downplay Colombia's less democratic characteristics because uncritical media depictions of an allied government would more closely conform to prevailing national identities. The fact that U.S. correspondents paid little attention to the Colombian state's failures to protect the civil and social rights of citizens suggests that the cultural authority of the American state significantly limited journalists' openness to information that was dissonant with official narratives. Thus, within the United States, there was relatively little cultural scrutiny of the Clinton and Bush administrations' uncritical support of two Colombian governments that did not consistently adhere to democratic norms.

Figure 4B. Comparing predictions of first liberal-culturalist model with percentage of reports that questioned Colombia's quality of democracy under allied counter-insurgent governments (using the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable)



*A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Pastrana's first three years in office and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Among the 201 reports about Colombia during the period, 109 were published in the *Times* and 92 in the *Post*. 2.75 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 4.35 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Colombian democracy during Pastrana's first three years in office.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Uribe's first three years in office and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .05$). If we look at the *Times* reports alone, however, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Of the 122 reports about Colombia during Uribe's early presidency, 74 were published in the *Times* and 48 in the *Post*. 8.1 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 2.08 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Colombian democracy during Uribe's first three years in office.

Cross-examining the third hypothesis: Official positions/narratives and media discourses about left/unorthodox governments

In one sense, an examination of the interests of the American state vis-à-vis left/unorthodox governments and official and media discourses about such governments suggests that U.S. relations with left/unorthodox governments are more complex than the third hypothesis suggests. Because of the variation in the strategic environments under which different left/unorthodox governments came to power, U.S. officials' calculations of what constituted the most risk-averse way to initially approach different left/unorthodox governments varied. U.S. officials were more reluctant to criticize left/unorthodox governments that came to power after 2002 because the potential costs of a hostile approach to a "second-generation" left/unorthodox government were higher in a context in which multiple left-leaning leaders held office in the region (and could conceivably help each other to resist American pressure). For strategic reasons, U.S. officials were not immediately inclined to signal that a second-generation left/unorthodox government was a budding rival. In turn, the press was also not immediately inclined to exaggerate the less democratic characteristics of a second-generation left/unorthodox government.

Table 4B: First and second-generation left/unorthodox presidents in the post-Cold War era

First-generation left/unorthodox presidents (elected in five-year period between 1998 and 2002)	Second-generation left/unorthodox presidents (elected in five-year period between 2003 and 2007)
Hugo Chávez	Nestor Kirchner Evo Morales Rafael Correa Cristina Fernández de Kirchner

In another sense, however, this chapter's analysis of official and media discourses about different left/unorthodox governments illustrates the explanatory power of the causal mechanisms to which the study points. Consistent with a central proposition of the study, official positions and narratives appear to have significantly influenced how U.S. news organizations depicted the political life of countries governed by left/unorthodox leaders. When the American state's initial approach to a left/unorthodox government involved official statements portraying the government as a potentially autocratic rival, such narratives appear to have played an important role in spurring the press to immediately exaggerate the government's illiberal behaviors. Alternatively, when leading U.S. officials initially took a more diplomatic approach toward a newly elected left/unorthodox government, the press' initial depiction of the political life of the country was more measured.

To reiterate, the American state's decisions about which initial approach to take toward a left/unorthodox governments were largely contingent upon the correlation of political forces within Latin America at the time of the government's rise. In the one case in which a left/unorthodox government came to office at a time when no other challenger to American hegemony held the executive office of an OAS member state, U.S. officials were less diplomatic in their initial approach to the government in question. Under the latter set of conditions, the allure of a partially undiplomatic approach appears to have been that the left-wing government's lack of natural allies would augment the capabilities of U.S. officials to isolate the government and would thus provide U.S. officials with greater leverage to pressure the government. Alternatively, when a left/unorthodox government came to office at a time when other left-leaning actors held

important positions of power within the region, U.S. officials would initially adopt a more diplomatic approach toward such a government. U.S. officials appeared to surmise that, when a newly elected left/unorthodox government had natural allies among OAS member states, an initially undiplomatic approach could push the government in a more hostile direction, as it would have less reason to fear U.S. efforts to isolate it when there were other left-leaning governments to which it could turn for support.

Nevertheless, the chapter's analysis suggests that second-generation left/unorthodox governments may still remain vulnerable to hostility from the American state and press because the conflicts of interest between U.S. officials and the governments in question can eventually develop into open rivalries. While U.S. officials initially adopted diplomatic approaches toward second-generation left/unorthodox governments, the decision about whether to persist with such diplomacy seems to have been partially contingent upon whether U.S. officials viewed such governments as potentially conciliatory. When leading U.S. officials came to see a second-generation left/unorthodox government as perpetually defiant, their approaches to the government became less diplomatic. In turn, once U.S. officials definitively signaled that a left/unorthodox government was a budding rival, such signals appear to have cued the press to overemphasize the government's less democratic characteristics. Thus, the evidence remains fundamentally consistent with the study's proposition that journalists were casually socialized to frame the United States' foreign rivalries in terms of the democracy/autocracy duality.

Official positions/narratives and media discourses about the Chávez and Morales governments

Among all the modern conditions in which left/unorthodox figures have won presidential elections in Latin America, the conditions under which Hugo Chávez won Venezuela's presidential election in late 1998 were the least conducive to measured American discourse about the political life of the country in question. At the time of Chávez's election, the former lieutenant colonel had few natural allies in the Western hemisphere, for Chávez was the first left-populist figure to be elected president of a South American country since the end of the Cold War. This chapter's comparative analysis suggests that, because Chávez initially lacked many regional allies to whom he could turn for support, U.S. officials initially calculated that open scrutiny of his actions would likely be an effective way to pressure him to avoid radical measures.

Although the Clinton Administration's relations with Chávez were not as tense as those of subsequent U.S. administrations, its approach to the new Venezuelan president was not particularly cordial. Rather than quietly seeking to encourage the former Venezuelan coup plotter to operate within democratic parameters and to moderate his program, Clinton Administration officials immediately alerted the press of their concerns about Chávez's intentions. Just four days after Chávez was elected, the *Washington Post* reported that "several administration officials" had told the *Post* that "they feared Chávez would attempt to use his broad support for fighting corruption to assume near dictatorial powers…"[70] Thus, even before Chávez had assumed office, U.S. officials had cued the press that Venezuela's president-elect was likely to be in the category of autocratic rivals. Comparative analysis suggests that the unusually blunt manner in which the Clinton

[70] See "U.S. Warns Incoming Venezuelan President; Radical Political or Economic Measures Could Sour Relations, Chávez is Told," *Washington Post*, 10 December 1998: A18.

administration initially expressed its concerns about Chávez's election was primarily due to Chávez's status as the only elected leader of an OAS member state to explicitly challenge the American state's political and economic vision for the region at the time.[71]

Of course, one plausible counter-hypothesis would be that the Clinton Administration's early expressions of concern about Chávez had less to do with his status as Latin America's first new challenger than with genuine doubts about his commitment to democracy, in light of his history as a failed coup plotter. However, comparative analysis of U.S. responses to the elections of various Latin American presidents gives us reason to doubt that U.S. concerns about Chávez's commitment to democracy were the primary motive behind the official alarmism following his election. Since the end of the Cold War, Chávez was only one among several Latin American political figures who won presidential elections despite having political histories that would have called into question their commitments to democratic norms. Such figures have ranged from Chávez, to Uribe, to Bolivia's former military dictator Hugo Banzer, to Ecuador's former coup leader Lucio Gutierrez, to Peru's former military insurrectionist Ollanta Humala. Yet in no case *except* that concerning Chávez does one find that U.S. officials issued

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[71] As the *Post* reported, the Clinton Administration was at first concerned that Chávez might "honor promises to stop payments of Venezuela's $22 billion foreign debt, and reverse key privatization initiatives in the state's petroleum industry." Although Chávez did not fulfill all such pledges in his early years, his commitment to an independent foreign policy —characterized by his closeness with Cuba and his criticism of increased U.S. military assistance to Colombia— would also create "friction between Caracas and Washington." By the endpoint of Chávez's first year in office, the *Inter Press Service* correspondent Luis Córdova observed that "disagreements between Venezuela and the United States have come up several times" since Chávez's inauguration. After the Clinton Administration's initial expressions of concern about Chávez's 1998 election, official positions/narratives continued to signal the press that the state viewed Chávez as a probable rival. In September of 1999, a *Post* correspondent reporting from Caracas noted that the United States "expressed concerns on several occasions over recent developments here, imploring Chávez not to ignore legalities in his efforts to overhaul the political system." See "U.S. Warns Incoming Venezuelan President; Radical Political or Economic Measures Could Sour Relations, Chávez is Told," *Washington Post*, 10 December 1998: A18; "Getting the Word Out; Venezuela's Populist Leader Says Opponents' 'Lies' Have Led to U.S. Misperception of His Reform Drive," *Washington Post*, 6 September 1999: A21; and "Politics-Venezuela: Chávez Denounces Alleged Smear Campaign," *Inter Press Service*, 7 December 2000.

statements immediately after a leader's election that questioned his or her commitment to democracy.[72] Thus, it would appear that Chávez's status as the first new Latin American challenger to U.S. hegemony was the primary impetus behind the unusual bluntness with which U.S. officials immediately called into question his commitment to democracy.

Of course, it was perfectly understandable that U.S. journalists and analysts would initially exhibit some concern about Chávez's original plan of organizing an election of a constituent assembly that would rewrite Venezuela's constitution and replace the country's congress.[73] Indeed, the liberal-culturalist model predicts a high degree of media questioning of Chávez's commitment to democracy during his first year in office, mostly because the configuration of power within the country's newly elected constituent assembly heavily favored Chávez and thus portended an expansion of presidential power in the new constitution.[74] Although Venezuela met minimal democratic standards in the early years of Chávez's presidency, Coppedge (2003) and Corrales (2009) find that the

[72] With respect to Banzer, Uribe, Gutierrez and Humala, the *Times* and *Post*'s reporting in the weeks following their elections does not indicate that U.S. officials expressed concerns to the prestige press about their commitments to democracy. Despite Banzer's seven-year military dictatorship in the 1970s, the one *Post* report that refers to official statements about his 1997 election gives no indication that U.S. officials questioned his commitment to democracy. Rather, the *Post* noted that some unnamed officials expressed concern about Banzer's commitment to the fight against narco-trafficking. A review of the reporting of the *Associated Press* and *Inter Press Service* and of the transcripts of the *Federal News Service* further indicates that, despite Banzer's history, U.S. officials did not question his commitment to democratic norms. See "Newly Elected Ex-Dictator Vows to Wage War on Drugs in Bolivia; U.S. is Skeptical of Banzer's Pledge to Eradicate Trafficking," *Washington Post*, 4 August 1997, A15.

[73] In the wake of Venezuela's election of the constituent assembly that was tasked with rewriting the constitution, the *New York Times* reported that, "since being sworn into office in February, Mr. Chavez… has repeatedly maintained that the constituent assembly will have the power to dissolve Congress and courts and should do so, a position he mentioned again tonight in his speech." See "Vote Pushes Power Toward Venezuelan Leader," *New York Times*, 26 July 1999: A8.

[74] The liberal-culturalist model that employs the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable predicts that approximately half of press reports about Chávez's first year in office would call into question the quality of Venezuelan democracy. While candidates aligned with Chávez won approximately 70 percent of the popular vote in the constituent assembly elections of 1999, their share of assembly seats was even greater due to an ad-hoc selection rule that favored *Chavista* candidates (Coppedge 2003; Corrales 2009).

ways in which Chávez and his supporters initially rewrote the country's constitution and governed with few checks on their power were in breach of several democratic norms.

