the role of the oas in the war on drugs in the americas

*Explaining the OAS shift in discourse regarding the war on drugs*

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# Preface

Before you lays the end product of my study process at Radboud University Nijmegen. After experiencing ups and downs, I am now saying goodbye to my student life.

My student career began in Universidad del Valle de Mexico (UVM), where I completed a Bachelor in International Relations. Throughout my Bachelor’s, my interest in international politics grew to the extent of seeking a professional career in this area, for what I sought an internship in a related area. After completing an internship in Mexico’s Immigration Department (INAMI) I served that department as a federal agent and my experiences in the fieldwork expanded my view on international politics. This drove me to continue studying international relations from different perspectives. At this moment I knew I wanted to complete my studies with the Master in Political Science/International Relationships at the Nijmegen School of Management, and I was thrilled when I got my letter of acceptance. Now, after studying at Radboud I can only look back at my student time with positive thoughts.

I would like to give a special thanks to my thesis supervisor Dr. Angela Wigger for her guidance throughout this process. Also, my thanks go to my friends and family who have helped me get through this experience in many different ways. I like to also thank my parents for their endless support and for being an inspiration. Finally, Lisa thanks for our conversations, for helping me ordering my thoughts and for supporting me throughout this process.

*Nijmegen, July 2015*

*Fernando Gómez*

# Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why the Organization of American States (OAS) shifted its policy discourse on its strategy for fighting the war on drugs in the Americas from a militarized to a more balanced approach. This thesis uses three grand theories of the International Relations (IR) scholarship, namely neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism, notably the life cycle of the norm, to test plausible explanations. Through a case study and process tracing, this thesis finds that neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism have limited explanatory power regarding the subject under investigation, for they fail to take the role of norms into serious consideration. Also, this thesis finds that norm entrepreneurs advocating for human rights norms have directly influenced the OAS shift in discourse regarding the war on drugs. This thesis enhances our understanding of the role of the OAS in the war on drugs, while taking the role of norms and ideas into account.

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# List of abbreviations

**ALBA** Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América

**ATF** United States Bureau of Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

**CIA** United States Central Intelligence Agency

**CICAD** Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission

**CIDI** Inter-American Council for Integral Development

**CPOs** Causal Process Observations

**CSBMs** Confidence and Security-Building Measures

**CSOs** Civil Society Organizations

**DEA** UnitedStatesDrug Enforcement Agency

**DSOs** Data Set Observations

**ERCAIAD** Escuela Regional de la Comunidad Americana de Inteligencia Antidrogas

**FARC** Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

**FBI** United States Federal Bureau of Investigation

**FTAA** Free Trade Area of the Americas

**IACHR** Inter-American Court of Human Rights

**IAPF** Inter-American Peace Force

**IATRA**  Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance

**ICE** United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement

**ICRC** International Committee of the Red Cross

**IGO** Intergovernmental Organization

**INL** United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

**IO** International Organization

**IR** International Relations

**MEM** Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism

**NAFTA** North American Free Trade Agreement

**NBRF** Northern Border Response Force

**NGO** Nongovernmental Organization

**NorthCom** United States Northern Command

**OAS** Organization of American States

**SPP** Security and Prosperity Partnership

**TNCs** Transnational Corporations

**US** United States of America

# 1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the international community has been shocked by ongoing crimes committed by drug cartels in the Americas (i.e. Amnesty International Report, 2013; Human Rights Watch World Report, 2011; 2013; 2014). For example, corruption and violence derived from drug trafficking are observed as a constant that has damaged the socio-political stability of Mexico. In 2007, as a response to the mayhem caused by drug cartels, the then president of Mexico, Felipe Calderón, declared an all-out ‘war on drugs’ that led to more than 100,000 deaths and at least 26,000 disappearances ever since (Human Rights Watch, 2011; 2014). However, the ‘war on drugs’ is not solely Mexico’s problem, it is a problem that has profoundly affected the peace and stability throughout the Americas since the 1980s (Bagley, 1988a; Carpenter, 2003; Shifter, 2007).

The history of the war on drugs in the Americas is marked by the decision of the US President Reagan to launch a war on drugs within and alongside US borders in 1982 (Bagley, 1988a; Chepesiuk, 1999). President Reagan thus turned the war on drugs into the national security objective and increased the participation of the US military and other law enforcement agencies in counterdrug operations (Bagley, 1988a). In support of Regan’s crusade, countries such as Mexico and Colombia began collaborating with the US on suppressing the illegal drug industry in the mid 80s (Bagley, 1988a, 1988b; Chepesiuk, 1999). The collaboration of Colombia and Mexico with the US was necessary for President Reagan since these countries represent the major source of production and transit to drugs entering the US (ibid.). Moreover, collaboration between these countries was possible since each of them experienced different problems derived from drug trafficking (Bagley, 1988a, Chabat, 2002). Whereas the US dealt with increased criminality related to drug consumption, Mexico and Colombia dealt with corruption and crimes related to trafficking and production (ibid.). These three countries thus experienced adverse consequences of drug trafficking; however, this did not stop at their national boundaries. Instead, drug trafficking has caused socio-political instability throughout the region.

The peace and stability in the Americas is the essential purpose of the Organization of American States (OAS). Besides being the world’s oldest regional organization dating back to 1948, the OAS is the principal International Organization (IO) managing multilateral cooperation in the American continent and the principal regional actor coordinating hemispheric drug policy (Shaw, 2004; Horwitz, 2010). As an organization tailored to warrant peace, the OAS has identified the drug problem as a complex and multi-causal challenge for ensuring the peace and security of the Americas (OAS, 1948).

In 1996, the OAS issued the “*Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere”* with a strong focus on drug prohibition and supply reduction. Ever since, and until 2013, the OAS’ discourse for choice of policy has been led by an offensive approach focused on disrupting the flow of the drug trade by dismantling drug cartels. For instance, in its “*Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere”,* the OASlists the dismantlement of crime organizations as its first control measurement and key strategy to be adopted by its members. Furthermore, it is stated within the aforementioned document that the problem of the illicit supply of drugs requires the adoption and improvement of measures to eliminate their availability. The strategy consists of chapters regarding demand reduction, supply reduction, and control measures (OAS, 2011a). The expressions of the offensive approach can be seen in the overwhelming focus of the governments on sending their military to fight the drug cartels, and the very little importance paid to the social causes and consequences of drug trafficking, such as human rights violations and escalation of violence (see OAS, 2011a). The focus of the strategy was thus on the state and transnational level, and not on the individual level (ibid.). This shows that the OAS members agreed on a militant and aggressive approach to deal with the drug problem in the Americas.

The OAS members have recognized that in spite of their multilateral efforts, illegal drug trafficking and the problems derived from it keep threatening the peace and stability in the continent. In response to this threat, the General Assembly of the OAS gathered at Guatemala in 2013 to address this security issue and reached consensus on adopting a different choice of policy for addressing the ‘war on drugs’. As the declaration that was issued from this session states, the OAS members agreed on the need for *“a comprehensive policy against the world drug problem in the Americas”*. This declaration, the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*”, states throughout its pages that the OAS members have recognized the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach built on a framework of full respect for human rights. Differently from the previous message, the point of reducing drug supply is barely touched in this declaration. To be more specific, this declaration now takes into account the welfare of individuals, and states that the lessons learned from approaches concerning drug control throughout the world are now recognized. Therefore, it takes into account the individual, national, and transnational level.

