

**THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES: AN
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE HEGEMONY OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

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Abstract

The emergence of the United States of America in the 18th century with its preponderance in space and resources (both human and natural) in the Western Hemisphere naturally set her as the de facto hegemon in the area that was once the “power-play theatre” of the distant rival European powers. Although, the US had leveraged on her overwhelming power for maintaining a so-called “Pax-Americana” in the Hemisphere since the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine to the decade after the World War One through unilateral brute force. This paper using the secondary sources of data, critically examines and analyses the United States of America's continued potentials in the maintenance and the sustenance of this hegemony which were fast dwindling at the twilight of the first World War, especially with the avowed sanctity of the sovereign and territorial integrity of states and as well as, other developmental occurrences of the time. Its finally concludes with the contention that, the formation of the Organization of American States was the result of the desperate need to legitimize in an institutional framework of the US hegemony in the Hemisphere in other to guarantying its sustainability and growth.

Keywords: Organization, Institutionalization, Hegemony, Hemisphere And The United States Of America.

Introduction

The emergence of a more or less continental state of the United State of America in the Western Hemisphere vastly divided into pockets of colonial and imperial territories of European powers in the twilight of the 18th century through a bitter but victorious struggle against British imperial authority for freedom in an era of strong imperialist hold on the Hemisphere which was gradually losing justification and defence following growing socio-political Enlightenment and nationalistic tendencies which came to be summed up in the three cardinal principles of the French Revolution of 1789 – Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity – coupled with her desire and determination to facilitate the liberation of the region from European grabs and inoculate it from European power politics based on her vast resources and esteem potentials, had tended to position the United States (US) for an hegemonic role in

the Western Hemisphere. However, this desire was further vivified and the position strengthened with the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe Doctrine was articulated in President James Monroe's seventh annual message to Congress on December 2, 1823 whereby the European powers which had partitioned and established themselves as colonial powers in the Hemisphere since the 15th century were obligated to respect the Western Hemisphere as the United States' sphere of interest. The doctrine warned European nations that the United States would not tolerate further colonization or puppet monarchs in the area (Milestone Documents, 1995). The doctrine stated that European powers were no longer to colonize or interfere with the affairs of the newly independent American states and also allowed the US to interfere with any existing colonies in the Western Hemisphere (Gutierrez, 2008), was a follow-up to the recognition of the rapidly increasing number of Latin American republics. It came to form basic thrust of US foreign policy in relation with the Latin American neighbours as well as the European powers effectively backed by Great Britain based on her intrinsic economic interest of increasing her trade dealings with Latin America where Spanish imperialism had prevailed over other European powers, as part of the Pax - Britannica or British Peace, which was a period of relative peace in Europe, during which the British Empire controlled most trade routes and was the main power in the seas.

The Monroe Doctrine expressed a spirit of solidarity with the newly independent republics of Latin America and these nations in turn recognized their political affinity with the United States by basing their new constitutions, in many instances, on the North American model. However, whilst the US had justified her several unilateral interventionist activities in the internal affairs of these republics beginning with the War on Mexico in 1846 which forced it to cede half of its national territory to its northern "neighbor", including present-day Texas and California; the bombardment and destruction of the Nicaraguan port town of San Juan del Norte in 1854 and the invasion and occupation of Nicaragua in 1912 that was to last almost continuously until 1933; the pushing and actual pressurizing of Colombia to allow for the creation of the separate state of Panama in 1903, then a part of its territory in order to acquire rights to the Panama Canal; e.t.c, (Gutierrez, 2008), in the name of maintaining law and order within the hemisphere and ensuring proper discipline among them, in pursuance of her political economic interest and entrenching herself as the grand - patron and arbiter of peace and justice in the region, yet she lacked the political legitimacy or organized process for effectively fulfilling this hegemonic objective; hence, her high - handedness in most instances which increasingly began to create more enemies at home and resentment among these republics, thereby signaling a threat to her leadership and mentorship among them. The overall impact of this state of affairs was the desire for organized processes or institutionalized procedures which would enjoy some degree of legitimacy through which the United States could leverage her hegemonic tendencies as already expressed in the Monroe Doctrine; hence, the political vacuum which the Organization of American States (OAS) was formed to fill.

This paper seeks to explore how the United States has been able to use the institution of the OAS to pursue and fulfill her hegemonic ambition in the Western Hemisphere, the challenges and prospects of this ambition, especially in the wake of contending forces like the proliferation of opposing identities or parallel regional political economic integrating frameworks in the Hemisphere, globalization and the rising influence of external political and economic powers like Russia and China in an era of nuclear stalemate. In order to properly put this in perspective, the paper adopts the Hegemonic Stability Theory, since "knowledge must always be knowledge from a certain position", according to Karl Mannheim, based on his concept of "relationism" (cit. in, Berger and Luckemann, 1967).