Nevertheless, when we compare the predicted probabilities of the liberal-culturalist model to the prestige press' depictions of Chávez's first three years in office, we find that the aggressiveness with which the press called into question Chávez's commitment to democracy significantly exceeded what the country's actual levels of deviation from liberal norms could explain (see Figure 4C).[75] While the first liberal-culturalist model predicts that between 43 and 44 of the 154 press reports about Chávez's first three years would carry an assertion that Venezuela was not fully democratic, content analysis reveals that 67 such reports conveyed such an assertion. A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the prediction of the first liberal-culturalist model and the actual frequency with which reports questioned the democratic status of Venezuela under Chávez was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Indeed, despite the fact that Venezuela emerged from Chávez's first year as a country that continued to have competitive elections and some (albeit fewer) institutional checks on the president's power, the percentage of reports in which correspondents referred to charges of authoritarianism against Chávez was disproportionately high (see Figure 6C in the

[75] As an example of the two newspapers' periodic use of hyperbole in their reporting about Chávez's early presidency, U.S. correspondents tendentiously referred to Chávez as a "strongman" on a number of occasions. In 2000, for example, two *Times* reports referred to Chávez as a "strongman" and a *Post* report described Chávez as among "a new group of Latin American strongmen." As the political scientist Jules Boykoff (2009: 10) points out, the term "strongman" is "usually reserved for unelected leaders." Boykoff's (2009) content analysis of press reporting about Chávez's presidency suggests that the frequency with which correspondents referred to charges of authoritarianism against Chávez bordered on a kind of hysteria. See "Cloud on Fujimori's Future Shadows Voting in Peru," *New York Times*, 9 April 2000, Section 1, Page 8; "The Andes in Tumult, Shaken by Political Tremors," 23 April 2000: Section 1, Page 3; and "Unpredictable Fujimori Is an Enigma to the End; Peruvian set style of the elected authoritarian," *Washington Post*, 18 September 2000: A14.

appendices).[76] The tendency of *Times* and *Post* correspondents to overemphasize the undemocratic characteristics of Chávez's early presidency is consistent with the proposition that open official signaling of a budding rivalry will cue journalists to focus more upon charges of authoritarianism against the rival in question.

In essence, the study suggests that official positions/narratives and the predominant belief structures of the society created a set of journalistic incentives that were not entirely conducive to objective reporting about Chávez's early presidency. Because of the United States' celebrated history of rivalries with powerful authoritarian states, the notion that rivals are autocratic will commonly resonate within American society (Oren 2003). Thus, when U.S. officials characterized Chávez as a budding rival, journalists could reconcile their news frames with both the narratives of the state and the predominant belief structures of the society by overemphasizing the rival's purported authoritarianism.

In contrast, the conditions under which Evo Morales won Bolivia's presidential election were more conducive to measured discourse about the political life of his country because U.S. officials did not have strong incentives to immediately cast Morales as a budding rival. An initially aggressive approach toward Morales would have come with more risks because there were multiple left-wing governments in the region by the

[76] It should be noted that, even by some of the most critical accounts of Chávez's early presidency, it is questionable that the press' incessant focus upon his purported authoritarianism conveyed an accurate picture of Venezuelan political life. While Coppedge (2007: 37) strongly criticized Chávez's disrespect for the separation of powers, he nonetheless felt compelled to concede as late as 2007 that Venezuela's political regime "is not totalitarian, and it may not even be authoritarian." While Corrales (2009: 12, 24-25) was also highly critical of Venezuela's "hyperpresidentialism" under Chávez, he nonetheless noted that the 1999 constitution did not grant Chávez "the power to rule by decree in some areas" and that "these limitations on presidential powers are important because they mean that presidents still required 'partisan powers' (Congressional majorities, disciplined ruling party) to rule unencumbered."

time Morales took power.[77] In the words of John Walsh of the Washington Office on Latin America, "it would be unwise to isolate and push" Morales, for he had "other options for aid and patronage" and would thus be less amenable to U.S. pressure.[78] Hence, U.S. officials made a calculated decision to at first approach Morales diplomatically. Unlike the official reaction to Chávez's first election, U.S. officials did not immediately issue pointed statements suggesting that Bolivia's president-elect would likely govern in an authoritarian manner. Rather, despite the fact that Morales had made unflattering statements about the Bush Administration during his campaign, the *Post* quoted an anonymous official as stating that the administration was "keeping an open mind" about Morales but that its relations with his government would ultimately depend upon Morales' decisions.[79] Soon thereafter, the Bush Administration made some efforts to reach out to Morales, which included (i) Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Shannon's early conversations with Morales, (ii) President Bush's congratulatory call to Morales after his inauguration, and (iii) Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice's meeting with Morales at Chile's inauguration of President Bachelet in March of 2006.[80]

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[77] Between Venezuela's election of Chávez in 1998 and Bolivia's election of Morales seven years later, the politics of much of Latin America had undergone a significant shift to the left (Vanderbush 2009). After the failed attempts of Chávez's opposition to oust him in 2002-2003, the Venezuelan president gained control of the country's vital oil industry and managed to consolidate his political position and to win a referendum on his rule in 2004 (Hellinger 2005). In addition, a left-of-center Argentine politician —Nestor Kirchner— won the country's presidency in 2003 and gained significant popular support for refusing to fully repay Argentina's debts to foreign bondholders (Hellinger 2011). Perhaps most importantly, the moderately leftist former trade unionist Luiz Inacio "Lula" Da Silva won the presidential election of Brazil in late 2002.

[78] See "For Bolivian Victor, A Powerful Mandate; Populist Faces Practical Constraints," *Washington Post*, 20 December 2005: A1.

[79] Ibid.

[80] See "U.S. Secretary of State Shannon wishes Bolivia's president 'success'," *Associated Press International*, 22 January 2006; "Bush telephones congratulations to Bolivia's new socialist president," *Associated Press International*, 1 February 2006; and "Interview with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (as released by the State Department)," *Federal News Service*, 11 March 2006.

Of course, because there were major differences between the Bush and Morales administrations over drug policy, economic policy, and their respective international alignments, it was inevitable that the level of cordiality in U.S.-Bolivian relations would not persist for long. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration's early pursuit of dialogue with Morales signified that U.S. officials were torn between their different interests vis-à-vis his government. On the one hand, U.S. officials had some interests in isolating and opposing left/unorthodox governments because the success of such governments could jeopardize the authority and prestige of the American state and impede its pursuit of its commercial objectives. On the other hand, U.S. officials were also faced with the distinct possibility that they could not effectively isolate a newly elected left/unorthodox government in a context in which left-leaning governments predominated in South America. Thus, Morales tended to elicit a mixed U.S. response, whereby U.S. officials would signal their displeasure with some of his positions but were not unified in casting him as a rival.[81] The lack of a unified narrative seems to have derived primarily from the fact that leading U.S. officials recognized the difficulties of isolating Morales under the conditions.[82]

Consistent with the proposition that mixed official signals will increase the probability of relatively accurate reporting about a country's state of democracy, the

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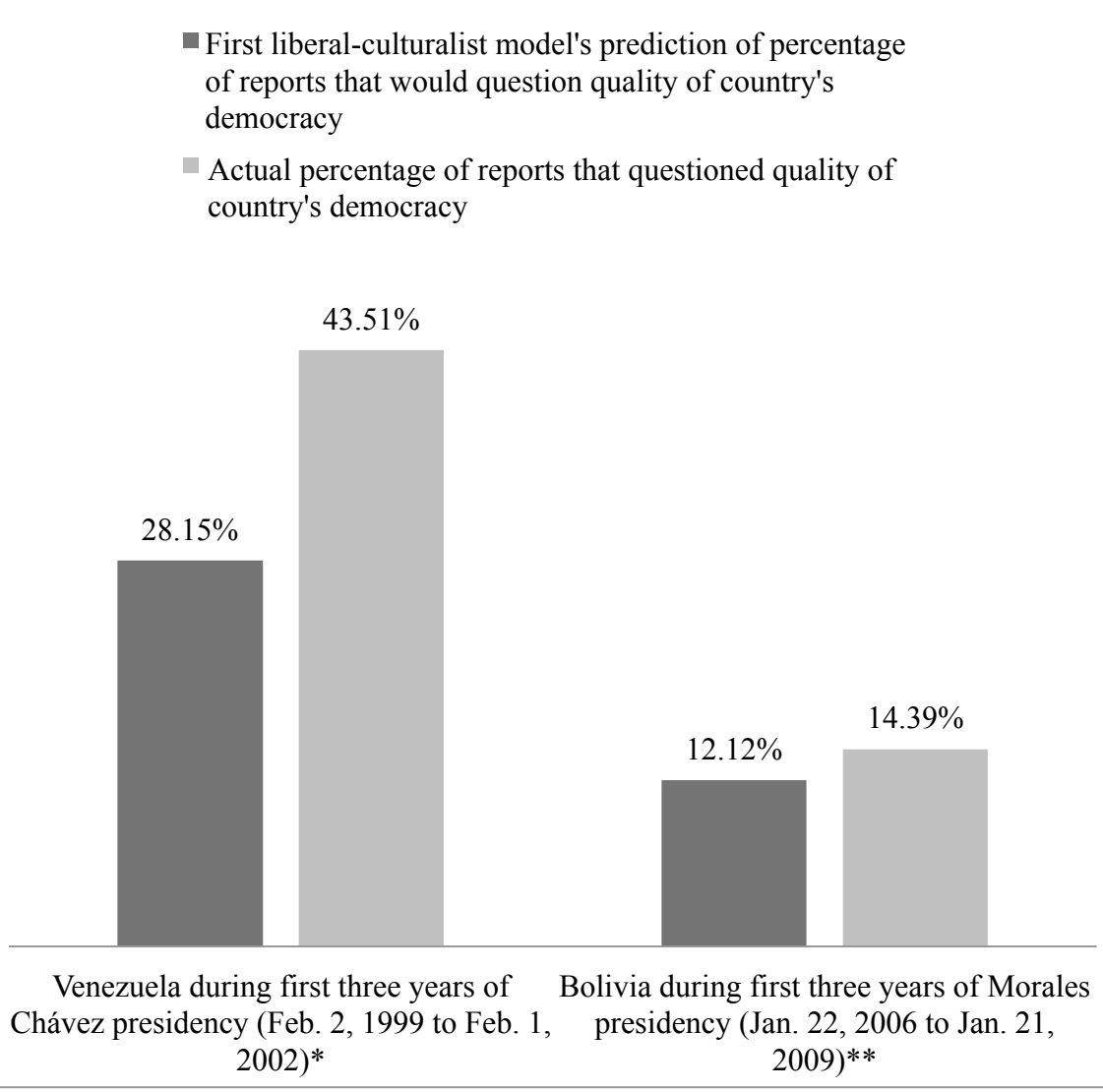
[81] The lack of a unified official narrative about Morales was perhaps best illustrated by the wide array of responses that his election elicited from different U.S. officials. One day an anonymous official would be quoted by the *Post* as stating that the Administration is "keeping an open mind" about Morales. The next day the *Times* would quote another unnamed official as saying that Morales was "potentially our worst nightmare." See "For Bolivian Victor, A Powerful Mandate; Populist Faces Practical Constraints," *Washington Post*, 20 December 2005: A1; and "U.S. Keeps a Wary Eye on the Next Bolivian President," *New York Times*, 21 December 2005: A3.