In contrast with past drug-control efforts, this new comprehensive approach represents a U-turn in the OAS’ discourse on tackling down the drug problem in the Americas from a more militant and aggressive approach towards a more inclusive and balanced approach focusing on the human rights of individuals among others. Therefore, this thesis aims to provide an answer to the following research question:

Why did the Organization of American States shift the discourse on its strategy for fighting the drug wars in the Americas from an offensive to a more balanced approach?

This thesis contributes to the scientific knowledge of the IR scholarship in several ways. Firstly, there is few research conducted by IR scholars on the war on drugs in the Americas. A variety of theoretical, methodological and empirical emphases on the war on drugs exist. However, most of these have neglected the role of the OAS as the regional organization tackling hemispheric security threats such as drug trafficking (see Bagley, 1988; Mercille, 2011; Morton, 2012).

For instance, Morton (2012) addresses the transnational aspect of the war on drugs in the Americas by noticing that the geographic restructuring of the trade in cocaine directly influences Mexico’s war on drugs. He argues that state power is not rooted within clear and immobile boundaries, and that it is more fruitful to consider that states are not simply fixed and unchangeable entities, but they rather experience continuous structural shifts that cannot be isolated from underlying historical patterns of development and political economy. However, the study of Morton (2012) is too focused on the state and thereby ignores the role of the OAS in this context.

Secondly, IR scholars have rarely explored the link between decision-making processes in the OAS, and the ‘war on drugs’ in the Americas. Shawn (2004), for instance, explores different approaches to understand the capacity of the OAS to serve the collective security needs of its members. However, her work does not sufficiently address the hemispheric security threat posed by drug trafficking and the role of norms. Similarly, Horwitz (2010) has argued that the US and Latin America are finding ways to use multilateral organisms to confront mutual security threats. However, her work needs to be complemented with a normative approach and a deeper exploration about the role of the OAS in the war on drugs.

The role of ideas and norms in international politics is crucial for enhancing our understanding about state behavior. This is so simply because state leaders and policy-makers can be influenced by norms about what they consider to be morally ‘appropriate’ (See Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Wendt, 1999). Therefore, in order to get a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation, this thesis will complement the work of both Horwitz (2010) and Shawn (2004) by addressing the role of the OAS in the ‘war on drugs’, while including the role that ideas and norms play in this context.

Thirdly, the OAS is relevant for the IR scholarship mainly because the role of IOs in the international system and the conditions under which IOs matter are still a matter of debate in the IR discipline. The role that IOs play has been mainly heightened by adherents of the institutionalist theory. However, neorealists and social constructivists seem to have strong arguments on what role institutions play in international politics. Thus, at first glance these IR theories seem able to provide plausible explanations for the OAS shift in discourse. Whereas neorealism would explain the OAS shift of discourse on the basis of balance of power as the main explanatory variable, neoliberal institutionalism would explain this through the role of international institutions on facilitating cooperation; and social constructivism/norm life cycle would explain this through a socialization process of ideas and norms, and the internalization of these at the international level. This thesis is consequently faced with a theoretical puzzle, which will contribute to the existing literature by portraying a more complete landscape of the war on drugs in the Americas.

Moreover, this thesis is relevant for society because by investigating the motivations behind the OAS shift in discourse, this research lays bare the conditions under which the OAS can aid in bringing peace and stability to the Americas. This thesis will therefore make its contribution to society by establishing whether or not citizens of the Americas can rely on the OAS for alleviating the negative effects that stem from the ‘war on drugs’. Additionally, this thesis aims to raise awareness about the impact that hard-line policies can have on society.

Within this thesis I argue that the OAS shift in discourse for the war on drugs has been directly influenced by norm entrepreneurs advocating for human rights norms. I will support this argument by investigating the mechanisms that led to a U-turn in the OAS discourse regarding the war on drugs. I build up an analytical narrative by employing the qualitative method of *process tracing* on extensive literature and other secondary data retrieved from official documents of the OAS, positions stated by OAS members and several interested national/transnational groups representing civil society, as well as data from previous scientific research.

This thesis is structured as follows: the second chapter presents the theoretical framework of this research. This chapter explores the theories of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism/norm life cycle, and deducts hypotheses from each theory for answering the research question. Thereafter, the methodology employed in this research and the operationalization of the theoretical concepts is presented in the third chapter. Chapter four begins by elaborating on the subject under investigation (*explanandum*) before moving on to the hypothesis testing procedure. Lastly, in the fifth chapter, the conclusion about the findings of this research is presented alongside its limitations and recommendations for further research.

# 2. Theoretical foundations

This chapter provides the theoretical foundations of this thesis. The first section explores the theory of neorealism and derives hypotheses to find a theoretically-informed answer on the research question. Thereafter, the second section explores the theory of neoliberal institutionalism and contrasts it against neorealism, again deriving hypotheses for answering the research question. Subsequently, the third section of this chapter explores the theory of social constructivism and the life cycle of norms with its hypotheses. Lastly, a figure of the hypothesized link between the dependent and independent variables is presented with the aim to provide a clear overview of the theoretical framework.

## 2.1. Neorealism

The theory of neorealism, also referred to as structural realism, derives from classical realism, of which its origins can be found in the work of the first realists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes (Nye and Welch, 2013, p.5; Lebow, 2007, p.53). Machiavelli stated that states always have to keep the interest of the state in mind and anything on that basis is permitted (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010), while Hobbes claimed that humans are evil in nature and only the state can help prevent a war of all against all (Lloyd and Sreedhar, 2014). Classical realists in the IR sphere claim that international politics is constrained by the nature of human beings, which is egoistic if not retained by some form of government (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010).

During the time of the First and Second World Wars, classical realist theory emerged as a response to the more idealist perspective that was born after the First World War (ibid.). The emergence of the ‘League of Nations’ after the First World War was aimed at preventing future catastrophic wars from happening by institutionalizing a collective security structure, and thus instigate cooperation between states (see Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.112-121; Korab-Karpowicz, 2010). This illustrates that there were views opposing the classical realist theory at that time; for instance, former US president Woodrow Wilson regarded realist policies as immoral because they violate democratic principles (Nye and Welch, 2013, p.112). However, the classical realist assumptions that the state’s self-interest prevails under the conditions of anarchy and that the state’s interest is defined by security concerns were consolidated by the failure of the ‘League of Nations’ in preventing the break out of World War II (see Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.112-121). The classical realist view thus seemed to be accurately explaining international politics at that time.

From the classical realist theory the neorealist theory emerged (Lebow, 2007, p.53; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.8). The difference between classical realist theory and neorealist theory can be explained by answering the question: “*why do states want power?”* Classical realist theory assumes, as Morgenthau (1948) argued, that states strive for power, because the individuals that make up the states are inherently egoistic and power-driven for that is in their human nature (in Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72). This stems from the fact that the primary interest of humans is survival.