Conceptual definition

The following key concepts are to be quickly clarified for precision and agreement in order for them to serve their primary functions of communication and organization of experience as this paper seeks to achieve. These concepts include: Institutionalization, Hegemony, and Western Hemisphere.

Institutionalization

In the context of this paper, the concept of institutionalization is used in its most literally sense of the process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode

of behavior) within an organization, social system, or society as a whole (Wikipedia, 2013) or the act of trying to cause (a custom, practice, law, etc.) to become accepted and used by many people: to establish (something) as an institution (Merriam-Webster, 2013).

Hegemony

The term “Hegemony” was most likely derived from the Greek word “egemonia”, whose root is “egemon”, meaning “leader, ruler, often in the sense of a state other than his own” (Williams, 195). Since the 19th century “hegemony” commonly has been used to indicate “political predominance, usually of one state over another” (Williams, 1985).

Western hemisphere

The Western Hemisphere also called Occidental Hemisphere is a geographical term for the half of the Earth that lies west of the Prime Meridian (which crosses Greenwich, London, United Kingdom) and east of the Antimeridian, the other half being called the Eastern Hemisphere, or "oriental hemisphere". In this sense, the Western Hemisphere consists of the Americas, the western portions of Europe and Africa, the extreme eastern tip of Russia, numerous territories in Oceania, and a portion of Antarctica, while excluding some of the Aleutian Islands to the southwest of the Alaskan mainland (Wikipedia, 2013). However, the term is often used in political rhetoric and in the context of this paper to refer to only North and South America (or the New World) and adjacent islands. In other words, it is the half of the earth comprising North America, Central America, and South America (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2009).

Theoretical framework - hegemonic stability theory (hst)

This paper as earlier hinted above adopts the Hegemonic Stability Theory as its analytical lens in assessing the OAS framework as the legitimizing institution for US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

Hegemony, in its basic form, means leadership. Gilpin (1981) defines hegemony as “one state (achieving) preeminence over other states in the system.” Keohane (1984) on his part defines it as “a situation in which one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, and willing to do so.” In the economic context, hegemony means “preponderance of material resources...Hegemonic powers must have control over raw materials, control over sources of capital, control over markets, and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods (Keohane, 1984).” Hegemony thus implies the existence of power disparity and a hierarchical power structure in the international system. The Realist/Neorealist theory states that “powerful states tend to seek dominance over all or parts of any international system, thus fostering some degree of hierarchy within the overall anarchy” (Wohlforth, 2008). Moreover, the term “hegemony,” although normally used to describe a system where one country simply has the most power in the system, actually refers to an international system or sub-system where one nation-state has achieved a preponderance of power and is perceived by the subordinate states as a legitimate leader (Calleo, 1987; Mann, 1990; Snidal, 1985). In a post-colonial world, “hegemony” has replaced “empire” as the principal term to describe an international system that is dominated by one powerful state. But, in addition to power, under a hegemonic system ideology is as important as brute force for attaining compliance by subordinate states. Soft power—“the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (Nye, 2004)—is thus a key element of hegemony.

The origins of hegemonic stability theory can be traced back to the 1950s, when Organski postulated that there was a link between British hegemony and the rise of free trade in the 19th century (Organski 1958). In 1973, Charles Kindleberger proposed the first true iteration of hegemonic stability theory when he argued that economic disorder in the years between the First and Second World Wars could be attributed to the lack of a hegemon (Kindleberger 1973). In his 1981 work, *War and Change in World Politics*, Gilpin argued that instability in the international system is inversely related to the extent of a hegemon's relative economic and military capabilities (Gilpin 1983). However, Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) is a hybrid theory that draws on the realist, liberal and historical structuralist perspectives.

Originally as a theory of international political economy, HST argues that a liberal economic order and stability occur when there is a single dominant power- that is, a hegemon. Thus, the theory contends that “the distribution of power among states is the primary determinant of the character of the international economic system” (Webb and Krasner, 1989). The works of Kindleberger and Gilpin divided hegemonic stability theory into two distinct approaches – Kindleberger, as a liberal economist, focused primarily on the role of the hegemon in providing collective goods contributing to economic stability. Gilpin, on the other hand, focuses much more on the security implications of hegemonic governance (Hubbard, 2010).

Charles P. Kindleberger formulated this theory arguing that “for the world economy to be stabilized there has to be a stabilizer, one stabilizer” (Kindleberger, 1973). However, Kindleberger represents the “collective goods” version of the theory in which he “contends that the maintenance of free trade requires what he calls (approvingly) 'benevolent' despot to provide certain institutional public goods.” For Kindleberger, international economic stability is a public, or collective, good because all countries benefit from it regardless of whether or not they contribute to its production. His argument thus contends that a single dominant power is required to induce cooperation in the international system.