[82] Hence, Condoleezza Rice noted in the spring of 2006 that the Bush Administration had worked hard to "at least give the relationship with Bolivia a chance." See "Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the National Conference of Editorial Writers (as released by the State Department)," *Federal News Service*, 1 May 2006.

evidence indicates that the reporting about Morales' early presidency was more measured than that concerning Chávez's early years. Because there was no unified official narrative to compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their depictions of Morales' early presidency, the press reported about Bolivia more objectively. A comparison of the first liberal-culturalist model's predictions to how the prestige press portrayed the state of Bolivian democracy under Morales indicates that the predictions of the model closely paralleled the press' depictions (see Figure 4C).[83] Whereas the first liberal-culturalist model predicted that approximately 16 of the 132 reports about Morales' first three years would carry assertions that Bolivia was not fully democratic, the actual number of reports that conveyed such assertions was 19. A two-tailed t-test indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the prediction of the liberal-culturalist model and the actual frequency with which reports called into question Bolivia's democratic status. In effect, the fact that U.S. officials were torn between their different interests vis-à-vis Morales appears to have temporarily removed him from the category of formal rivals and thereby caused the press to report about his government in a more measured fashion.

[83] Likewise, the predictions of the second liberal-culturalist model were very similar to the frequency with which the prestige press called into question the quality of Bolivian democracy during Morales' early presidency (see Figure 6C in the appendices).

Figure 4C. Comparing predictions of first liberal-culturalist model with percentage of reports questioning quality of democracy under Latin America's most left-wing governments (using comprehensive measure of dependent variable)



*A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Venezuelan democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Among the 154 reports about Venezuela during the period, 85 were published in the *Times* and 69 in the *Post*. 43.53 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 43.48 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Venezuelan democracy, according to the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test reveals that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Bolivian democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Of the 132 reports about Bolivia during the period, 73 were published in the *Times* and 59 in the *Post*. 8.22 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 22.03 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Bolivian democracy in the period.

U.S.-Argentine relations and the prestige press' depictions of the Kirchner presidencies

An analysis of official positions and media discourses about the presidencies of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and the conditions under which such positions and discourses evolved can help us further cross-examine two of the propositions that the study has introduced. Much like the Morales government, the government of Nestor Kirchner was a second-generation left/unorthodox government that took power at a time when the Left was ascendant in the region.[84] Thus, an analysis of official and media responses to Kirchner's early presidency enables us to further cross-examine the chapter's explanation of why U.S. officials and the press would initially be more measured in their treatment of a second-generation left/unorthodox government. In addition, a subsequent shift in U.S.-Argentine relations after Kirchner's early presidency enables us to further cross-examine another core proposition of the study. After three years of what U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice referred to as "reasonably good relations" between the Bush and Kirchner Administrations, U.S.-Argentine relations began to deteriorate in 2007 (Russell 2010).[85] Thus, a comparison of press reporting about the Kirchner presidencies from before and after the shift in relations enables us to further cross-examine the proposition that official signaling of a budding rivalry will cue the press to become more scrutinizing of the rival leader's political practices.

Much as in the case of Morales' rise, the election of the center-left Argentine president Nestor Kirchner presented U.S. officials with a dilemma. On the one hand,

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[84] Nestor Kirchner assumed office in the Spring of 2003, only seven months after the moderately leftist former trade unionist Luiz Inacio "Lula" Da Silva had first won Brazil's presidential election. Kirchner's rise also came at a time when Chávez had just weathered his domestic opposition's second attempt to force him from power and was in the process of taking control of Venezuela's oil industry.

[85] See "Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the National Conference of Editorial Writers (as released by the State Department)," *Federal News Service*, 1 May 2006.

Kirchner posed a threat to American prestige and authority by taking independent foreign policy positions and by resisting pressures from bondholders and the international financial institutions to settle Argentina's debts on terms that creditors found agreeable (Brieger 2009; Hellinger 2011). On the other hand, the correlation of forces in Latin America at the time of Kirchner's rise was not conducive to an immediate U.S. effort to isolate and discredit him. Kirchner's rise came in the wake of a pivotal event in modern Latin American history: Brazil's election of the moderately left-leaning former trade unionist Luiz Inacio "Lula" Da Silva. With South America's most powerful country under the leadership of a left-leaning president, U.S. officials were now faced with the prospect that Lula could undermine U.S. efforts to isolate left/unorthodox governments in the region.[86] In addition, Kirchner's rise came at a time when Chávez had just weathered his domestic opposition's second attempt to force him from power and was eager to form an alliance with other left-leaning leaders in an effort to counter-balance American power (Vanderbush 2009; Hellinger 2011).

It is within this context that we can begin to understand the Bush Administration's initial approach to Nestor Kirchner. Recognizing that the prospects of effectively isolating Kirchner were grim and that he commanded strong popular support in Argentina, U.S. officials initially refrained from criticizing him and instead embarked

[86] The reasons that Lula would likely side with left/unorthodox governments in their disputes with the United States were not merely that he shared some ideological affinities with such governments but also that he saw cordial relations with left-leaning governments as central to his strategy of solidifying and expanding Mercosur, the Brazilian-led economic bloc in the region. In the days following Lula's first election, the Mexican-based German sociologist Heinz Dieterich suggested that Lula was poised to lead a project of "protectionist developmentalism" in South America that would conceivably permit South American states to incorporate themselves into Mercosur instead of opening themselves up to greater economic competition from North America. See "Lula, un estadista latinoamericano," *Rebelión*, 2 November 2002.

upon a calculated strategy of attempting to secure his cooperation.[87] The Bush Administration initially tried to neutralize Kirchner by making an apparent side payment to his government, in the form of a U.S. decision to use its leverage within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assist Kirchner in debt negotiations (Cibils 2003).[88] The evidence that the Bush Administration's initial support was intended as a *quid pro quo* can be deduced from subsequent U.S. statements suggesting that the Administration expected greater cooperation from Kirchner in return. Only four months after the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega had called upon the IMF to "be more flexible" in its debt negotiations with Argentina, Noriega expressed disappointment with "a certain leftward drift" in Argentina's foreign policy.[89] However, despite its misgivings about some of Kirchner's policies, the Bush administration continued to provide some support to Argentina in its dealings with the IMF (Helleiner 2005).[90] In other words, much as in the case of Morales, Kirchner's early presidency elicited what the *Financial Times* described as "distinctly mixed signals" from U.S. officials.[91]

Standard interpretations of the mixed U.S. response to Kirchner's early presidency are consistent with this chapter's proposition that the existence of multiple left-leaning governments increased the prospective costs of taking an immediately hostile position to a newly elected left/unorthodox government. In effect, the rise of the Left

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[87] In the words of Helleiner (2005: 960), US officials responded to Kirchner's election by "actively trying to cultivate the support of this new leader."

[88] In September of 2003, the *Post* noted that "Argentina has received crucial support from the Bush Administration in its efforts to renegotiate debt." See "Argentina Defaults on IMF payment," *Washington Post*, 10 September 2003: A13.

[89] See "Argentina Defaults on IMF payment," *Washington Post*, 10 September 2003: A13; and "Question and Answer Session with Ambassador Robert F. Noriega, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Following Speech to the Council of the Americas," *Federal News Service*, 8 January 2004.

[90] See "Argentine-IMF rancour starts to turn personal," *Financial Times*, 30 January 2004: Page 11.

[91] Ibid.

increased Kirchner's bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the United States by potentially enabling him to garner more assistance from other left-leaning leaders in the event of a break with the Bush Administration.[92] Thus, U.S. officials appear to have initially calculated that their options were either to tread softly with Kirchner and accept the limited cooperation he extended or to pressure him in such a way as to risk being rebuffed in a context in which U.S. leverage over Argentina had declined.[93]

Nevertheless, there was a limit to how long the Kirchner government could maintain its level of independence from U.S. leaders without eventually incurring a negative reaction from them. To reiterate, official ambivalence toward Kirchner was rooted not only in some disappointment with his policies but also in the hope that U.S. officials could eventually garner more cooperation from him. Of key interest to the Bush Administration was more Argentine cooperation in containing Chávez and in helping the United States to push forward with the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).[94] However, as U.S. officials came to learn over time that Kirchner was

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[92] Indeed, the Chávez government's offer of material assistance to Kirchner in the midst of his negotiations with the IMF appears to have strengthened Kirchner's hand vis-à-vis the United States by reducing the prospective level of damage the IMF could inflict upon Argentina (Kozloff 2007; Hellinger 2011). Hellinger (2011: 56) notes that, "facing the prospect of a winter without oil for Argentina if he did not accept IMF conditionality, Kirchner was helped when Venezuela agreed to send several oil tankers to guarantee supply." The decision of Venezuela in December of 2005 to buy out the last of the debt that Argentina owed the IMF is further evidence that Venezuelan support of the Argentine government reduced the leverage that the United States could wield over Kirchner (Kozloff 2007; Weisbrot 2007; Hellinger 2011).[92]

[93] In the words of the economist Alan Cibils (2003: 3), "the Bush Administration did not want to risk Kirchner going it alone and perhaps becoming another Hugo Chávez." Rather, some leading U.S. officials appear to have initially calculated that they could at least salvage some Argentine cooperation by taking a more flexible approach to the Kirchner government. The historian Hal Brands (2009: 28-29) notes that the Kirchners cooperated with the United States in strengthening "bilateral and multilateral efforts to impede terrorist activity and illicit economic traffic in the Tri-Border Area between Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil" and in participating in other anti-terrorism programs.

[94] Helleiner (2005: 960) finds that, in the wake of Kirchner's election, U.S. officials were "keen to cultivate" Argentina's "support for the war on terrorism and for the FTAA." The *Washington Times* also reported that, in late March of 2005, President Bush made a phone call to Kirchner "asking Argentina to support its efforts to isolate Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and protect civil liberties in Venezuela." Given Chávez's hostility to the FTAA and his general outspokenness in favor of counter-balancing

unreceptive to their requests for support in such matters, subtle tensions began to mount.[95] At some point between Bush's 2005 attendance of the Summit of the Americas in Argentina and his decision to forego a visit to the country during his tour of the region in early 2007, leading U.S. officials appeared to have concluded that continued high-level engagement with Kirchner was not in the national interest. The political calculus seems to have been that to persist with such diplomacy in the face of Kirchner's recalcitrance would be viewed as a sign that there are no costs to a pattern of defiance. By passing over Argentina and instead visiting Uruguay during his 2007 tour, Bush was effectively signaling that, if South American governments remained inconsiderate of the strategic and commercial interests of the United States, the regional hegemon could pursue its objectives by other means and penalize defiant governments.[96]

When Kirchner retaliated against Bush's snub by allowing Chávez to lead a protest in Buenos Aires against Bush's tour of the region, the U.S. counter-retaliation was not long in coming.[97] After Nestor Kirchner's wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, won

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alliances against American power, U.S. officials are likely to have perceived that a spread of Chávez's influence would serve as not only an impediment to U.S. commercial objectives but also a blow to American prestige. See "Bush urges 'regional stability,' liberty," *Washington Times*, 1 April 2005: A13.

[95] The Argentine daily *La Nación* reported that, in a private meeting between Bush and Kirchner at the 2005 Summit of the Americas conference in Mar del Plata, the U.S. president took offense at Kirchner's description of the United States as a "hegemonic power." Years later, the *New York Times* would report that Bush "left Argentina insulted by his treatment there." See "De cordial frialdad a moderada tensión," *La Nación*, 5 November 2005; and "Rice Trip to Skip Argentina In Sign of a Growing Rift," *New York Times*, 13 March 2008: A10.