Adherents of neorealist theory do not acknowledge this pivotal place for human nature; instead they argue that the anarchical system forces states to pursue power, because it is the safest way to ensure their survival (ibid.). Because the international system lacks a higher authority to ensure the safety of the states, and is thus anarchic by definition, the states are also primarily concerned with their own survival (Waltz, 1979, pp.103-106; Mearsheimer, 1994-1995, pp.10-11). Whereas for classical realists power is the end goal, for neorealists power is merely the means to an end, namely the survival of the state (Waltz, 1997, p.913; Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72).

Neorealism is subsequently underpinned by five main assumptions. The first assumption is that states are the main actors in the international system and they operate under the condition of international anarchy (see Waltz, 1959, pp.160, 188; Mearsheimer, 1994-1995, pp.10-11: 2007, p.73). Anarchy implies that the structure of the international system lacks an overarching legitimate authority at the global level (Waltz, 1959, p.188; Mearsheimer, 2001, p.30). Since there is no higher authority above the state, for neorealists, states are the beginning and the end of international politics and the thereby the main unit of analysis (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.5-6).

The consequence of anarchy leads to the second assumption of neorealism: there is a *security dilemma[[1]](#footnote-1)* for states within the international system due to uncertainty about the intentions of other states and thus a lack of trust between them (Mearsheimer, 1994-1995, pp.10-11: 2007, pp.72, 74-75). The *security dilemma* stems from the inability to know whether the other state is a *revisionist* or a *status quo* state. A *revisionist state* is a state that is determined to use force to alter the balance of power in the international arena, which will be always in their favor according to neorealist theory (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.73). A *status quo state* is a state that is not interested in using force to alter the balance of power in the international arena, because it is satisfied with the status quo that it possesses at that moment (ibid.).

The lack of trust stemming from the *security dilemma* leads to the third core element of neorealism: survival (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.10: 2007, p.74; Waltz, 1997, p.13). Under anarchical conditions the ultimate goal of the state is survival by the state’s own means –as in a self-help system, for in an anarchical system it is always possible that there is *revisionist state* posing a threat to the safety of others (Waltz, 1979, p.13; Mearsheimer, 2007, p.74; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.84). States can pursue other goals, but all the goals are assumed to be directed towards survival, because without survival no other goals can be pursued (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.11: 2007, p.74; Waltz, 1997, p.915). Survival can be best established by pursuing power. It follows that the most powerful state can get things done easier than the others and does not have to be worried about its survival as much as the others (Mearsheimer, 1994-1995, p.11). Security and power are therefore central to the neorealist theory (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.64).

The fourth assumption of neorealism is that in order to achieve survival, states posses at least some offensive military capability. Each state thus has some –little or great- power to inflict harm on its neighbor (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.10). The power of states is thus measured by the material capabilities that they possess, especially as military power as a means to maximize security (Waltz, 1979, pp.103-104; Mearsheimer, 2007, p.73). This power is subjected to change over time and varies between states; it is not given.

The last assumption of neorealism is that, in the figurative sense, states ‘think’ and ‘act’ strategically about how to survive in the international system, and thus states are rational actors capable to order their preferences (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.10: 2007, p.74). For a state, the rational decision means that it will always follow the strategy of the maximal prospect of survival: a *logic of consequences*. The logic of rational choice, or rationalism, translates into actors making decisions on the basis of utility calculations. This means that actors calculate the benefits and costs of different actions, and based on their calculations they choose to act in the way that gives them the highest net pay-off (Martin, 2007, p.112). Rationalists thus assert that actors –namely: humans, and consequently states- will always follow the motivation of utility maximization (see Kurki and Wight, 2007, pp.22-23).

Within neorealism there is thus an ongoing security competition and struggle for power between states (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.9: 2007, p.74; Nye & Welch, 2013, p.84), because all states follow the rationale in which the greater the relative power position that one state has over the others, the more secure it will be (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, pp.11-12). Therefore, neorealism gives primacy to the distribution of power between states and assumes that states should not entrust their safety to others because these other states are potential threats (Mearsheimer, 2007, pp.74-75). It follows that peace and cooperation among states is difficult to achieve and even harder to maintain according to neorealist theory (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.12).

### 2.1.1. Types of neorealism: defensive vs. offensive

There are two types of neorealism: defensive realism (see Waltz, 1979) and offensive realism (see Mearsheimer, 1994-95). These two types of neorealism differ in the amount of power that their adherents think that a state does and implicitly, also should, strive for (Mearsheimer, 2007, pp.72, 75). The defensive neorealists argue that states should strive for power, but not too much power, because this will work against their interest of survival. The logic behind this is that when a state possesses overwhelming power, the weaker states will form coalitions to balance against the preponderant state for obtaining too much power (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.10; Waltz, 2000, pp.13, 29). States will thus be punished for trying to obtain too much power; so striving for too much power is strategically foolish. Waltz (1979) argues, states should strive for an ‘appropriate amount of power’ and thus avoid giving reasons to weaker states for forming coalitions (p.40).

Contrarily, offensive neorealists argue that states should strive to achieve as much power as possible, and even become a hegemon if the context allows it (Mearsheimer 1994-95, p.12: 2007, p.75). According to neorealist theory this makes strategic sense, because having overwhelming power is the best way to ensure the survival of the state; after all, every state would like to be the most formidable power in the system (Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.12), because today’s friend might be tomorrow’s enemy (Grieco, 1988, p.487: 1993, p. 117; Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.11)*.*

### 2.1.2. Strategies for survival of states: (balance of) power, and bandwagoning

Both types of neorealism agree that, at least to a certain extent, states should strive for power, and survival is the ultimate goal (see Mearsheimer, 1994-95: 2007; Waltz, 1979). Power can be defined as the material capabilities that a state owns, which are usually measured in military capabilities (Mearsheimer, 2007, pp.72-73). However, there is also another type of power called *latent power* that refers to the socio-economic elements of power, such as the money and technology that states can use to build up their military power (ibid.).

The distribution of power within the international system is the *balance of power* (Lebow, 2007, pp.56-58; Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.82). Since the ultimate goal of the state is survival in a self-help system, states can help themselves by *balancing* their power against other states through *internal balancing* or *external balancing* (Waltz, 1979, pp.163, 168; Mearsheimer, 2007, p.75; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.84). *Internal balancing* refers to the building up of a state’s own power, which means building up their *latent power* and/or building up their military capabilities (Waltz, 1979, p.168). *External balancing* refers to the forming of alliances between weaker states to balance against the hegemon, because the lack of trust and heightened suspicion between states leads them to perceive the overwhelming power of the hegemon as a source of danger with the potential to jeopardize their prospects of survival (Waltz, 1979, p.168: 1997, p.916: 2001, pp.181-188; Mearsheimer, 1994-95, pp.11-14).