The Emergence of the Organization of American states (OAS)

The principles that embody the Organization of American States (OAS) grew out of a history of regional cooperation dating back to the 19th century (OAS, 2013). The OAS charter was adopted on April 30, 1948, during the Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Colombia's capital Bogota, by twenty – one independent states of the Americas led by the US, in which they affirmed their commitment to common goals and respect for each nation's sovereignty. Since then, the OAS has expanded to include fourteen newer republics or nations of the Caribbean, as well as Canada. Nevertheless, multilateral relations among the countries of the Western Hemisphere go back much in history, as a series of inter- American conferences that began in the 1820s had led to the creation of the International Union of American Republics in 1890. Originally created to collect and distribute commercial information, the International Union of American Republics was renamed the Pan American Union in 1910. In 1933, following the launch of President Franklin Roosevelt's “Good Neighbor” policy, the United States and other nations in the hemisphere signed the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which formally recognized the equality of states and the principle of nonintervention in one another's internal affairs. Close cooperation during World War II considerably strengthened hemispheric ties, which were reinforced in the post-war period with the adoption of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) in 1947. The OAS Charter and American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man were signed a year later by the United States and 20 other countries in the region to legally codify the institutions and principles that had come to form the inter-American system.

Purpose/Aims of the OAS

Although, the very logic of its creation at the initiative of the United States was to serve as a legitimating body for U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere (Mahajan, 2005), according to the OAS Charter, as amended, the purpose of the organization is to:

- I. Strengthen the peace and security of the continent;
- II. Promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention;
- III. Prevent possible causes of difficulties and ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among member states;
- IV. Provide for common action on the part of those states in the event of aggression;
- V. Seek the solution of political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise among them;
- VI. Promote, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development;
- VII. Eradicate extreme poverty, which constitutes an obstacle to the full democratic development of the peoples of the hemisphere; and
- VIII. Achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of member states (OAS Charter).

Nevertheless, although the OAS initially sought to address border disputes and collective security issues, it has expanded its activities into other areas over time. In 1959, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was created to carry out the provisions of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. During the 1960s, the OAS greatly expanded its economic, social, cultural, scientific, and technological programs, placing a strong emphasis on development following the 1961 launch of President Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress." Abuses by authoritarian governments prompted the creation of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 1978, and growing concern over narcotics trafficking led to the establishment of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission in 1986. The OAS acknowledged the challenges posed by regional and international terrorism by creating the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism in 1999, and recognized the near universal commitment to democracy in the region through the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001 (Stoetzer, 1993).

Institutional Bodies/Organs

The OAS is composed of a variety of councils, committees, and other institutional organs, some of which are autonomous. There are three primary bodies, however, that are responsible for setting and carrying out the agenda of the OAS: the General Assembly, the Permanent Council, and the General Secretariat.

General Assembly

The General Assembly which was created through a 1970 amendment to the OAS Charter, replacing the International Conference of American States that had previously met every five years is the principal policy-making organ of the OAS. It meets annually¹⁵ to debate current issues, approve the organization's budget, and set policies to govern the other OAS bodies. The General Assembly is composed of the delegations of each of the 34 participating member states (following the suspension of Cuban in 1962), with each state having a single vote. It is empowered to adopt most decisions with the affirmative votes of an absolute majority of the member states; however, some decisions, including the adoption of the agenda and the approval of budgetary matters, require the affirmative votes of two-thirds of the member states. In practice, the General Assembly tends to operate by consensus.

Permanent Council

The day-to-day business of the OAS is conducted by the Permanent Council, which meets regularly throughout the year at the organization's headquarters in Washington, DC. Among other activities, the Permanent Council works to maintain friendly relations among member states, assists in the peaceful settlement of disputes, carries out decisions assigned to it by the General Assembly, regulates the General Secretariat when the General Assembly is not in session, receives reports from the various bodies of the inter-American system, and submits recommendations to the General Assembly. Additionally, the Permanent Council is empowered by the Inter-American Democratic Charter to undertake necessary diplomatic initiatives in the event of an unconstitutional alteration of government. Each OAS member state appoints one representative to the Permanent Council, and each member state has a single vote. The affirmative votes of two-thirds of the member states are required for most Permanent Council decisions. Like the General Assembly, however, the Permanent Council tends to operate by consensus.

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat, directed by the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General, is the permanent body charged with implementing the policies set by the General Assembly and the Permanent Council. The Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General are elected by the General Assembly and serve five-year terms with the possibility of one re-election. According to the OAS Charter, the Secretary General serves as the legal representative of the organization and is allowed to participate in all OAS meetings with a voice but without a vote. The Secretary General is also empowered to establish offices and hire personnel to implement OAS mandates. Some analysts maintain that—given the virtual paralysis of the organization that can result from differences among states and the

need for consensus—"the effectiveness of the OAS critically depends on the consistent, vigorous, and sometimes risk-taking leadership of the Secretary General" (Inter-American Dialogue, 2006). The current Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza of Chile, was first elected in 2005, and was reelected to a second term in March 2010.