[96] Naturally, the Bush Administration did not see it as in its interests that the presidents of South America's three most economically powerful countries used regional integration as a means to maintain some protection against U.S. firms and to increase Latin America's political independence from the United States (Brieger 2009). Thus, the Bush Administration was visibly intrigued by the possibility that a negotiation of a free trade agreement with Uruguay could break up the South American Common Market (Mercosur). A U.S.-Uruguayan free trade agreement would have been in breach of Uruguay's commitment to its Mercosur partners —Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay— to maintain a common tariff on goods coming from outside Mercosur. In recognition of the possibility that Uruguay could abandon Mercosur, Lula decided to visit the Uruguayan president shortly before Bush's tour of the region as a way of signaling the Mercosur bloc and Washington that Brazil was intent on holding the bloc together (Brieger 2009).

[97] Russell (2010: 115) confirms that Kirchner's decision to allow Chávez to lead the protest came "in retaliation for Bush's snub of Argentina."

Argentina's presidency in late 2007, U.S. prosecutors would present evidence gathered in a South Florida sting operation that the Chávez government had secretly tried to funnel hundreds of thousands of dollars to Fernández de Kirchner's campaign.[98] Although the Kirchners and Chávez would deny the charges and grow closer in repudiating them, the American state had once again demonstrated that it was prepared to inflict some damage on defiant governments.[99]

Naturally, U.S. journalists were cognizant of the Bush Administration's shift from a position of ambivalence toward the Kirchners to one of growing antagonism towards them beginning in 2007. When the Bush Administration again excluded Argentina from its itinerary during Condoleeza Rice's 2008 tour of the region, the *Times* pointed to the second high-level snub as a "sign of a growing rift" between Washington and Buenos Aires.[100] As an indicator of the level of tension, the *Times* noted that Fernández de Kirchner had "restricted diplomatic access for the American ambassador" in retaliation for the U.S. investigation of Venezuela's alleged attempt to funnel money to her presidential campaign.[101]

Given that U.S. officials' perceived interests and positions with respect to Argentina shifted across the period of the Kirchners' presidencies, the study's realist-constructivist approach suggests that we should also expect a shift in how the press would depict the state of democracy under the Kirchners. In the early period of official ambivalence

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[98] See "U.S. Says Venezuela Tried to Give $800,000 to Argentine; 4 Accused in Miami of Trying to Hide Illegal Contribution," *Washington Post*, 13 December 2007: A24.

[99] See "Rice Trip to Skip Argentina In Sign of a Growing Rift," *New York Times*, 13 March 2008: A10.

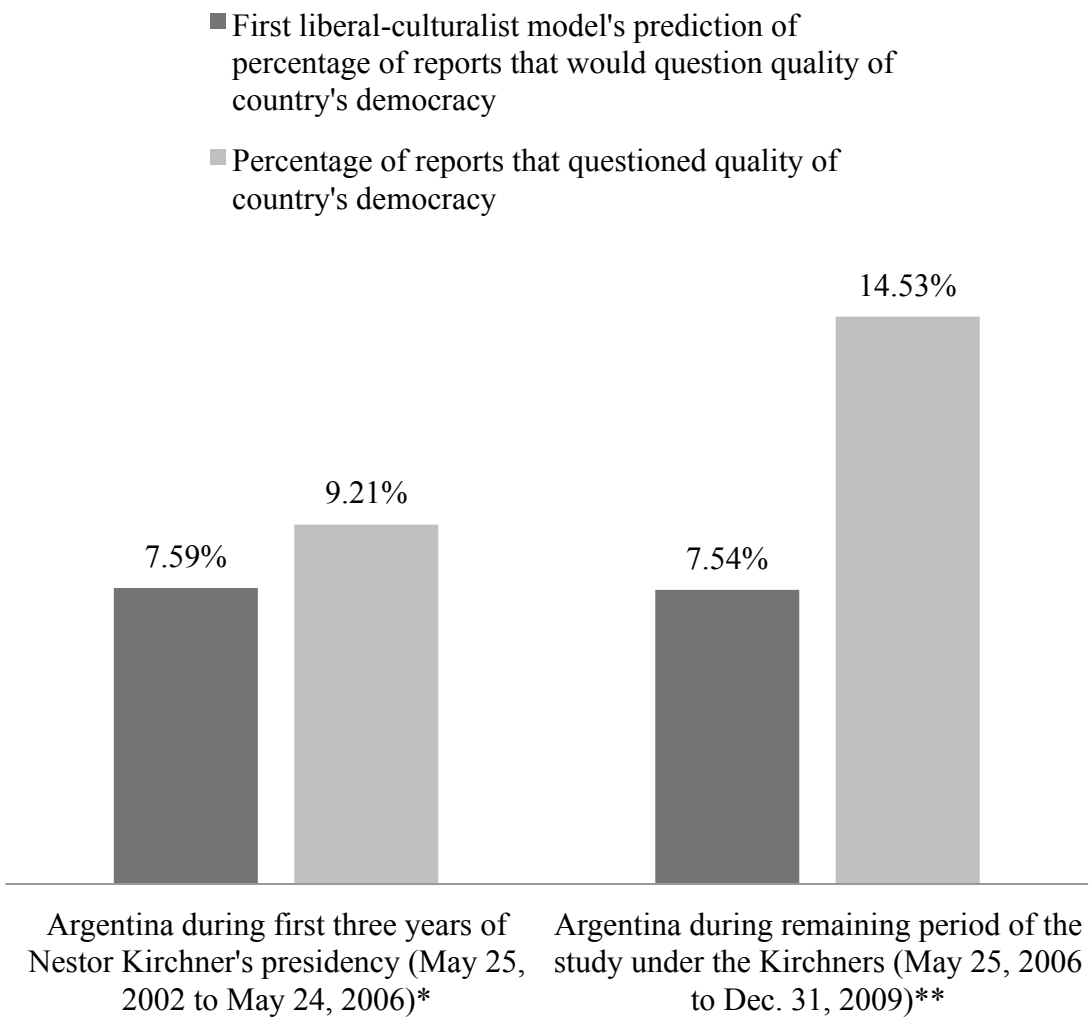
[100] The report quoted the prominent Washington-based analyst Peter Hakim as saying that the United States was "clearly snubbing Argentina." See "Rice Trip to Skip Argentina In Sign of a Growing Rift," *New York Times*, 13 March 2008: A10.

[101] See "Rice Trip to Skip Argentina In Sign of a Growing Rift," *New York Times*, 13 March 2008: A10.

toward the Kirchners, we should expect a relatively measured depiction of the state of democracy in Argentina because the American state initially lacked a unified narrative about Nestor Kirchner that could compete with the objective ideals of journalists in shaping their depictions of the state of Argentine democracy. Alternatively, we should expect more exaggeration of the Kirchners' undemocratic characteristics in the period following Nestor Kirchner's early presidency because the American state's signaling of a budding rivalry in 2007 would likely place subtle pressures upon journalists to reconcile their news frames with societal preconceptions of rival actors. And indeed, such a shift from relatively objective reporting to an exaggerated portrayal of Argentina's less democratic characteristics is in evidence. A comparison of the first liberal-culturalist model's predictions to how the prestige press portrayed the state of Argentine democracy during Kirchner's first three years in office indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the predictions of the liberal-culturalist model and the press' depictions (see Figure 4D).[102] Conversely, in the second period of the "growing rift" between Washington and Buenos Aires, the percentage of press reports that called into question the quality of Argentine democracy was nearly double what the first liberal-culturalist model predicts (see Figure 4D). Whereas the liberal-culturalist model predicts that approximately nine of the 117 reports about the Kirchners in the second period would call into question the quality of Argentine democracy, the actual number of such reports was 17. A two-tailed t-test reveals that the difference between the liberal-culturalist model's prediction for the second period and the press' actual frequency of assertions that Argentina was not fully democratic is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

[102] While the first liberal-culturalist model predicts that approximately six of the 76 reports about Kirchner's first three years would carry an assertion that Argentina was not fully democratic, the actual number of such reports was only one more than the number predicted (seven).

Figure 4D: Comparing predictions of first liberal-culturalist model with percentage of reports that questioned Argentina's quality of democracy under left/unorthodox governments (using the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable)



*A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Argentine democracy in the first period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Among the 76 reports about Argentina during the period, 52 were published in the *Times* and 24 in the *Post*. 11.54 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 4.17 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Argentine democracy during Nestor Kirchner's first three years in office.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Argentina democracy in the second period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .05$). However, if we look at the *Post* reports alone, the difference between the percentage of such reports that questioned the quality of Argentine democracy during the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Of the 117 reports about Argentina during the period from May 25, 2006 to the end of 2009, 70 were published in the *Times* and 47 in the *Post*. 15.71 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 12.77 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Argentine democracy during the period.

The press' bias against the Kirchners in the second period appears even starker when we compare the predictions of the second liberal-culturalist model to the frequency with which reports presented explicit charges that the Argentine government, ruling party or state apparatus acted undemocratically. Despite the fact that the Polity IV index does not indicate any decline in Argentina's adherence to democratic norms under the Kirchners, the frequency with which the press presented explicit charges of undemocratic behavior in the second period was more than three times what the second liberal-culturalist model predicts (see Figure 6D in the appendices). Indeed, much as in the case of Chávez's early presidency, the study suggests that official signaling of a budding rivalry and societal preconceptions of rival actors created a set of journalistic incentives that were not entirely conducive to objective reporting in the second period of the Kirchners' presidencies.

The predictable effects of discursive distortions

In light of the quantitative and qualitative evidence that the strategic and commercial interests of the American state competed with liberal and objective norms in shaping two leading U.S. newspapers' depictions of rival and allied actors, the chapter's realist-constructivist critique of liberal-culturalist approaches appears sound. The evidence suggests that, by conceptualizing a Western power's worldviews in almost exclusively liberal terms, liberal-culturalist arguments obfuscate how strategic and commercial interests can have significantly distorting effects upon a Western culture's discourses about the political life of countries governed by rivals and allies. In failing to account for how the state's interests have distorting effects upon cultural discourses about

allied and rival governments, liberal-culturalist theorists overlook that such distortions will tend to diminish the capacities of elites and attentive publics to accurately identify when and where the state is deviating from its professed principles in its external relations.

Indeed, the ultimate relevance of this study to the IR sub-field lies not merely in what it tells us about a Western power's discursive patterns but rather in what it tells us about how such discursive patterns are likely to shape the Western power's foreign policy dispositions. Contrary to Doyle's (2005: 464) postulation that Western media merely help to "ensure that the officials of republics act according to the principles they profess to be just," this chapter illustrates that the press often helped the American state to casually stray from it professed liberalism in its relations with allies and rivals. In a number of the aforementioned dyads, the state's success in cuing the press to partially distort the political life of countries governed by allies and rivals appears to have reinforced the state's impulses to casually stray from its professed liberalism. For example, once leading U.S. officials had managed to cue the press to downplay the less democratic characteristics of the Menem and Uribe governments, such officials' uncritical support of the two presidents would likely appear as congruent with a liberal foreign policy course. Because U.S. news organizations did not generally provide attentive publics and elites with the means to recognize that Menem and Uribe were not model democrats and that uncritical U.S. support of them was incongruent with the state's professed liberalism, U.S. officials had little reason to worry that their narratives about the two presidents might elicit domestic criticism. Unfortunately, the precedent that leading U.S. officials and the press were reinforcing is that significant breaches of

liberal norms will rarely be scrutinized as long as the offending actors (i) serve the American state's immediate objectives and (ii) stop short of definitively overturning democratic institutions. Such a precedent is not likely to be promising for the consolidation of liberal norms in the hemisphere, for the lesson to regional political elites is that an alliance with the Western power is usually a free pass to violate some democratic norms.