States may try different strategies for survival; *balancing* is one of them, and *bandwagoning* is another (Waltz, 2000, p.38). *Bandwagoning* is defined as aligning with the threatening state (Walt, 1987, p.17; Waltz, 1997, p.915). The strategy of *bandwagoning* can be considered to be a more rewarding strategy because it requires far less effort than balancing. However, it is a dangerous strategy because it allows the threatening state to gain power and take the lead; but despite of its dangerousness, one cannot rule out that *bandwagoning* may be rational for states with scarce resources (weaker states) (Waltz, 1997, p.915: 2000, p.38). The underlying logic is that weak states aim to avoid wars that endanger their survival by appeasing the threatening state, rather than by *balancing* against it (Waltz, 2000, p.38). Neorealist theory thus predicts that states will *bandwagon* when the costs of building a balancing coalition outweigh the benefits of doing so, and when the threatening state can be successfully appeased (ibid.).

### 2.1.3. Neorealist explanations for the OAS shift in discourse

In order to be able to answer the research question guiding this thesis, hypotheses need to be deducted from this theory. Stemming from the neorealist assumption of statism, neorealists argue that international organizations (IOs) such as the OAS are created and maintained merely to serve the interest of the dominant state or hegemon, and hence are subordinated to national purposes (Waltz, 2000, p.18).

Furthermore, in this theory it is assumed that the interests of the state should always be directed towards its own survival. As Waltz (1997) argues, states can pursue whatever other goals they may have, but they first must survive in order to be able to pursue these other goals (p.4). It follows that states seek, at a minimum, their own preservation and, at a maximum, universal domination (Waltz, 1979, p.118), since being the preponderant power is the best way to guarantee their survival (Mearsheimer, 1995-95, p.12). For weaker states, fashioning institutions to serve their own ends in their own ways is rather difficult, but a state that is stronger than any other can create and maintain institutions to serve its perceived or misperceived interest; or put simply, *“strong states use institutions, as they interpret laws, in ways that suit them”* (Waltz, 2000, p.24). Thus, from this perspective, it is expected that all policy choices within IOs are determined by the hegemon. Hence a first general hypothesis is deducted as follows:

**General hypothesis 1**:Policy choices of international organizations are determined by policy choices of the hegemon that sustains and is part of this international organization.

More specifically, for the subject under investigation this implies that the shift in the OAS discourse should be explained by analyzing the behavior of the hegemon (see Waltz, 2000; Nye and Welch, p.16). Within this thesis the US is regarded as the hegemon within the Americas, since it achieved its hegemony at the end of the Cold War. From the neorealist view, the OAS is an international organization that lacks autonomy, because it primarily serves the interest of the most powerful state: the US. It follows that the behavior of the OAS should always be aligned with the interest of the US. A first applied hypothesis is thus derived as following:

**Applied hypothesis 1.1:** The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because it is in the best interest of the US to shift the discourse.

Moreover, from a neorealist perspective it is also expected to encounter weaker states balancing against the overwhelming power of the hegemon. In this regard, the behavior of an IO would still be determined by the hegemon’s interest in ensuring its dominant position, but it would be as a reaction against a balancing coalition of weaker states. So, if the weaker states have balanced against the preponderant power that threatens them, it is also expected to see the hegemon’s strategy for survival influencing the behavior of the IO that the hegemon belongs to. Besides, from this view, the rational choice of the hegemon is to appease its adversaries, which in turn would explain why an IO shifts its policy course. The following hypothesis can be derived:

**Applied hypothesis 1.2:** The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because a coalition of weaker states have balanced against the US, and in turn, the US has shifted the policy course of the OAS to please its adversaries and keep its hegemonic position.

### 2.1.4. Limitations of neorealism

Despite the broad acceptance of the neorealist theory, there are some critical views. After the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the critical views became louder. Neorealist theory failed to explain the ending of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, so the critics claimed that neorealist theory does not take the historical context into account, and that the theory wrongfully claims that all states will in principle behave in the same rational manner. Thus neorealists are criticized for treating states as if they are *black boxes* (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72). This is so because neorealists assume that the national interest of the state is nothing more than survival; a fixed interest that leaves no room for cultural context and the identity of a state (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.64). So in principle states behave in the same manner, and the only difference between them is the amount of power they have and should strive for (Mearsheimer, 2007, p.72). This also means that neorealist theory does not take into account individual preferences, norms, and ideas of, for example, state leaders. All leaders should in principle make the same rational decisions as any other rational thinker would, and non-state actors such as IOs, NGOs, and TNCs are left outside the field of analysis of the neorealist theory (Keohane and Martin, 1995). Lastly, the interdependence between states that is observed through for example the process of globalization is ignored within neorealist theory.

Furthermore, the OAS stands for institutionalized multilateral cooperation, and it is commonly acknowledged by IR scholars –especially by institutionalists- that neorealism dooms cooperation with failure. As Mearsheimer (1994-95) argues, cooperation between states is difficult to achieve and harder to maintain, because states are egoistic and self-interested (p.31); and because today’s friend might become tomorrow’s foe (Grieco, 1988, p.487). Institutionalists such as Keohane and Martin (1995) thus claim that by focusing on the lack of trust between states, neorealism has a limited view on cooperation. However, neorealists respond that cooperation and institution building among nations is not impossible, although uncertainty conditions their operation and limits their accomplishments (see Mearsheimer 1994-95; Waltz, 2000, p.40-41). In other words, in neorealism there is room for cooperation between states, such as it happens in the OAS, but it is limited by the self-interest of the parties involved. This is why it is acknowledged in this thesis that the theory of neorealism is worth of exploration and testing.

## 2.2. Neoliberal institutionalism

The theory of neoliberal institutionalism derives from liberalism, which can be traced back to the eighteenth century in the writings of Immanuel Kant (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.66-68). Kant was one of the first scholars to implement the ideas of enlightenment in the international relations realm (in a liberal way) (Rauscher, 20012). He promoted democratization, free trade, and international organizations (ibid.). Unlike classical realists, liberalists within the sphere of IR argue that foreign policy, identities, and interests of states are shaped by domestic actors or structures (Panke and Risse, 2007, p.90).

An important notion in the liberalist theory is the democratic peace theory, which holds that democracies do not engage in war with other democracies for two reasons: internal and external influences (ibid.). Citizens within democracies have their say in (foreign) policy, so at least the majority of the citizens would have to agree to engage in war; an internal influence. The external influence is that democracies do not view other democracies as a threat to their existence, so they are less likely to engage in war. In the 20th century the World Wars and the failure of the League of Nations discredited the liberalist theory (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp. 6-9, 64-65). However, in the 60s and 70s, increased transnational interdependence between states and the failure of predictions of classical realism brought back the attention of IR scholars towards liberalist theory (ibid.).