Inter-American Council for Integral Development (ICDI)

The ICDI was created in 1993. CIDI's purpose is to promote cooperation among member states and further the agenda of CIES and CIECC. This organ of the organization discusses issues related to: eradication of unemployment and poverty incentives for economic growth and investment defense of social justice liberalization of trade scientific, educational, and cultural development

Specialized Organizations

The Inter-American Commission on Women- this commission focuses specifically on issues regarding women. Its recent activities include the drafting of the "Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women."

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture- this institute has projects designed to help member states evaluate and plan agricultural policies, promote rural development, improve health in rural areas, and develop and share technology.

The Pan American Health Organization promotes health care, has helped eradicate disease and improve mental and physical health.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights promotes fundamental rights and advises the OAS. It is made up of seven experts elected by the OAS General Assembly. The Commission meets twice a year to hear presentations on specific issues, cases, and countries. This Commission also makes on-site visits and issues reports concerning their findings.

The Inter-American Defense Board - This board recommends measures for hemispheric defense, strengthens military cooperation, and conducts studies. The IADB runs an academic program at the Inter-America Defense College.

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission promotes regional cooperation to disrupt illegal production and supply. Also, it seeks to reduce demand through educational programs

OAS and the Hegemony of the United States in the Western Hemisphere

Power alone cannot lead to hegemony; it leads simply to domination or coercion (Sanchez and Sholar, 2012). In a hegemonic system, rather than always being forced to comply which was evident in the US leadership in the Western Hemisphere since 1823 which tend to create resistance and undermine sustainability of the hegemony, subordinate states accept the rules of the system designed by the hegemon mostly because those rules are perceived by the subordinate states as beneficial, especially within some institutional frameworks where they feel their interest is safeguarded. Since hegemony power politics alone cannot maintain the system, the need for a collective institution that would formalize the process through certain socio - economic and political interactions became a necessity. In a fully developed hegemonic system, the subordinate states not only abide by the rules of the international system owing to the accepted leadership of the hegemon, they also emulate the domestic economic and political system of the hegemon. Therefore, hegemony truly exists only "...when the major institutions and forms of organization—economic, social and political—as well as the key values of the dominant state become models for emulation in other subordinate states" (Gill, 1990, p. 47). Emulation is deeper than soft power, since it is based on the complete acceptance by the subordinate states of the hegemon's ideologically inspired social order. In Latin America, the trend towards human rights, democracy and neoliberal economic policies at the behest of the OAS which has been established to entrench this hegemony, is a clear example of such emulation. In this section, we will briefly overview this hegemonic legitimization by the US through the instrumentality of the OAS.

From the time the Monroe Doctrine was promulgated in 1823 through the Cold War period, the US became a preponderant power which she visibly brought to bear on the Western Hemisphere in fulfillment of her herself-imposed duty of maintaining law and order as eventually summed up in the

1905 declaration by President Theodore Roosevelt that the United States was "the policeman" of the region. For instance, between the declaration of Monroe Doctrine in 1823 and the signing of the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States in 1933 which culminated in the formation of the OAS in 1948 following the "Good Neighbor" policy of President Franklin, the US adopted power politics hegemonic strategy through several unilateral - interventionist engagements in the region with little or no regard for the sovereign territorial integrity of the other states, as evident in this time-line provided by Victoria Gutierrez:

1823: The Monroe Doctrine declares that Latin America is within the United States' "sphere of influence".

1846: The US goes to war with Mexico and the latter is forced to cede half its national territory to its northern "neighbor", including present-day Texas and California.

1854: The US navy bombards and destroys the Nicaraguan port town of San Juan del Norte. The attack occurred after US millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt sailed his yacht into the port and an official attempted to levy charges on his boat. The navy attack was to pave the way for William Walker.

1855: William Walker, operating on behalf of bankers Morgan & Garrison, invades Nicaragua and proclaims himself President. During his two year rule, Walker also invaded neighboring El Salvador and Honduras (proclaiming himself head of state in each of these countries also). Walker restored slavery in areas under his occupation.

1898: The US declares war on Spain and annexes Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Hawaii. US forces also occupied Cuba after the war.

1901: US forces leave Cuba and the country gains its "independence" only after passage of the infamous Platt Amendment. The amendment allows the US to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs at any time. Cuba was also forced to cede Guantanamo Bay to the US, in perpetuity.