The pattern whereby U.S. officials and the U.S. press disproportionately focus upon the less democratic characteristics of left/unorthodox rivals also poses significant problems for the consolidation of liberal-democratic norms abroad. When both U.S. officials and the press focus disproportionately upon the less democratic characteristics of a left/unorthodox rival, this is likely to cause many U.S. elites and publics to interpret the rivalry in terms of a cognitive schema that I refer to as the democracy/autocracy duality.[103] Such a schema —which is largely rooted in narratives that were historically constructed to explain U.S. conflicts with powerful authoritarian states— categorizes the rivalry as one between an autocratic side (that of the rival government) and a democratic side (the rival government's U.S.-backed opposition). Although the democracy/autocracy duality may sometimes approximate the reality of some countries' political conflicts, such a schema can pose significant problems when Western-backed opposition figures do not behave in ways that fit the schema. The cognitive schemas of human beings often cause them to embrace facts or interpretations that are consistent with their schemas and to discount information that does not fit such preconceptions (Rosati 2000). When the democracy/autocracy duality causes elites and publics to

[103] Jacobs and Page's (2005: 113) research on the foreign policy preferences of political, cultural and economic elites suggests "the existence of something like a 'foreign policy establishment,' in which policy preferences are largely shared across several different categories of elites engaged in foreign policy."

embrace inaccurate interpretations of events and/or to discount accurate information that does not fit the schema, the capacity of such elites and publics to make rational assessments in accordance with liberal preferences is compromised. In a Western power's relations with a rival government, one danger is that exaggerated images of the rival's illiberalism can cause attentive publics and elites to conceive of the rival government's country in ways that preclude recognition of the possibility that the Western power itself may be deviating from its professed liberalism in its relations with the rival.

For example, in the lead-up to Venezuela's failed coup of 2002, official and media exaggerations of Chávez's less democratic characteristics appear to have caused many political and cultural elites to conceive of Venezuelan political life in terms of the democracy/autocracy duality and to therefore ignore threats to democracy from within the allied opposition.[104] We can infer the existence of such a schematic conceptualization of Venezuelan politics from the basic fact that no mainstream U.S. news organization showed any notable concern about the threats of an extra-constitutional alteration of power in the lead-up to the failed coup.[105] By any objective standard, an extra-constitutional alteration of power would have posed a threat to the evolving regional norm that the consolidation of democracy required the defense of elected governments against coups (Parish et al 2007; McCoy 2012). However, because the democracy/autocracy duality categorizes only the rival government as threatening to

[104] While Chávez in his early presidency did not strictly adhere to democratic norms, he was sufficiently respectful of democratic institutions to qualify as partially democratic. Hence, by any objective standard, an extra-constitutional alteration of power would have posed more problems for the consolidation of hemispheric norms than Chávez's continuation in power.

[105] The existence of coup plots against the Chávez government was sufficiently obvious that the *Post*'s correspondent had reported more than four months before the coup that a "clandestine movement" to oust Chávez "by force" was "underway." See "Though Poor Remain Loyal, Opposition to Chávez Grows," *Washington Post*, 26 November 2001: A21.

democracy, the schema's influence over the thought processes of political and cultural elites tends to diminish their capacities to recognize the threats that allied opposition figures periodically pose to democratic processes. Thus, even when prominent opposition figures openly called for a military overthrow of Venezuela's elected president, the U.S. press displayed no particular concern that such acts constituted threats to democracy.[106] When the *Post* reported in late 2001 that one of Venezuela's former state governors —Oswaldo Álvarez Paz— viewed "military invention" against Chávez as the only solution to the country's problems, the newspaper treated Álvarez Paz's statements matter-of-factly, as if to convey no more than the level of political polarization within Venezuelan society.[107] At no point did the report entertain the question of what a prominent civilian figure's call for military intervention portended for the cause of democracy. In effect, the democracy/autocracy schema lent itself to considerable equanimity in the face of a prospective coup because the notion that allied opposition figures might threaten democracy did not fit within the schema.

Likewise, the democracy/autocracy schema appears to have diminished the capacities of cultural elites to recognize how U.S. officials were casually signaling Venezuelan coup plotters that the Bush Administration would likely acquiesce to an

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[106] On the three occasions in February of 2002 in which high-ranking Venezuelan military officers issued calls for military insubordination to the elected president, neither the *Times*' correspondent nor the *Post*'s correspondent reported on the threats. Rather, the *Times* and *Post* merely republished four news briefs and three reports from the major newswires —the *Associated Press* and *Reuters*— about the officers' calls for a military revolt against Chávez. See "World: In Brief," *Washington Post*, 8 February 2002: A28; "A Second Day of Anti- and Pro-Chavez Demonstration in Venezuela," *New York Times*, 9 February: A3; "Venezuela seeks calm after leader challenged," *New York Times*, 10 February 2002: A22. "Venezuelan President Dismisses Talk of Coup," *New York Times*, 11 February 2002: A8; "World: In Brief," *Washington Post*, 11 February: A22; "World: In Brief," *Washington Post*, 19 February 2002: A12; "World Briefing," *New York Times*, 19 February 2002: A8.

[107] See "Though Poor Remain Loyal, Opposition to Chávez Grows," *Washington Post*, 26 November 2001: A21.

extra-constitutional alteration of power.[108] The fact that the prestige press did not seriously scrutinize official signals could be gleaned from a *Post* report less than two months prior to the failed coup. The report quotes an unnamed State Department official as saying that, "If Chavez doesn't fix things soon, he's not going to finish his term."[109] Instead of noting that the quote implied that the State Department would likely acquiesce to an overthrow of Venezuela's elected president, the *Post* allowed official sources to frame the story as one about how the State Department merely sought to avoid any "backsliding from democracy" in the event that Chávez were to fall.[110] At no point did the report consider that Venezuelan coup plotters would likely interpret such official statements as signals that the Bush Administration would acquiesce to an overthrow of Chávez.[111] Neither did the report discuss how the fall of an elected president could itself constitute backsliding from democracy if such a fall were the product of a coup. In essence, the democracy/autocracy duality precluded serious consideration of how significant segments of the American state and the allied opposition were in the process of deviating from democratic norms in their relations with the Chávez government.

Of course, the strongest indication that official and media exaggerations of a rival government's illiberalism had diminished the cognitive capabilities of cultural elites to

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[108] After the coup failed, an unnamed Defense Department official who was described by the *Times* as being "involved in the development of policy toward Venezuela" seemed to corroborate that U.S. officials had sent ambiguous signals to groups plotting to overthrow Chávez. The *Times* quoted the official as stating the following: "We were not discouraging people. We were sending informal, subtle signals that we don't like this guy. We didn't say, 'No, don't you dare,' and we weren't advocates saying, 'Here's some arms; we'll help you overthrow this guy.'" See "Bush Officials Met With Venezuelans Who Ousted Leader," *New York Times*, 16 April 2002: A1.

[109] See "Political Crisis in Venezuela Worries White House; Declining Popularity of Country's President Threatens Stability of a Key U.S. Oil Supplier," *Washington Post*, 23 February 2002: A18.

[110] Ibid.

[111] After the coup failed, one of it suspected conspirators who joined the short-lived coup government as head of the its leader's security told the *Post* that "we felt we were acting with U.S. support." See "Class of Visions Pushed Venezuela Toward Coup; Admiral and President Were Old Rivals," *Washington Post*, 21 April 2002: A1.

objectively analyze facts could be seen in how leading cultural elites reacted to the short-lived coup itself. During the coup, the editorial board of the *Times* opined that Venezuelan democracy was "no longer threatened by a would-be dictator" as a result of the coup against Chávez.[112] Such a formulation ignored the obviously anti-democratic implications of an alteration of power that followed no constitutional line of succession and involved the military high command's selection of a new leader (Jones 2007).

The fact that the *Times*' editorial board joined the Bush Administration in initially welcoming the coup was an indicator that the U.S. reaction to the coup could not be understood merely in terms of the Bush Administration's disregard of regional political norms. The study's realist-constructivist approach alerts us to how the Bush administration's behavior in the Venezuelan case must also be understood in terms of a consistent pattern whereby the state's interests and narratives exert distorting influences upon the larger culture's discourses about allies and rivals. The state's success in cuing major news organizations to exaggerate the illiberal characteristics of a rival government spurred the dominant culture to conceptualize Venezuelan political life in ways that precluded serious consideration of whether U.S. officials and allied opposition figures were violating democratic norms. Hence, during the lead-up to the failed coup, the discursive climate was largely permissive of the American state's deviations from its professed liberalism. In the face of the state's impulses to acquiesce to a coup against Chávez, the press failed to check such impulses, for the press gave the state little indication that it would not be able to manage cultural discourse about a coup in such a way as to conceal the illiberal nature of the U.S. position toward it. In effect, the dominant culture facilitated the Bush administration's initial support for an extra-

[112] See "Hugo Chavez Departs," *New York Times*, 13 April 2002: A16.

constitutional alteration of power by having permitted the state to shape cultural discourse about Venezuelan political life in such a way that the embrace of the coup would not necessarily appear as illiberal until the coup began to unravel.

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusion

During the short-lived ouster of Venezuela's Chávez government, the coup leader, Pedro Carmona, did not hold any elected or appointed office that would have put him in line to constitutionally succeed a Venezuelan president (Jones 2007; McCoy 2012). Thus, when Venezuela's military high command handed power to Carmona after forcing Chávez to vacate the presidential palace, the transition met no standard of legality.[113] Hence, when mid-level military officers rebelled against the coup and handed power back to the country's elected president, a number of commentators criticized the Bush Administration for having initially endorsed the coup (Leogrande 2007; Parish et al 2007; Vanderbush 2009).

Indeed, after the coup's defeat, one Bush Administration official seemed to admit that U.S. officials had strayed from their professed principles. Under congressional questioning, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage acknowledged the "irony" of how the Administration had recently signed the OAS' democratic charter to oppose regional coups but did not take an initially principled position against Venezuela's coup.[114] Armitage lamented that his Administration's initial response to the coup was not

[113] It is worth noting that one former Clinton Administration official pointed out the dubious legality of the coup at the time of its occurrence. Arturo Valenzuela, who had served as President Bill Clinton's top adviser on Latin America, explained to the *Washington Post* on the first day of the coup that Venezuela's National Assembly had not been "consulted" about the alteration of power, that "there was no succession to the vice president," and that there was therefore "no constitutional continuity." See "Leader of Venezuela is forced to resign; Ex-Oil Executive Takes Office as Interim President," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2002: A1.

[114] See "U.S. Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) Holds Hearing on Appropriations for Increased Security and Anti-Terrorism Expenditures," *FDCH Political Transcripts*, 18 April 2002.

in keeping with the standard that, "where principle is involved, we should be deaf to expediency."[115]

The Deputy Secretary of State's unusually candid acknowledgement presents us with an interesting question: Can a Western power consistently abide by its professed liberalism? This study has illustrated that, when the perceived interests and the professed principles of the American state came into conflict, U.S. officials were rarely if ever "deaf to expediency." When it seemed expedient for U.S. officials to tacitly signal that they would acquiesce to a coup against the Chávez government, several U.S. officials conveyed such a signal.[116] Likewise, when it seemed expedient for leading U.S. officials to uncritically support allied governments that did not consistently adhere to liberal norms, such officials usually did so.

The central contribution of this study's realist-constructivist approach is to provide us with a comprehensive explanation of why casual deviations from the state's professed liberalism often become expedient. There is no doubt that the American state's interests in assisting allies that would strengthen its authority and help it to achieve its commercial objectives were a key catalyst of its uncritical support of strategic allies. However, only a realist-constructivist approach sheds light on the other key reason why it became expedient for leading officials to uncritically support such allies: that the state had effectively shaped cultural discourse about allies in such a way that uncritical support of them would not necessarily appear as a breach of the state's professed liberalism.