Within liberalism there are many different approaches to be found, of which neoliberal institutionalism is one (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.64-68). There are more differences than similarities to be found between these different approaches to liberalism (see Panke and Risse, 2007, pp.90-105). Within the liberalist thinking there are three focus areas. (1) The *economic approach* focuses on the importance of trade. Trade will lead states to reshape their interests, in such a way that war will be less important to them. (2) The *social approach* focuses on the more individual level. Person-to-person contact will lead to a decrease in war, because mutual understanding will be achieved. (3) Lastly, the *political approach* can be divided into two parts: the first is related to democracy, and the second is related to institutions. The first part, democratic peace theory, derives from the political approach that focuses on democracy and assumes that democracies do no fight each other (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp. 64-68). The second part, neoliberal institutionalism derives from the political approach that focuses on international institutions, which are also often referred to as IOs (ibid.). Since the OAS is an international organization that is regarded by institutionalists as an international institution, this part of liberal theory will be explained and implemented in this research[[2]](#footnote-2).

Liberal institutionalists argue that international institutions could provide the means for cooperation between states, and therefore they all reject the realist view of world politics (Grieco, 1988, p.486). In the 1970s it seemed that the theory was proven wrong due to the international tensions witnessed during that decade. However, the international system did not collapse as the realist theory had predicted. As a reaction, neoliberal institutionalism emerged in the 1980s (Grieco, 1988, p.486; Martin, 2007, p.110; Nye and Welch, 2013, p.8). Neoliberal institutionalists claimed to subsume realism by adding the focus on the role of international institutions to the neorealist framework, albeit they accepted some basic premises of the latter (Martin, 2007, p.111). Departing from the same premises, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism drew different conclusions about the role of international institutions, which consequently led scholars from both strands to engage in an ongoing debate referred to as “*the neo-neo debate*”.

### 2.2.1. Neoliberal institutionalism versus neorealism; the neo-neo debate

Neoliberal institutionalism emerged as a response to realist theories, and challenges realism’s underlying logic (Grieco, 1988, p.486; Martin, 2007, p.111; Mearsheimer, 1994-1995, p. 3). Fundamentally, neoliberal institutionalism accepts the basic premises of neorealism. Both theories possess an individual ontology that assumes that international relations revolve around the state; and likewise, they both accept that states make decisions in a rational manner while operating in an anarchical international system (Keohane, 1984, p.9; Keohane and Martin, 1995, p.39; Martin, 2007, p.111). As Keohane and Martin (1999) suggest, *“for better or for worse institutional theory is a half-sibling of neo-realism”* (p.3). However, the consequences that follow from sharing some premises are understood differently in each theory (see Keohane, 1984, p.26).

Neorealists, such as Mearsheimer (1994-95) and Waltz (1979) on the one hand, claim that international institutions, such as the OAS, are nothing more than tools for the states to pursue their national interest and that their influence on the behavior of states is minimum and inconsequential. Neoliberal institutionalists, such as Keohane and Martin (1995) on the other hand, argue that international institutions, as agents, have a substantial degree of autonomy to pursue their own interests and that international institutions can have an independent effect on the behavior of states. More specifically, adherents of neoliberal institutionalism argue that international institutions reduce the acuteness of the *prisoner’s dilemma[[3]](#footnote-3)*, because they can increase the trust between states by providing a platform for negotiation, and thus facilitating mutually beneficial agreements under a framework of cooperation in which the information about the intentions of other states is provided (See Keohane, 1982, p.332; Keohane and Martin, 1995). Consequently, international institutions change the incentives for states to gain relative advantages above the others. Hereby, neoliberal institutionalists argue that the negative effects of anarchy (uncertainty and lack of trust) that the neorealists predict are mitigated (Keohane and Martin, 1995, p. 45; Martin, 2007, pp.110-113).

Whereas neorealism assumes that cooperation is difficult to achieve and harder to maintain, because anarchy inhibits the state’s willingness to cooperate and fosters competition among them (Grieco, 1988, p.485), neoliberal institutionalists claim that international institutions can aid states to overcome fears of capturing unequal gains from cooperation, because they can help states to identify areas of mutual interest, wherein states might be willing to cooperate (Keohane and Martin, 1995, p.39; Lamy, 2008, p.132). In this regard, neorealists like Mearsheimer (1994-95) claim that neoliberal institutionalism only focuses on the areas of mutual interest and mainly in economy related issues (not in security issues) (pp.18-19). Keohane and Martin (1995) respond by arguing that the logic of neoliberal institutionalist theory also applies to situations where there are security concerns, and/or distributional problems –problems of who gains and/or loses more from cooperation (p.43). It follows that international institutions can provide transparent information in these situations, which is essential to solve those issues (ibid.).

Furthermore, the theory of neoliberal institutionalism makes a distinction between *absolute gains* and *relative gains*, which can be used to explain state behavior. For neorealists, it is all about *relative gains,* which means that states are concerned about gaining relative advantages (power) over its competitors in the sense of “*the winner takes all, and the loser takes nothing*” (Grieco, 1988, p. 487; Powell, 1991, p. 1303); or put simply, it makes reference to the unequal gains that allow one state to have an advantage in the relative position above another (see Waltz, 1979, p.105).This means that the power that one state has, can be seen as relative to the power of other states, so a balance of power. Neorealists claim that in order to survive, it is important for a state to have more power than the others, so *relative gains* are important.

Neoliberal institutionalists argue that states seek *absolute gains*, which means that a state's utility is solely a function of its absolute gain and not of a relative measure; or in other words, is the total effect comprising of all the effects (military, economically, and socially) of an action (Powell, 1991, p.1303). The logic of *absolute gains* is thus a collective way of looking at gains because instead of merely focusing on the short-term gains of individual states, it focuses on the long-term gains. Thus, for neoliberal institutionalistsstates can follow the logic of *absolute gains* and be concerned about the total sum of their gains, while being indifferent to the gains achieved by others (see Grieco, 1988).

Realists argue that cooperation is faced with *cheating problems*, because states seek relative rather than absolute gains (see Grieco, Powell, and Snidal, 1993; Mearsheimer, 1994-95, p.20). From this perspective, it follows that anarchy inhibits cooperation because the lack of a central authority causes states to worry about others achieving relatively greater gains from cooperation, and if a state gains more in relation to others, this sate may become a more dominant ally or a stronger foe (see Grieco, 1988; Mearsheimer, 1994-95). In response, Keohane and Martin (1995) argue that under conditions of anarchy, states that are faced with mixed interests are unlikely to engage in cooperation because they are tempted to cheat and also fear that others might cheat (p.44). However, international institutions can easily solve the problem of cheating, because they can change a state's calculations about how to maximize gains by helping states to work together on the basis of *tit-for-tat* strategies[[4]](#footnote-4) of conditional cooperation such as the establishment of verification and sanctioning arrangements (Keohane, 1998, pp.86-87; Snidal, 1991, p.391). Thus, international institutions can help states to achieve an even distribution of gains in a way that states receive payoffs that do not affect their relative position, thereby eliminating the problem of cheating (see Snidal, 1991; Keohane and Martin, 1995).

Neoliberal institutionalists accept the realist claim that institutions are not significant when there are only two states with conflicting interests, but they reject the significance of *relative gains* in scenarios where there are more than two states involved (Keohane, 1998, p.88; Keohane and Martin, 1995, p.44). This is so because when the potential *absolute gains* are substantial, *relative gains* are not likely to have an impact on cooperation, or in any context involving multiple states (Snidal, 1991). So, the problem of cheating only highlights the difficulties of cooperation, especially when there is bilateral competition, but it does not undermine the prospects of cooperation (Keohane, 1998, p.88).