1903: The US pushes for the creation of the separate state of Panama, then a part of Colombia and acquires rights to the Panama Canal. In later years, former President Theodore Roosevelt was to remark: "I took the Canal Zone and let Congress debate". Colombia was later paid \$25 million in compensation.

1905: President Theodore Roosevelt declares the United States to be "the policeman" of the Caribbean.

1912: U.S. marines invade Nicaragua, beginning an occupation that was to last almost continuously until

1933. In the same year, President Taft declares: "The day is not far distant when three Stars & Stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territory: one at the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal and the third at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally."

1914: The US navy shells the port city of Veracruz, an attack apparently caused by the refusal of some Mexicans to salute the US flag. During World War I, the US also invaded Mexico and Hispaniola (present day Dominican Republic and Haiti).

1933: US forces leave Nicaragua, leaving a dictator, Anastasio Somoza and his National Guard in control (Gutierrez, 2008).

Meanwhile, with the strategic creation of the OAS in 1948 which also cannot be dissociated with certain developments in the international system, especially with the increasing "ideologization" of global politics following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 which eventually led to the dichotomization of the global order, the formation of the League of Nations in 1919 with special institutional regard for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, and the rapidly expanding frontiers in the sciences, especially in the area of information, communication and technology (ICT) which came to transform the conception of geography as a major determining factor in the conduct of international relations, particularly with reference to the Western Hemisphere where the US had been able to perfect its isolationist policy since 1823, as it is naturally separated from the rest of the world, and culminating in the emergence of nuclear technology which further ossified this dichotomy, such unilateral - interventionist hegemonic strategy became very unsustainable and unjustifiable. According to Aragon Miller the dynamics of the Cold War tended to level the playing field between the

superpowers and the developing and decolonizing world. As thinkers like Walt W. Rostow (cit. in Miller, 2010) have noted, the advent of nuclear weapons and ideological blocs meant that there could be no dictation of terms, either by the superpowers against one another or by the superpowers against less powerful nations. Instead, the allegiance of a given smaller country was a highly valuable commodity, since dictation would only create a propaganda opportunity for the other side. In the American context, Washington had to balance competing needs. It could not afford to allow leftist influence to pare off regional governments, but neither could it appear heavy-handed in establishing an anti-communist quarantine. Such that, although the United States had presented itself as a champion of American security and the wielder of the 'Big Stick' in the Americas since President James Monroe's famous (or infamous) declaration of 1823, it was not until the beginning of the Cold War that U.S. policymakers felt compelled to create a formal, collective security system, as old fears, that European empires would nibble at the edges of the hemisphere in an ideologically neutral positive-sum game, gave way to new fears that an ideologically driven Soviet empire would absorb undeveloped regions as well as the United States itself in a zero-sum game. Therefore, The OAS was the ideal forum in which to maintain such a hegemonic stand in the hemisphere and a united front against communism (Miller, 2010).

As with most multilateral political, economic and financial institutions – the UN, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, NAFTA, or the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) – the OAS is one of many instruments used by the Global Power Masters deeply embedded inside the public and private power structures of the United States, to wield political, financial, even legal control over all of the Americas (Salbuchi, 2012). Thus, the US has demonstrated this patriarchal and hegemonic control or ownership of the institution of the OAS in its policies, administration, and the overall sustenance of it, though not without vital challenges following specific changes in the international political system, especially the end of the Cold War, the emergence of certain competing forces in the region like the BRICS activities, and the increasing identity re-orientation in the hemisphere which has led to the proliferation of regional organizations with parallel interest to OAS, thereby leading to the modification of US hegemonic strategies and continue to pose serious threat to the prospects of her dominance in the hemisphere.

Cases of United states Hegemonic Influence in the OAS

The paper will now briefly review areas of US hegemonic influence in the OAS framework and to extent to which she has been able to use the Organization as a legitimizing machinery for her realist quest to dominate and continue to set the rules for the peoples and countries of the Western Hemisphere as she has done since in the early 19th century.

The Funding of the OAS

A part from paying host to the OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. despite that the organization was established in a Bogota, the capital of Colombia in 1948, yet in terms of funding or mobilizing resources for OAS activities, the United States is the top source of funding for the OAS (Meyer, 2013). The OAS has a regular fund, which supports the General Secretariat, and a special fund, which is geared toward specific programs and initiatives. Member countries finance the regular fund through country quotas set by the General Assembly and based on their capacity to pay. The United States contributes approximately \$48 million per year. Contribution to the special fund is voluntary. The OAS's 2012 budget supplies approximately \$85 million for the regular fund and \$70 million for the special fund (Lee, 2012). For instance, the US contributed an estimated \$67.5 million in FY2012—equivalent to nearly 43% of the total 2012 OAS budget. This included \$49.6 million for its assessed contribution to the Regular Fund and \$17.9 million in voluntary contributions to specific funds (see Table 2). According to preliminary OAS calculations, the largest member state donors after the United States in calendar year 2012 were Canada (\$30.1 million), Brazil (\$8.3 million), Mexico (\$7.7 million), Argentina (\$2.1 million), and Colombia (\$1.9 million). The largest nonmember donors to the OAS were the Netherlands (\$4.4 million), Spain (\$3.2 million), and Germany (\$1.4 million) (OAS, 2012). It is therefore evident from the above statistics that the OAU is the pet project of the US with its closest allies

in North American and Western Europe, as it contributes over three - quarter of the total budget of the Organization.