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[115] Armitage stated that the Administration's initial response to the coup was "not good enough for a principled nation." See "U.S. Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) Holds Hearing on Appropriations for Increased Security and Anti-Terrorism Expenditures," *FDCH Political Transcripts*, 18 April 2002.

[116] As noted in the 110th footnote of **chapter four**, one Defense Department official effectively conceded after the failed coup that U.S. officials had tacitly signaled that they would acquiesce to a coup. See "Bush Officials Met With Venezuelans Who Ousted Leader," *New York Times*, 16 April 2002: A1.

Once the state had cued major media to downplay the less democratic characteristics of allied counter-insurgent governments and big-market reformers, U.S. officials' uncritical support of such allies would not elicit significant domestic criticism. In other words, uncritical U.S. support of allies became expedient not only because such allies served the state's immediate strategic and commercial objectives but also because the dominant culture facilitated uncritical support of such allies by minimizing domestic awareness of their less democratic characteristics.

Likewise, we could not adequately understand why the preeminent Western power's leading officials have sometimes supported or acquiesced to coups against elected rivals if we neglected to consider how its dominant culture has often accommodated such deviations from the state's professed principles.[117] To be sure, the American state's ambiguous signals to Venezuelan coup plotters and its initial endorsement of Venezuela's coup were largely rooted in the state's interests in counteracting a left/unorthodox rival's challenges to the state's authority. However, the other reason why U.S. officials would deem it expedient to initially acquiesce to the coup was that the state's partially distorting influences over cultural discourse had essentially precluded significant public scrutiny of the Bush Administration's approach to Venezuela.

This study illustrates that, once U.S. officials had signaled that an elected government was a budding rival or a strategic ally, this tended to cue U.S. journalists to

[117] The Venezuelan case is by no means the first one in which major U.S. news organizations have accommodated official U.S. support of the overthrow of an elected rival. Contrary to Russett and Oneal's (2001: 62) suggestion that journalists did not know about U.S. complicity in the coup against Guatemala's democratically elected president in 1954, the memoirs of two late *New York Times* reporters indicate that the paper's news personnel were not only aware of what happened but suppressed information about U.S. involvement (Salisbury 1980; Reston 1991). In his memoirs, Harrison Salisbury (1980: 486) quoted fellow *Times* reporter James Reston as stating that "we left out a great deal of what we knew about U.S. intervention in Guatemala and in a variety of other cases" on grounds of national security.

frame the rivalry or alliance in terms of the democracy/autocracy duality, according to which allies are more democratic and rivals are more autocratic.[118] By partially framing rivalries and alliances in terms of the democracy/autocracy schema, journalists exaggerated the illiberalism of rival governments and downplayed the illiberal behaviors of allied governments. In turn, such distorted depictions are likely to have caused increasing numbers of elites and publics to conceive of rivals and allies in terms of the democracy/autocracy duality. In other words, there appears to be a mutually reinforcing cycle whereby the democracy/autocracy duality largely preconfigures discourses about rivals and allies and such partially distorted discourses reinforce the democracy/autocracy duality as a common way of interpreting the political life of countries governed by rivals and allies. The cycle between such partially distorted discourses and the democracy/autocracy schema appears to have two important effects. Firstly, it draws disproportionate attention to how rival governments might violate some democratic norms. Secondly, the cycle diverts some attention from how the Western power and its

[118] Nevertheless, it is important to clarify what the study does *not* purport to show. In positing that partially distorted cultural discourses increase the likelihood of casual deviations from the state's professed liberalism, the study does not purport to show that distorted cultural discourses will *singularly* cause the Western power to deviate from its professed liberalism in any given dyad. Cultural discourses are only one among a number of important factors that will shape the Western power's dispositions toward a foreign actor. While the budding rivalry with the Kirchners appears to have caused media to exaggerate Argentina's less democratic characteristics, there is no evidence that U.S. officials were preparing to significantly deviate from their professed liberalism in their relations with Argentina. While the growing rift seems to have spurred media to exaggerate the Kirchners' supposed heavy-handedness, leading U.S. officials themselves did not cast the Kirchners as undemocratic. Thus, there was not the combination of media *and* official distortions that could signal actors that the Western power might support a campaign of destabilization. While tensions between U.S. administrations and the Kirchners went public, there were a number of reasons why U.S. administrations would maintain more restraint in their relations with the Kirchners than in their relations with Chávez. Given that the Kirchners were less inclined to publicly challenge U.S. policies, there appears to have been less of an official perception that the demise of the Kirchners was vital to the preservation of American prestige. Moreover, the fact that Argentina was less politically and socially polarized meant that there would be fewer opportunities for U.S. officials to tacitly encourage destabilization. With fewer prospects of destabilization and less of a potential payoff from it, U.S. officials seem to have perceived that the costs of attempting to destabilize Argentina would likely outweigh any prospective benefits.

allies periodically violate liberal norms. A realist-constructivist approach thus alerts us to how the cycle between the democracy/autocracy schema and distorted discourses about rivals and allies is likely to recreate scenarios in which the state's casual deviations from its professed liberalism go largely undetected and thus become more expedient.

Does the study's realist-constructivist approach overstate its case?

While the study has illustrated some significant problems with liberal-culturalist and neorealist approaches, it is important to consider whether the realist-constructivist alternative might overcompensate in its attempt to correct for the problems of other approaches. A review of both the evidence and the qualifiers of the study suggests that one of the primary strengths of the realist-constructivist approach is that it provides us new insights about the roles of cultural discourse in the foreign relations of a Western power *without* introducing significant new blind spots. In other words, a realist-constructivist approach adds explanatory power without simultaneously obscuring patterns and relationships that other approaches have revealed.

To be sure, liberal-culturalist approaches help us understand the bounds within which a Western power operates insofar as they impress upon us that Western officials will often be reluctant to blatantly deviate from a liberal foreign policy course in the recognition that obvious deviations would likely elicit negative publicity (Doyle 1983[a]; Owen 1994; Russett and Oneal 2001). Nevertheless, liberal-culturalist approaches obscure how a Western power's officials can often lay the groundwork for casual deviations from a liberal foreign policy course by shaping cultural discourse in such a way that the state's deviations do not necessarily appear as deviations. By assuming that the dominant culture of a Western power is wholly independent of the state, the

proponents of liberal-culturalist arguments overlook how the most powerful Western state has been able to facilitate many casual deviations from its professed principles by influencing cultural discourse about allies and rivals.

To reiterate, however, the study's realist-constructivist approach does not purport to suggest that the capacity of a Western power to conceal deviations from its professed liberalism is limitless. Some particularly dramatic deviations —such as support for the wholesale reversal of a foreign country's democratic processes— would usually be too obvious to conceal. Moreover, the capacity of the state to conceal deviations from its professed liberalism is sometimes in flux. One moment the state may be able to influence cultural discourse about the political life of a country in such a way as to conceal certain deviations from its professed principles. The next moment, a turn of events may expose the state's breach of its professed principles and significantly reduce its capacity to conceal such deviations. With an event-driven shift in the discursive climate, a deviation that was not readily detectable before the event may appear as a blatant deviation afterwards. In turn, a decline in the capacity of the state to conceal deviations from its professed liberalism will tend to reduce its inclination to stray from a liberal foreign policy course.

To illustrate how the capacity of a Western power to conceal deviations from its professed liberalism is sometimes in flux, it is useful to compare U.S.-Venezuelan relations before the failed coup to such relations after the coup. The evidence presented in **chapter four** indicates that, prior to the coup, the American state's interests and narratives played an important role in cuing the U.S. press to exaggerate the Chávez government's illiberalism and to obfuscate how the Bush Administration was sending

ambiguous signals to Venezuelan coup plotters. Thus, in the pre-coup discursive climate, some U.S. officials appear to have calculated that they could tacitly encourage the overthrow of Chávez without eliciting significant negative publicity. Conversely, after the coup failed, the interests of journalists and their news organizations in maintaining some semblance of objectivity caused them to temporarily deliberate more critically about the blatantly undemocratic nature of the coup. Hence, although U.S. officials continued to have an interest in the political demise of Chávez, the post-coup discursive climate was less conducive to deviations from the state's professed liberalism. Thus, it should come as little surprise that, when some figures in the Venezuelan opposition again clamored for an extra-constitutional alteration of power in late 2002 and early 2003, the Bush Administration felt compelled to publicly distance itself from the figures in question (Parish et al 2007). In effect, U.S. officials appear to have recognized that revelations about the undemocratic nature of the failed coup had shifted the discursive climate in such a way that the state would not have been able to continue sending ambiguous signals to coup plotters without risking exposure.

Thus, the point of a realist-constructivist approach is not to suggest that the conditions are *always* in place for a Western state to be able to shape cultural discourse about a foreign country in such a way as to conceal the state's deviations from its professed liberalism in it relations with the country. Rather, the study's primary contribution is to illustrate that part of the reason why officials often deem casual deviations to be expedient is that the state is *often* able to influence cultural discourse about allies and rivals in such a way that the state's deviations do not necessarily appear as incongruent with a liberal foreign policy course.

The proposed road to more principled foreign policy

In light of the evidence that partially distorted cultural discourses about the political life of some foreign peoples reinforce the impulses of a Western power to sometimes deviate from a liberal foreign policy course, this study suggests that there are likely to be two prerequisites to a more principled foreign policy. The first prerequisite is the spread of sounder theory about the role of culture in shaping a Western power's foreign policy dispositions. The second prerequisite is a sober discussion of whether casual deviations from a Western power's professed liberalism serve its interests in the long term.

If the goal is to encourage a Western power to consistently adhere to a liberal foreign policy course, we need a theory of what shapes the discursive environments that often facilitate the state's deviations from such a course. Again, if a principled liberalism is the objective, we should not persist with the flawed assumption that Western publics and elites are equipped with all the information they need to be able to hold the state to its professed principles in its external relations. Liberal-culturalist approaches are a poor guardian against deviations from a liberal foreign policy course because they divert our attention from how the state's distorting influences upon cultural discourse often facilitate its deviations from its professed principles.

In contrast, the spread of theory that casts a critical light upon how the state often shapes cultural discourse in such a way as to conceal some deviations from its professed liberalism could conceivably cause the state to reconsider such a strategy. If scholars and students showed greater cognizance of the potentially distorting influences of official positions and narratives, the state may be more inclined to reconsider the effectiveness of

its own distortions of the political life of some foreign peoples. In turn, if the state were to exert less of a distorting influence upon discourse about allies and rivals, the discursive climate would be less conducive to deviations from the state's professed liberalism.

However, we must not overestimate the extent to which the spread of new theory could change long-standing relationships between official positions/narratives and cultural discourses about the political life of foreign peoples. If the goal is to encourage a Western power to avoid deviating from its professed principles in its relations with rivals and allies, there is also some value in appealing to the Western power's own long-term interests. Viewed across time, the preeminent Western power's tendency to exaggerate certain allies' commitments to democratic norms has been of questionable efficacy. While overly generous assessments of allies may have facilitated some cooperation in the short term, they are likely to have sapped the credibility of the American state as an arbiter of legitimate political practice in different regions of the world. Many Latin Americans are not likely to see U.S. criticisms of its rivals' political practices as credible when they consider that U.S. officials were highly generous in their assessments of controversial figures such as Uribe and Menem. It will be difficult for the American state to convince most Latin Americans that it is helping to consolidate democracy in the hemisphere when there is still evidence to suggest that a regional alliance with the United States is a free pass to violate some democratic norms. Thus, there is a strong case to be made that it would serve both the interests of American state and the cause of regional democracy if the state would adopt more critical distance from controversial allies and avoid exaggerating their commitments to democracy.