Two lines of inquiry were thus identified within institutionalism theory. The first is about whether or not states can overcome mutual distrust and create an IO under the condition of anarchy. The second line of inquiry addresses the problems of cheating and coordinating actions around a particular cooperative outcome. The first line of inquiry will most likely serve to illustrate the origin and development of the OAS. However, cooperation through the OAS has been in motion for more than 60 years. This observation implies that the first line of inquiry is not directly relevant to address the puzzle of this research. Therefore, hypotheses will only be derived from the second line of inquiry.

### 2.2.2. International institutions and their influence on state behavior

According to neoliberal institutionalists, international institutions can have independent effects on state behavior (Keohane, 1982, pp.343-451: 1984, p.51; Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp.42-46; Martin, 2007, p.111). They argue that by facilitating a flow of information on the actions of the states, institutions can provide a framework of cooperation that helps to shape expectations about the intentions of other states, and thus mitigate the negative effects of anarchy (ibid.). The underlying logic is that following the rules of the institution can get states to make the short-term sacrifices needed to resolve the *prisoners' dilemma* (Keohane, 1998, pp.86-87).

From the institutionalist logic it follows that policies for specific situations cannot be entirely *ad hoc*. Instead they must conform to general rules and principles in order to receive approval from the institution where the states are part of. These institutions generally do not have to enforce the agreements between its constituencies, because the mechanism of reciprocity provides an incentive for the states to follow the rules and live up to their commitments on their own, predicting that others will do so as well. Thus, the decision-making procedures and general rules of international institutions are important, because they affect the substance of the policies and the degree to which other states accept them (Keohane, 1998, p.86).

Furthermore, rules can increase the number of transactions between particular states over time, which discourages cheating states in three ways. (1) Rules can raise the costs of cheating by creating the prospect of future gains through cooperation, and thus deterring cheaters. If a state is caught cheating, its prospects of benefiting from future cooperation would be jeopardized. (2) Since reciprocity is the principle within cooperation, the state that was cheated has the opportunity to retaliate against the cheater, as a *tit-for-tat* strategy punishing the cheaters. (3) Whereas some states develop a reputation for their faithful adherence to agreements, some others acquire a reputation for cheating (see Keohane, 1984, pp.89-92; Lipson, 1984, pp.4-18; Axelrod and Keohane, 1985, pp.245-250).

Discouraging cheaters, however, is not the only way that international institutions influence the behavior of the state. International institutions stabilize the state’s expectations about its peers in four ways. (1) Institutions provide a sense of *continuity*, which derives from the expectation that the international institution will last. (2) They provide an opportunity for *reciprocity*, sostates have fewer worries about *transaction costs[[5]](#footnote-5)*, because in time the costs will balance out. (3) International institutions also provide a *flow of* *information* about who is doing what through the monitoring of its adherents, for example exhibiting information about the military expenditure of its member states. (4) Finally, international institutions provide ways of *solving conflict* through a forum for political bargain and negotiation, and through *constructed focal points* in case of distributional conflict when the distribution of gain seems rather difficult (Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.66-67; Keohane, 1984, pp.89-94; Keohane and Martin, 1995, p.46).

### 2.2.3. International regimes

Another aspect within neoliberal institutionalism is related to *international* *regimes,* as developed by Krasner (1982). *Regimes* are defined as: ”*principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area”* (Krasner, 1982, p.185). Regimes facilitate agreements, but cannot be seen as one and the same. Whereas agreements are *ad hoc* arrangements, regimes have to be seen as a more long-term cooperation (Krasner, 1982, p.187). International regimes can thus also be seen as Keohane and Martin’s (1995) view of international institutions, albeit in a less formalized way.

Within this theory of *regimes*, states that are part of a regime might make ‘irrational’ choices in the eyes of neorealists regarding their short-term goals, with the prospect of reciprocity in the future from other states within the regime (Krasner, 1982). This way, both sides can benefit in areas that are important to them. More specifically, in this theory behavior is not only based on the rational short-term cost-benefit analysis, as it happens with neorealism (ibid.).

Furthermore, Krasner (1982) acknowledges changes *of* and *within* regimes, while leaving room for norms and principles. Changes *within* a regime can be recognized when changes of rules and decision-making procedures are implemented, while the norms and principles underlying the regimes are unaltered. Changes *of* the regime can be seen when the principles and norms within this regime have changed (ibid.). Different scholars have come up with different causal variables to distinguish how the changes *of* and *within* a regime, of which the most important ones are self-interest, political power, norms and principles, habit and custom, and knowledge (ibid.). These can be divided within three basic variables, namely: interest, power, and values. Regimes thus have to serve the benefit of the states, as previously discussed in the function of the international institutions (see Krasner, 1982).

Also, Krasner (1982) stresses the importance of distinguishing changes *of* and *within* a regime from the *weakening* of a regime. The *weakening* of a regime occurs when the principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures or a regime become less coherent. In this case, the actual practice becomes more and more inconsistent with those principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures (p.185).

The principles, norms, rules, and decision-making processes that constitute a *regime* can have a significant effect on the behavior of the state (Krasner, 1982). For the subject under investigation this means that the OAS is a formalized *international regime*, and as such, its political outcomes are subject to the changes experienced within its regime. This implies that a change in the principles, norms, rules, and/or decision making processes within the regime is expected to directly affect the political outcome(s) of the OAS; for instance, the discourse on the policy choice for combating the war on drugs in the Americas. However, a change of patterned behavior cannot be intelligibly explained by itself, as caused by a change *of/in* behavior. In other words, to explain the OAS shift in discourse as a change *of* or *within* a regime does not add a great deal to our understanding of the subject under investigation.

As a matter of fact, an early criticism can be raised in the sense that regimes are too broadly defined and therefore are difficult to distinguish apart from their changes. Besides, the theory does not set forth clear concepts to distinguish norms from rules or principles, or decision-making processes. In turn, this makes the operationalization of the concepts problematic and consequently gives me strong reason to believe that hypotheses are too broad to be accurately tested. Because of these reasons, hypotheses are not derived from this theory.

Moreover, the theory of international regimes allowed us to consider that regimes, and thereby norms, are intrinsically correlated to behavior (Krasner, 1982, p. 185). This notion allows us to turn our attention to explore norm dynamics and consider norm-based behavior as a cause of the OAS shift in discourse. This notion, however, will be further stressed in this chapter.

### 2.2.4. Neoliberal institutionalist explanation for the OAS shift in discourse

When states attempt to cooperate they are often faced with the worry of potential cheating and the problem of coordinating their actions on a particular cooperative outcome (mainly because there is usually more than one cooperative outcome) (Keohane and Martin, 1995, p.45). Neoliberal institutionalists are aware that states may not agree on which outcome is the preferred one, because each state has different distributional implications (ibid.).