OAS and US Intervention in the Hemisphere

The OAS has more than once covered up the US aggressive action. Suffice it to recall Guatemala (1954), Panama (1964, 1991), the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1985), Haiti (1994) etc. It is under the flag of the OAS that the United States has been waging a struggle against socialist Cuba for over half a century now. Back in 1964 the Organization of American States bowed to the US pressure and took the decision that the OAS member-states should sever relations with Cuba.

The US Hegemony and the OAS Programmes and Actions

Whilst the use of hard power through the use of overt unilateral military intervention in other states in the hemisphere by the US has gradually given way to more covert and overt operations mostly with (and sometimes without, especially for the former) the support of the OAS as shown in the 1954 CIA orchestrated overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Jacobo Arbenz, in Guatemala; the 1961 US-backed forces invade Cuba, but suffer defeat at the Bay of Pigs; in 1965 the US sends 23,000 troops sent to the Dominican Republic to restore order following a popular uprising against the country's military regime; the 1973 a US-backed coup that overthrown the elected government of Salvador Allende, ushering in the regime of General Augusto Pinochet; e.t.c., yet the US until recently has maintained strategic grip on the reins of the Organization's initiatives and policy thrust in accordance with her political, economic and social interests.

For instance, the Cold War politics and the quest contain the spread of Communism everywhere tended to have dominated the agenda of the OAS between 1948 and 1990 with little or no attention on other areas of international endeavors in line with President Truman Doctrine of "Containment" Policy against Communism. During the cold war years, the US imposed regional security strategies on Latin America centered on "the fight against communism"; and today this has shifted to region's role in the "global war on terror" following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on US coupled the propagation of US liberal - democratic philosophy. The 1959 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights which was create as a key player in the struggle against the hemisphere's repressive regimes was due to the suspected influence of communism and the signing of 1961 Charter of Punta del Este which launched the Alliance for Progress, an ambitious cooperative program designed to strengthen democracy and achieve economic progress and greater social justice in the hemisphere, and condemning Communism as un - American political ideology; hence, the suspension of Cuba from the OAS on the grounds that its self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist government was "incompatible with the principles and objectives of the inter-American system" (Lee, 2013) and its reintegration remains one of the divisive issues plaguing the OAS, despite the 2009 resolution to restore her membership.

Similarly, the US renewed commitment to promote its political and economic liberal - democratic philosophy rather than just maintain laws and orders in the Hemisphere also seems to provide the road-map for the OAS in the decade succeeding the Cold War as demonstrated in the fact that began member states approved a series of instruments designed to support democratic governance, culminating in the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter on September 11, 2001, which asserts that the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it. As a free-market, democratic hegemon, the United States through its ideological influence expects subordinate states in Latin America to embrace democratic principles and institutions, as well as free-market policies. Consequently, democracy and self-determination, in addition to peace and prosperity, are also values that subordinate states expect as derivatives of American hegemony. After the Great Depression, the countries of Latin America began to embrace economic policies that placed the state at the economic helm. These statist economic policies, principally import substitution industrialization, were deemed by many nationalist leaders as the best route toward national development. However, since the dominance of the Washington Consensus in the 1980s, which promoted neoliberal policies, the countries of Latin America have eschewed statism and increasingly

embraced free trade, privatization, and laissez faire economics in general. Perhaps the most salient example is President Fernando Enrique Cardoso of Brazil. Cardoso was a leading dependency theorist who argued that global capitalism keeps poor countries from developing; however, when he became president of Brazil in 1995, Cardoso promoted neoliberal economic policies. Hence, Sanchez and Sholar (2012) have argued that, from the time the Monroe Doctrine was promulgated in 1823 through the Cold War period, Washington became a preponderant power; however, only after the 1980s can we say that brute force was matched by ideological influence.

This US over-bearing hegemonic influence in setting the hemispheric agenda can also be seen in the June 2002 adoption of the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism by OAS member states, through which they committed to take action against the financing of terrorism, ratify U.N. anti-terrorism instruments, improve cooperation among law enforcement, and deny asylum to suspected terrorists in the bid to reinvigorate Inter-American Committee on Terrorism (CICTE by its Spanish acronym) which was established in 1999 and serves as the primary forum for cooperation on terrorism issues within the hemisphere in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US and President Bush's avowed "War on Terror".