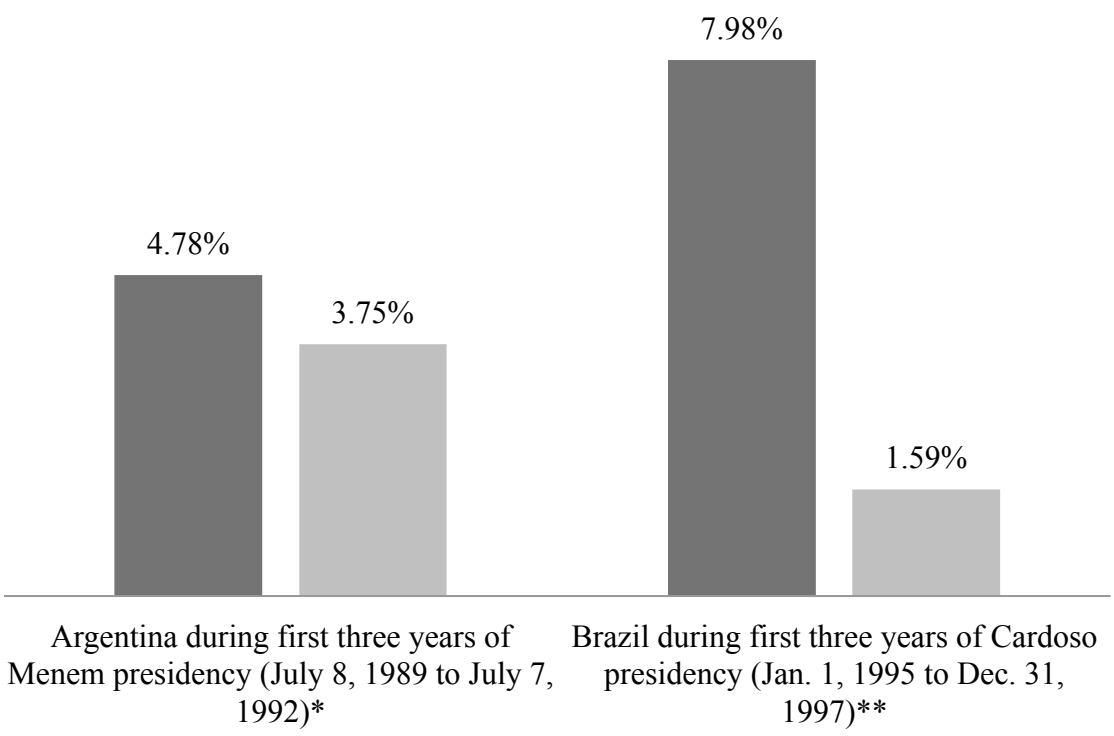
Likewise, while it is often tempting for a Western power to unleash a pattern of

exaggeration of its rivals' breaches of liberal norms, it would be difficult to sustain that U.S. exaggerations of the illiberal characteristics of left/unorthodox rivals have served its interests in the long term. The initial U.S. support for the failed coup in Venezuela was, in part, the culmination of three years of quasi-hysterical discourse about Chávez. Thus, the irony of the U.S. overreaction to Chávez was that it resulted in an initial U.S. stance toward the coup that turned out to be much more damaging to American prestige than anything Chávez had represented prior to the coup. In the words of Vanderbush (2009: 344), "Chavez's return to power after the aborted coup, and the sense that with the help of mass demonstrations by his supporters he was able to defeat both his domestic opponents and their US allies, marks a critical juncture in the process of increasing the autonomy of the Latin American left concurrent with the decline of US influence in the region."

Hence, it may be that the further development of realist-constructive theory could ultimately be of service to a Western state as well. As U.S.-Venezuelan relations illustrate, sometimes a Western state's positions and narratives cue the dominant culture to distort the political life of a foreign country in a manner that ultimately emboldens the Western state to inadvertently damage its own interests in the process of deviating from its professed principles. In other words, even the state may have some reason to want more scrutiny of its cultural authority, for sometimes the state's short-term interests cause it to adopt positions and narratives that influence cultural discourse in ways that ultimately temp the state to use bad judgment and compromise its long-term interests.

Appendices

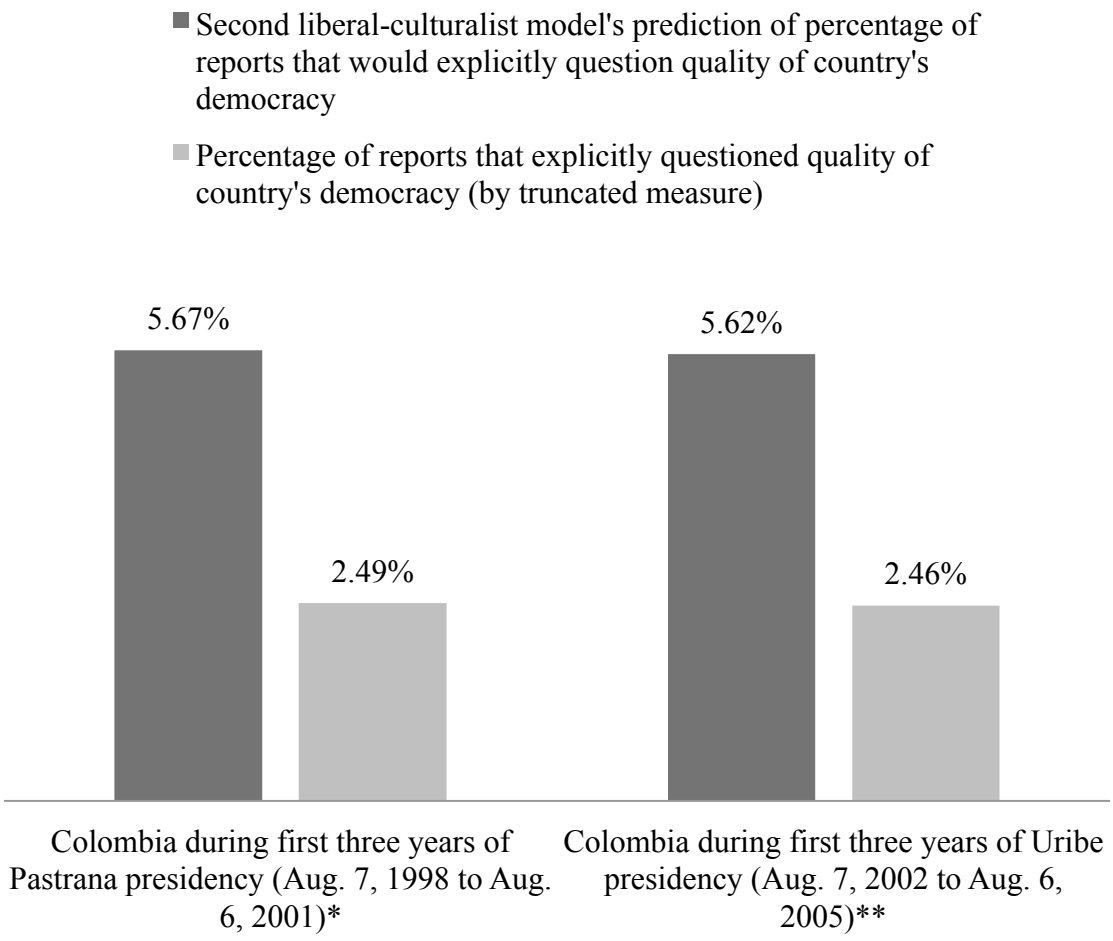
Figure 6A. Comparing predictions of second liberal-culturalist model with percentage of press reports that explicitly questioned quality of democracy under South America's big-market reformers



* A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Argentine democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Among the 160 reports about Argentina during the period, 92 were published in the *Times* and 68 in the *Post*. 4.35 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 2.94 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Argentine democracy, by the truncated measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Brazilian democracy and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Of the 63 reports about Brazil during the period, 41 were published in the *Times* and 22 in the *Post*. 2.44 percent of the reports in the *Times* and none of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Brazilian democracy in the period. One-third of the reporting about Cardoso's first three years in office fell within the last three months of that period, during which Cardoso was up for reelection. In periods when presidents are up for reelection, reports have a higher probability of calling the country's state of democracy into question, which is the primary reason why the second liberal-culturalist model predicted that reporting would be more critical of Brazil's state of democracy than Argentina's. Interestingly, however, none of the 21 reports about Cardoso that fell within the election year carried charges calling into question the quality of Brazilian democracy.

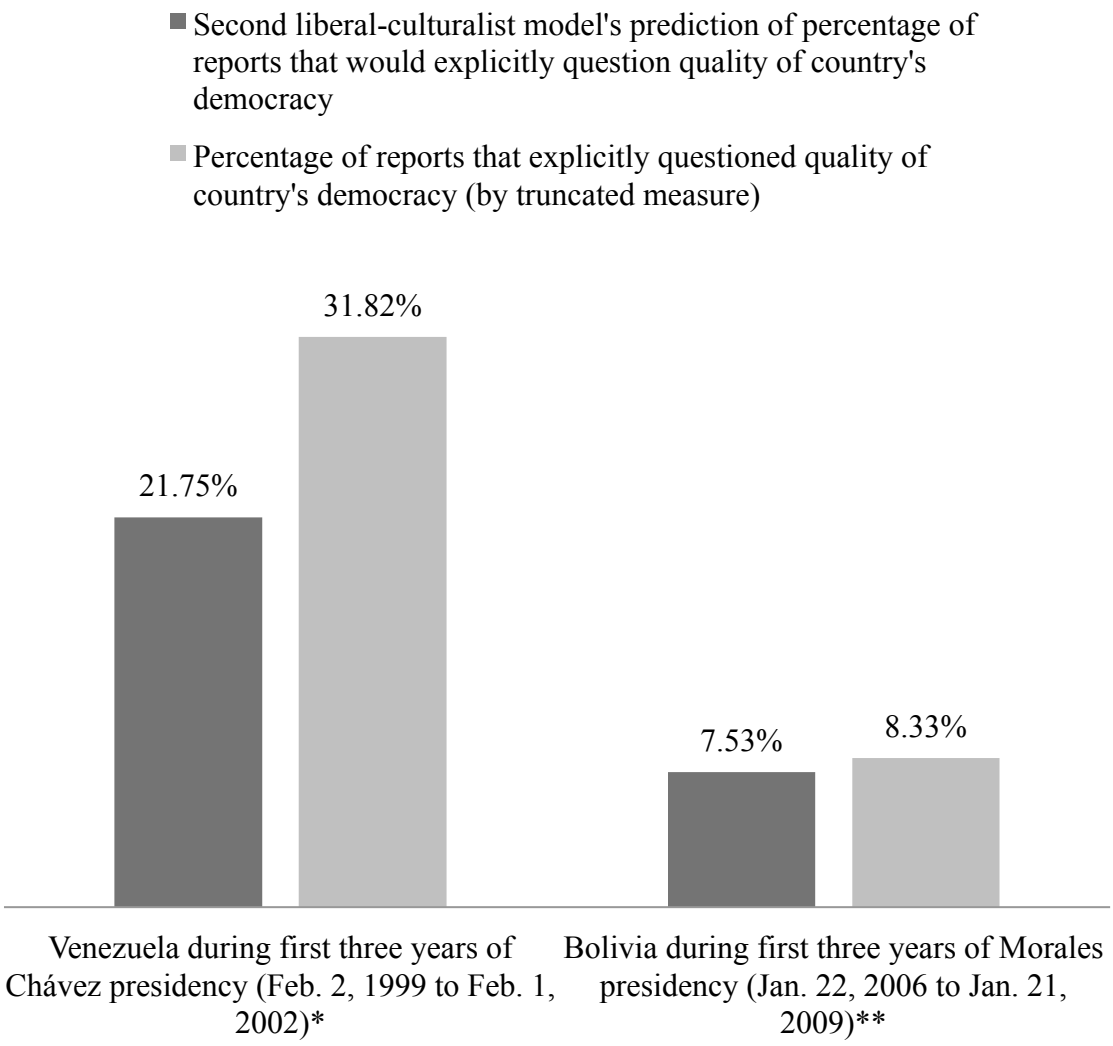
Figure 6B. Comparing predictions of second liberal-culturalist model with percentage of reports that explicitly questioned Colombia's quality of democracy under allied counter-insurgent governments



*A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Pastrana's first three years in office and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .01$). However, if we look at the *Post* reports alone, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Colombian democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Among the 201 reports about Colombia during the period, 109 were published in the *Times* and 92 in the *Post*. 1.83 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 3.26 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Pastrana's first three years in office, by the truncated measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Uribe's first three years in office and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .01$). However, if we look at the *Times* reports alone, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Of the 122 reports about Colombia during Uribe's early presidency, 74 were published in the *Times* and 48 in the *Post*. 4.05 percent of the reports in the *Times* and none of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Colombian democracy during Uribe's first three years in office.