Keohane and Martin (1995) suggest that a solution for distributional issues and the *prisoner’s dilemma* is to construct some coordinating mechanism that makes a particular cooperative outcome prominent by providing *constructed focal points* – points in which the competing states may agree-*,* and thereby alleviating states’ fears of capturing unequal gains (p. 45). In other words, when cooperation meets distributional issues, the role of institutions consists of providing reliable information necessary for ensuring an even division of gains. This allows states to escape the *prisoner’s dilemma* and overcome situations of multiple equilibrium –situations where there are many possible solutions- through the successful operation of *reciprocity* (Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp.45-46; Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner, 1999, p.41).

Therefore, in complex situations involving distributional conflict among many states, institutions become more important, for they can step in to help states to coordinate their actions on a particular stable outcome through *constructed focal points* (Keohane, 1998, p.89; Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp.45-46). Thus, international institutions can influence the policy of its member states. Hence, from a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, it is expected to observe the *constructed focal point(s)* in the policy choice of the member states*,* which leads to the second general hypothesis:

**General hypothesis 2:** International institutions providing constructed focal points aimed at solving coordination problems between its state members will influence the political discourse of that international organization.

This general hypothesis can be applied to the subject under investigation. Following this logic, the shift in discourse of the OAS regarding the war on drugs could have been caused by a constructed focal point provided by the OAS. This suggests that there has been distributional conflict between states about the policy for the war on drugs, and the OAS has stepped into the distributional conflict by providing a constructed focal point to coordinate the actions of its member states and help them overcome fears of unequal gains. The shift in discourse towards human rights is, in this logic, a point on which all the conflicting states within the OAS agreed. This leads to the following applied hypothesis:

**Applied hypothesis 2.1**: The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because by acting as an autonomous international institution, the OAS has stepped into the distributional conflict between its member states to construct a focal point based on a more balanced approach.

### 2.2.5. Limitations of neoliberal institutionalism

In spite of the broad explanatory power of neoliberal institutionalism, there is some criticism. First of all, neoliberal institutionalism is still a state-centric theory. This theory contributes to the research program of neorealism by adding the focus on the role of institutions, but the scope of analysis that it offers is still too focused on the state. Second, neoliberal institution leaves some room for norms and ideas, yet in an insufficient manner. For instance, neoliberal institutionalists assume that a constructed focal point is an institutional maneuver aimed to solve bargaining problems, and as such, it takes place within a larger ideological context that helps define which purposes the institution should pursue and which practices are acceptable (Keohane, 1998, pp.88-90).

By the same token, through institutional procedures and rules, the involved parties determine which principles are acceptable as the basis for reducing conflicts (ibid.). In this regard, Keohane (1998) indicates bargaining processes leads to concerns about subjectivity, because *“bargaining depends so heavily on the beliefs of the parties involved”* (p.90). Neoliberal institutionalists thus acknowledge the role of the principles, beliefs, and norms that constitute the institutional rules. However, the scope of neoliberal institutionalism in this particular area is very limited if we seek to understand how these beliefs and preferences are formed.

Third, the part of the theory that discusses the *regimes* moves too far away from the analysis of specific IOs (Kratochwil and Ruggie, 1986). Besides, *regimes* are defined in a very broad manner, so the effects of the *regimes* and the *regimes* themselves are difficult to distinguish (Haggard & Simmons, 1987).

## 2.3 Social constructivism and the life cycle of norms

The theory of the life cycle of norms derives from social constructivism*,* which addresses the relatively recent ‘turn’ to ideas and norms in the IR scholarship by paying serious attention to the role that they play in international politics. In spite of the dominant presence of mainstream rational theories in the IR discipline, social constructivism has become ever more present in the last past decades with the work of scholars such as Finnemore (1996), Katzenstein (1996), Kratochwil (1989), Ruggie (1998), Sikkink (1996), and Wendt (1999), amongst others. In the 1970s for instance, scholars of transnational relations such as Keohane and Nye (1971) began focusing on how transnational actors were influenced by norms and ideas. In the decade after, the scholarship of regimes emphasized the role of norms (see Krasner, 1983), and thus it opened the door for the ‘ideational turn’ to take place within the study of international politics (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.888). On this matter, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) noticed that there is a tendency among scholars to treat norms and ideas, and rational choice, as mutually exclusive; but they argue that even when the behavior of an actor can be considered to be rational, it cannot be understood apart from its normative context. Thus, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) claim that normative and ideational concerns have always played a role in the IR field (p.888).

Whereas theories such as realism and liberalism depart from the umbrella of *rationalism*, social constructivism favors *idealism*. Adherents of *idealism* stress out the idea that human nature is intrinsically altruistic in the sense that human beings are capable of acting according interests that go beyond selfish needs of power, and thus idealists attempt to construct an international community aimed to replace the rules of anarchy in the international system (see Kant, 1795; Schell, 2003; Carr, 1964). This inclination towards *idealism* therefore implies that social constructivism takes in the role of ideas and norms in global affairs seriously. More specifically, social constructivists stress out that norms and ideas depart from the norms and ideas that individuals may have, and thereby granting individuals with a pivotal place in this theory. Therefore, by taking an individual’s ideas into account, social constructivism allows non-state actors to play a role in international politics.

The inclination of social constructivism towards *idealism*, however, does not necessarily imply the inexistence of material reality; but rather implies that the material reality is subjective, and hence dependent on ideas[[6]](#footnote-6) (Wendt, 1999, p. 1). On this matter, Barnett (2008) argues that our ideas about the forces in the international system are influenced and shaped by *social facts,* such as knowledge, language and rules (p.163). Contrary to *brute facts*, which indicate the material reality, *social facts* are socially constructed and thus prone to change. As Ruggie (1998) argues, *social facts* are created by actors who agree upon their existence[[7]](#footnote-7) (p.12). For instance, Wendt (1992) provides a clear illustration of a *social fact* by claiming that *“anarchy is what the states make of it”* (p.395); and thus demonstrating that anarchy is a collective idea to which we attach certain meaning[[8]](#footnote-8).

Social constructivism thus does not only allow us to pay serious attention to the role of ideas and norms in international politics; but also allows us to consider the possibility that they may influence the actors’ behavior, because the actor is involved in evoking and acting according to an identity or role in specific situations (see Kratochwil and Ruggie, 1986; Wendt, 1987; Kratochwil, 1989; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998; Ruggie, 1998; Risse, 2007). Identity and rules are thus regarded as a social construction, and as such, they are prone to change rather than being fixed in a rationale of utility maximization (Ruggie, 1998, p.33). The behavior of the actors can thus be explained by making reference to a *logic of appropriateness* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; March and Olsen, 1998). The *logic of appropriateness* is defined as a logic in which actors internalize norms because they perceive that the behavior proposed by the norm is something good, appropriate and even desirable (March and Olsen, 1998, p.951; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.12).