Other concerns like the fact that the production, trafficking, and consumption of illegal narcotics posed a serious threat to the entire Western Hemisphere which led OAS member states to establish the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD by its Spanish acronym) in 1986 are also true reflection of this strategic US influence, since most of these drugs usually find their way to the US markets and are such consumed mainly by US population.

Challenges and prospects of United States' hegemony in western hemisphere

The general discourse of the hegemony of the United States in the globe, according to Debin et al (2012), tends to reveal how she rose to the status of 'Superpower' in the aftermath of World War II and 'Hyper power' after the demise of Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the era of Post Cold War has been replete with 'American Unilateralism' and poor role played by international regimes who failed to check upon American unrestrained misadventure ranging from Vietnam, Afghan war (2002) and Iraq war (2003). These overextended commitments not only damaged US interests to the great extent but ignited Anti-Americanism all over the world (Debin et al, 2012). While the above seems true from the general perspective of the US global hegemony, yet it is truer with regard to the states of the Western Hemisphere who have subjected under the heavy - weight of the United States since their liberation from colonial bondage in the 19th and early 20th centuries as already discussed above. The implications of this condition in an inter - dependent world of increasing independence and nationalist consciousness are the challenges now plaguing the OAS which tend to undermine its functionality as a legitimizing institution of the US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere and the general capacity of the US to exercise this hegemony over the Hemisphere (or police it) as she had done between 19th and 20th centuries. Some of these challenges include:

Proliferation of Regional Organizations

One of the greatest challenges to the OAS as an integrating or rally point in the Western Hemisphere is the increasing proliferation of parallel regional organizations in the hemisphere which has tended to create identity crisis among its members which is also in recognition of the over-arching hegemonic influence of the US within the OAS framework regardless of the avowed equality and general consensus as the basis for decision making. According to Varas (2008), the most striking thing about the region is the almost constant bombardment of integration proposals which the region has been subjected to of late, some of which, in their different focuses, have led to confusion regarding the various processes already in place. At first glance, one might think that Latin American Foreign Ministries were trying to outdo each other (some more than others) in seeing who can come up with the greatest number of proposals, while scant attention is paid to those already established, which are in poor shape. Such is the case of MERCOSUR, the main post Cold War regional initiative, which finds itself in a critical state of affairs thanks to the inefficiency of its institutions in maintaining "the common objectives which drove its member states to engage in the process of regional integration and the consequent loss of focus and

capacity to prioritise underlying political problems. Similar diagnoses could be made with respect to the Latin American Economic System (Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe or SELA), and the Andean Community of Nations (La Comunidad Andina de Naciones or CAN) and other regional organizations including such Venezuelan proposals on a wide range as in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (Alternativa Bolivariana para América Latina y el Caribe or ALBA), the Trade Treaty of the Peoples (Tratado Comercial de los Pueblos or TCP), the Bank of the South (el Banco del Sur) and the South Atlantic Treaty Organisation (la Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Sur or OTAS) and the proposal for a standing army for ALBA, Petrocaribe, Petrosur and TeleSUR. In the case of Brazil, it proposed the Union of South American Nations (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas or UNASUR) as well as its recent initiative for a South American Defense Council. Nonetheless, in order not to be left out, Ecuador's President Correa has proposed an Organization of Latin American States to replace the OAS (Varas, 2008). The two most substantive of these emerging regional organizations which have seen as rivals to the OAS are ALBA and UNASUR (Kellogg, 2012).

The acronym ALBA originally stood for the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. In 2007 the name was changed slightly, first to Bolivarian Alternative for Our America, then to Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America. However, "since the 6th Extraordinary ALBA Summit" in June 2009, ALBA has stood for Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Muhr, 2010). Retained in all the versions, however, is the acronym "ALBA," which "in Spanish means dawn" with the clear implication "that there is a dawning of a new (non--capitalist) reality" (Cole, 2008). According to Backer and Molina (2009) ALBA "is an alternative approach to economic, social, cultural and political integration that aims to foster trade, development and unity among the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean on the basis of a set of principles distinct from those underlying conventional integration efforts".

The Union of South American Nations, known by its acronym UNASUR (based on the Spanish Union de Naciones Suramericanas), was formally constituted on May 23, 2008 through the South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty. It includes all South American countries except French Guiana. The UNASUR like ALBA deliberately denied membership from North America made of US and Canada.

Meanwhile, the most challenging regional integration in this context could be seen in the eventual establishment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on February 23, 2010, at the Rio Group-Caribbean Community Unity Summit in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico. CELAC which comprises 33 regional countries out of the 35 member states of the OAS, excluding the US and Canada (Lendman, 2011). The inaugural summit of the community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in December 2011, De La Barra and Dello Buono (2013) have contended, marked a significant step toward consolidating a system of regional integration that will operate as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States. One major important part of this development is the active participation of Cuba, another divisive issue in OAS framework following her suspension in 1962 in these parallel regional integration efforts in the hemisphere.