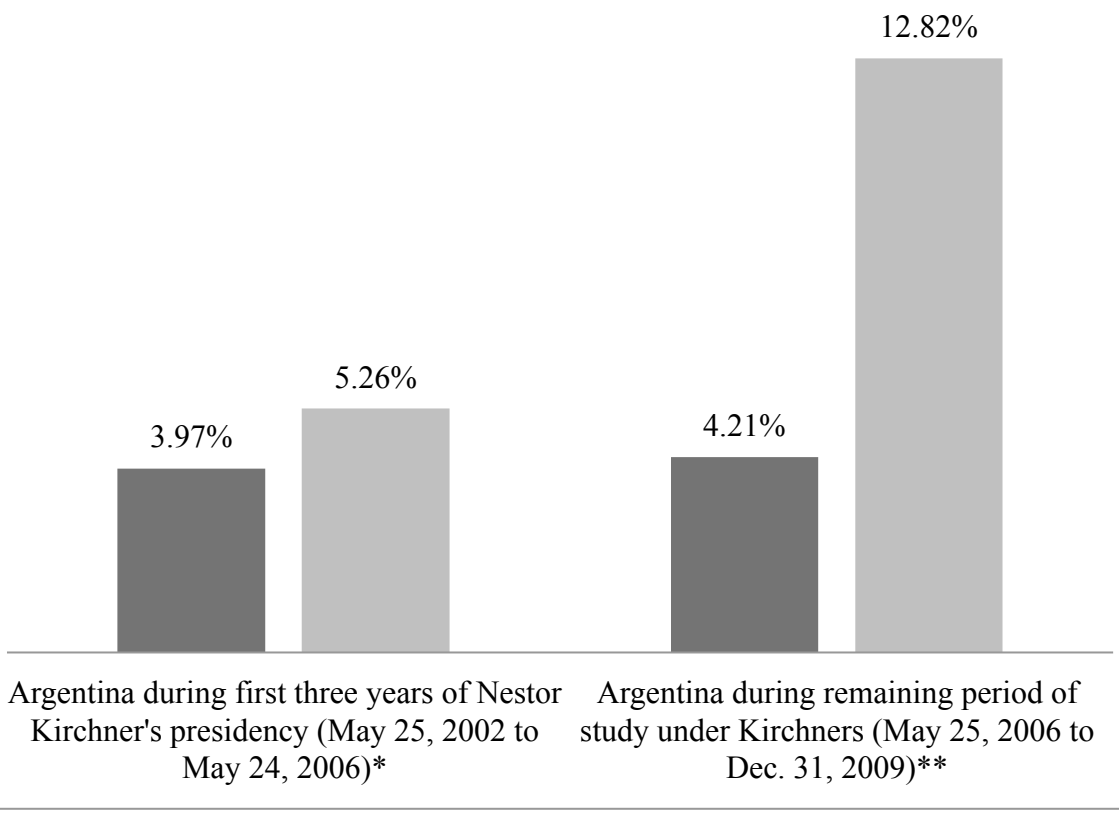
Figure 6C. Comparing predictions of second liberal-culturalist model with percentage of press reports that explicitly questioned quality of democracy under Latin America's most left-wing governments



* A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Venezuelan democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). However, if we look at the *Times* reports alone, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Venezuelan democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Among the 154 reports about Venezuela during the period, 85 were published in the *Times* and 69 in the *Post*. 28.24 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 36.23 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Venezuelan democracy, by the truncated measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Bolivian democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Of the 132 reports about Bolivia during the period, 73 were published in the *Times* and 59 in the *Post*. 5.48 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 11.86 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Bolivian democracy in the period.

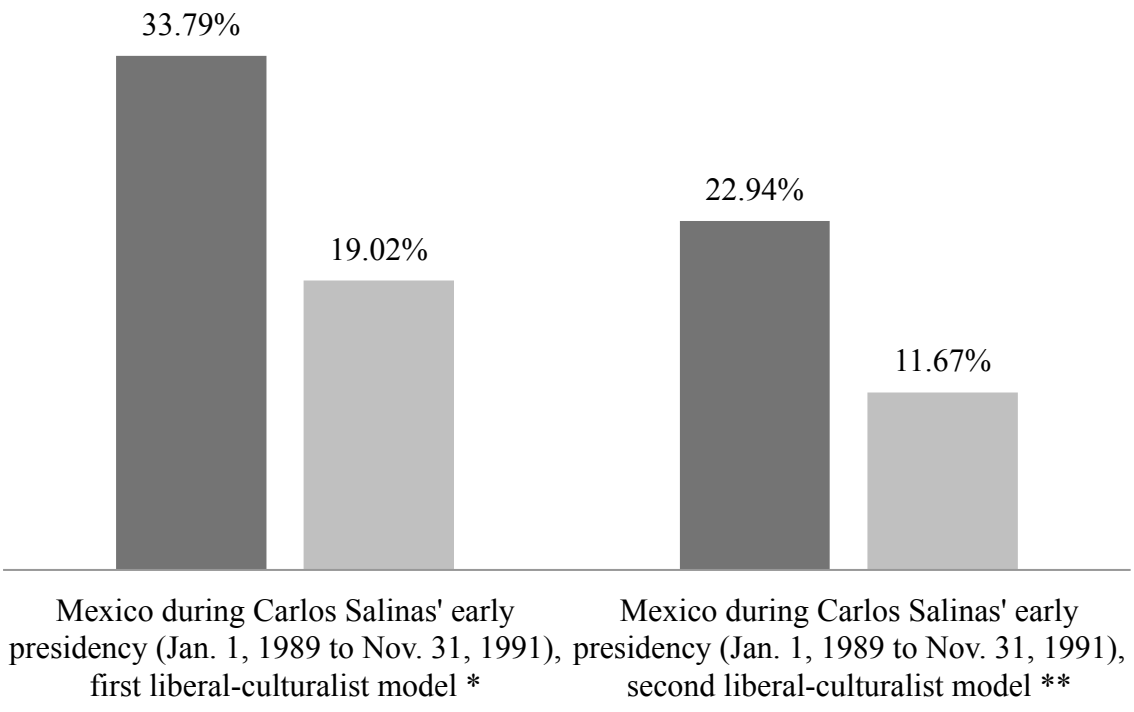
Figure 6D. Comparing predictions of second liberal-culturalist model with percentage of press reports that explicitly questioned Argentina's quality of democracy under left/unorthodox governments



*A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Argentine democracy in the first period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Among the 76 reports about Argentina during the period, 52 were published in the *Times* and 24 in the *Post*. 7.69 percent of the reports in the *Times* and none of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Argentine democracy during Nestor Kirchner's first three years in office, by the truncated measure of the dependent variable.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Argentina democracy in the second period and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Of the 117 reports about Argentina during the period from May 25, 2006 to the end of 2009, 70 were published in the *Times* and 47 in the *Post*. 14.29 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 10.64 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Argentine democracy during the period.

Figure 6E. Comparing predictions of first and second liberal-culturalist models with percentages of reports that questioned Mexico's quality of democracy under country's big-market reformer



* A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that questioned the quality of Mexican democracy in the period and the predicted percentage of the first liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Among the 163 reports about Mexico during the period, 89 were published in the *Times* and 74 in the *Post*. By the comprehensive measure of the dependent variable, 23.56 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 13.51 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges questioning the quality of Mexican democracy in the period.

** A two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between the percentage of reports that *explicitly* questioned the quality of Mexican democracy and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). However, if we look at the *Times* reports alone, we find that the difference between the percentage of such reports that explicitly questioned the quality of Mexican democracy and the predicted percentage of the second liberal-culturalist model is not statistically significant. Using the more narrow measure of the dependent variable, we find that 16.85 percent of the reports in the *Times* and 5.41 percent of those in the *Post* carried charges that explicitly questioned the quality of Mexican democracy in the period, by the truncated measure of the dependent variable.

Table 6A. Cross-checking the sample (by comparing sample and total frequencies with which reports questioned quality of a country's democracy during specified periods, using comprehensive measure of dependent variable)

President(s), country in parenthesis	Period	News-paper	Percentage of total reports that questioned quality of democracy in country, total number of reports in parenthesis	Percentage of reports in original sample that questioned quality of democracy in country, number of sampled reports in parenthesis	Total result is within 95% confidence interval of sample result?
Carlos Menem (Argentina)	7/8/89 – 7/7/92	*Times* *Post*	6.52% (92) 2.94% (68)	0% (21) 4.17% (24)	Yes (± 11.40) Yes (± 6.81)
Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Brazil)	1/1/95 – 12/31/97	*Times* *Post*	2.44% (41) 0% (22)	0% (8) 0% (7)	Yes (± 10.82) NA
Andrés Pastrana (Colombia)	8/7/98 – 8/6/01	*Times* *Post*	2.75% (109) 4.35% (92)	0% (23) 3.125% (32)	Yes (± 6.72) Yes (± 7.1)
Álvaro Uribe (Colombia)	8/7/02 – 8/6/05	*Times* *Post*	8.1% (74) 2.08% (48)	11.76% (17) 0% (16)	Yes (± 13.06) Yes (± 7.07)
Hugo Chávez (Venezuela)	2/2/99 – 2/1/02	*Times* *Post*	43.53% (85) 43.48% (69)	57.89% (19) 30.43% (23)	Yes (± 22.42) Yes (± 20.41)
Evo Morales (Bolivia)	1/22/06 – 1/21/09	*Times* *Post*	8.22% (73) 22.03% (59)	11.11% (18) 19.05% (21)	Yes (± 12.78) Yes (± 17.88)
Nestor Kirchner & Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina)	5/25/03 – 12/31/09	*Times* *Post*	13.93% (122) 9.86% (71)	7.14% (28) 25.0%* (24)	Yes (± 12.88) No* (± 12.01)
Carlos Salinas (Mexico)	1/1/89 – 11/31/91	*Times* *Post*	23.6% (89) 13.51% (74)	35% (20) 12.5 (24)	Yes (± 18.71) Yes (± 13.77)

* The sampled *Post* reports about the Kirchners significantly overrepresented those that called into question the quality of Argentine democracy under the Kirchners. However, this does not appear to have had a significantly distorting effect on the overall sample. The sample's overrepresentation of *Post* reports that criticized Argentina's state of democracy appears to have been offset by its underrepresentation of *Times* reports that questioned the quality of democracy under the Kirchners.

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