External Influence from the BRIC States

Whilst the "rise of China" is seen as part of the "U.S. decline", the ascendancy of the BRICs is to be interpreted as the rise of contenders to U.S. hegemony and developments in Latin America as it tends to give us a grasp on the emerging form of contestation (Brand et al, 2012), especially with burgeoning influence of Brazil in the South with some valid claims to regional power block as demonstrated in her proposal for the creation of a regional collective security apparatus named South American Defence Council (Consejo de Seguridad Sudamericana or CSS) in close partnership with such close partnership such rivals of the US like China, following the Colombian military incursion into Ecuadorian territory in March 2008 (Varas, 2008) outside the US, thereby signaling some loss of confidence in the capacity of the US to effectively discharge her supposed hegemonic duties to protect and maintain peace. It is on the basis of this that Sabatini (2013) has argued that for decades, the standard framework for describing and understanding U.S.-Latin American relations has been the

overwhelming hegemonic power of the "colossus of the north." Now, though, with the rise of regional powers like Brazil the importance of new emerging economies like China, and the diversity of political and economic models in the region, policymakers and observers are beginning to discuss the decline of U.S. power in the region, and that the effects of waning U.S. influence are already shaping countries' calculations in their domestic and foreign policies and the formation of multilateral alliances.

Other Challenges to the US hegemonic influence in the hemisphere and overall OAS functionality a part from the Cuban re-integration crisis, are inherent in the general institutional weaknesses and administrative deficiencies inherent in the OAS, ranging from limited funding as most of the funds needed for its administration are solely provided for by the Us with her allies coupled with lapses inherent in the OAS operating principle of General Consensus.

Prospects of us Hegemony in Western Hemisphere via the OAS

While the US continuous domination of the OAS cannot be easily waived aside, as her fingerprints run over its framework, yet the over-arching hegemonic and power politics disposition which she had manifested through several overt and covert unilateral – interventionist operations or activities since the 19th century and during the Cold War on the excuse of containing Communism seems to have been overtaken by events, especially with the proliferation of extra – US security alliances among other states of the hemisphere.

Meanwhile, Washington will find it hard to forgo the OAS as a time-tested (almost unfailing) instrument of pursuing the North-American policy on the continent. But many Latin American leaders see prospects for this kind of “co-existence” quite differently as the “populists” are determined that all future community members should pull out of the OAS (Nikandrov, 2012). The “populists” see the OAS as a “punitive agency” that the United States has used all along to neutralize any “potentially dangerous” opponents in the region. The OAS has more than once covered up the US aggressive action as earlier outlined, especially in the struggle against socialist Cuba for over half a century now. Back in 1964 the Organization of American States bowed to the US pressure and took the decision that the OAS member-states should sever relations with Cuba. Although an overwhelming majority of these countries have since brought their relations with Havana back to normal, Washington's dominant attitude whereby a return of “Castro's dictatorial regime” to the OAS is inadmissible, is still there. This has largely prompted the idea of creating an “alternative OAS without the US” in Latin America, with the Rio Group already playing the role to a degree. Washington used the OAS to pursue an isolation policy not only against Cuba, but also against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, the Omar Torrijos government in Panama, while recently, against the “populist” regimes of Ecuador, Bolivia and, above all, Venezuela. The more obsessed the Empire is in fighting “enemies” all over the world, the more frequently that obsession backfires (Nikandrov, 2012). Prospects for setting up CELAC, – an “alternative Organization of American States without the USA”, may result in the isolation of the United States proper on the American continent. Even the OAS voting machine, well-adjusted over the Cold War years, would occasionally glitch. But now that the Empire is in its twilight years, the policy of brazen diktat proves increasingly ineffective, causing Washington time and again to cede “the field” for tactical considerations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be said that, while the era of unilateral intervention by the US could be said to have become belated, the turn of the century have witnessed several Latin American countries elected presidents who are questioning the so-called Washington consensus and the overbearing influence of the US. If the United States wishes to remain the region's hegemon, it must therefore act quickly to design a new regional policy, beyond the present OAS capacity, akin to Roosevelt's Good Neighbour policy or Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. Only a more “ethical” policy toward the region will ensure that America can continue to exercise hegemony. By employing the term “ethical,” we are suggesting that the US government will need to ensure that its foreign policy benefits the countries of Latin America, providing such universal values as democracy, peace, and prosperity. A new, ethical policy will not only guarantee vital US interests, but it will also promote the principles that America has

rhetorically stood for since its founding—democracy and self-determination—and will therefore be welcomed by the leaders and people of the region.

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