Unlike the individual ontology of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, which places states as unitary actors, social constructivism is grounded in holism, also known as social ontology or ontology of mutual constitution (Checkel, 1998, p.326; Fierke, 2007, p.170). This ontology implies that the international system cannot be adequately understood by treating states as units with fixed preferences, because states behave as social beings that are inseparable from their normative context and interact with the structure (Fierke, 2007, p. 170). Furthermore, this ontology refers to a *socialization process* that makes it possible for the agents to construct and transform the structure (Wendt, 1999, p.324). The *socialization process* relates to how the actor’s identity is socially constructed through shared ideas in social learning processes (ibid.). Social constructivists thus are concerned with understanding the relationship between the agents and the structure (Barnett, 2008, p. 162).

For the subject under investigation, the theory of social constructivism implies the possibility that the interest of the state members of the OAS can be different from just survival, since the behavior of each state is determined by their own identity. In order to uncover which other interest(s) a state can have, social constructivism allows us to take into account the cultural context and historical development of each OAS member state, as these form part of the identity of each. For instance, it allows us to consider that Colombia has a different identity (and thus interest) than the US; and consequently it allows us to come up with conclusions about their behavior on basis of their identity. Besides, by taking into account the role of ideas and norms, social constructivism provides us with valuable insight on the interactions between agents and the structure of the international system.

### 2.3.1. Life cycle of the norm

The work of Finnemore’s and Sikkink’s has strongly focused on the interactions between the agents and the international structure particularly on the influence of norms in international politics and the role these play in political change (see Finnemore, 1996; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Sikkink, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, 1999; Sikkink, 2009). They argue that agents may play an unconstrained role, and are thus capable of shaping the structure. They do so by including the power that moral entrepreneurs may exert, while explaining how and why these entrepreneurs engage in rational strategic choices. Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) conceptualization of the role of norm entrepreneurs is based on the promotion of beliefs, ideals, and more specifically the norms that they uphold. Therefore, in order to answer the research question guiding this thesis, Finnemore’s and Sikkink’s (1998) framework of the life cycle of the norm and the mechanisms for political change are stressed in this section, based on the three stages they distinguish: *norm emergence*, *norm cascade*, and *internalization of the norm*.

#### Norm emergence

In the first stage, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) identify the emergence of norms through the work of norm entrepreneurs and the organizational platforms through which they act. Norm entrepreneurs are defined as –human- agents that have strong notions about what counts as appropriate behavior based on for example altruism, empathy, ideational commitment, and moral belief in general (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, pp.896-905). It follows that human agency plays an important role in creating norms, because of people’s ideas about what constitutes appropriate behavior[[9]](#footnote-9). To introduce a norm, norm entrepreneurs engage in a process of *framing* issues by making the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate behavior in order to shape perceptions of others and call for the community’s attention to get support for the emerging norm (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.897). The *framing* process consists of creating issues by renaming, interpreting and dramatizing an event (ibid.). The new norm goes hand in hand with contesting a prior norm, which has a serious implication for our understanding of appropriateness, since that has been defined by the prior norm. The emergence of the norm depends on winning enough support of the community; therefore, norm entrepreneurs behave explicitly inappropriate in challenging the existing *logic of appropriateness* – the previous norm. This, however, may not be entirely in the realm of reason since their behavior is driven by idealism[[10]](#footnote-10) (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.900).

In order to successfully introduce their ideals, norm entrepreneurs require organizational platforms through which they can promote a norm. Organizational platforms enhance the entrepreneur’s ability to introduce and spread their norms, since they can *“provide information and access to important audiences, specially media and decision makers”* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.900). Some of these platforms are created specifically for the promotion of norms, such as NGOs and the large (trans)national advocacy networks (ibid.). According to Keck and Sikkink (1998), the (trans)national advocacy networks are created by political entrepreneurs that share certain values while aiming to change the existing appropriate behavior. Furthermore, (trans)national networks must be dense enough to fulfill their purpose since they require that the information is easily gathered and exchanged in a constant flow. These networks thus are essential, although not sufficient for the emergence of a norm; because the accomplishment of their goal depends on the characteristics of the issue and the actor (ibid.). Besides, in order to successfully introduce an idea, the targeted actor(s) must be susceptible enough to the pressure that comes through incentives and/or sanctions to adopt the norm.

Norm entrepreneurs also often work through existing IOs that already have their own purposes and political agendas. IOs with political agendas that differ from the purpose of norm entrepreneurs do not represent an obstacle for introducing a norm, because IOs can use their professionals’ expertise and information to influence actors’ behavior. Thus, IOs have become highly important for entrepreneurs, because they can provide substantial support on socializing or blocking a norm. The underlying logic is that even when some IOs are not specifically tailored to norm promotion, they may offer the advantage of resources and leverage over weak states that the entrepreneurs seek to convert them into followers of the new norm (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.900). When dealing with powerful states, however, networks of NGOs and IOs are not likely to coerce agreement to a norm; and thereby they must persuade in order to convert what is considered to be appropriate behavior into inappropriate behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.900).

Once the entrepreneurs have persuaded the considerable majority of states to become norm leaders and adopt the new norm, the norm reaches a *tipping point* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.901). This *tipping point* (also referred as threshold point) is what constitutes the division between the first two stages of the life cycle of the norm. The *tipping point* occurs when a *critical mass* is reached *(ibid.)*. A critical mass is rarely reached before one-third of the total states in the system adopt the norm, and usually comprises of the majority of states (ibid.). There are some states whose adherence to the norm is vital for reaching the *tipping point*; the *critical states* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998)[[11]](#footnote-11). For instance, states with certain high moral stature can be considered as critical[[12]](#footnote-12) (ibid.); and this is so mainly because of the inclination of the state leaders to fulfill their need of esteem, conformity, and legitimacy or simply because they want others to think well of them (Fearon, 1997).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) acknowledge that the support of *critical states* is required for entering the *norm cascade*. However, unanimity amongst *critical states* is not a necessary condition for entering the second stage. A strategy, applied in the majority of the cases[[13]](#footnote-13), is institutionalizing the norm in specific sets of international organizations in order to reach a *tipping point* and entering the second stage (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.900). Institutionalization can strongly contribute to the norm entering the second stage by clarifying what the norm is, what constitutes its violation, and by specifying the procedures by which norm leaders coordinate the sanctions and disapproval for breaking it (ibid.). However, both scholars acknowledge that the institutionalization of the norm is not a necessary condition for entering the second stage, and that it is also possible that institutionalization may follow rather than precede the second stage (ibid.).

#### Norm cascade

Once the emerging norm achieves considerable traction, a *tipping point* is reached and the second stage of the norm life cycle, *norm cascade*, begins by spreading the norm. This process of spreading the norm is known as *international socialization*, which is also referred as the *socialization process* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.902). *International socialization* is a process through which new states are induced to change their behavior by following the norms preferred by the international society (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, 1999). In international politics this is translated into bilateral or multilateral diplomatic praise or censure; which is additionally reinforced by sanctions or incentives (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.902). States, however, are not the only agents of socialization, but networks of norm entrepreneurs and IOs also play a role by pressuring targeted actors to adopt new policies and laws, and by monitoring compliance with the norm[[14]](#footnote-14) (ibid.).

In this stage the norm faces less contestation than in the first one. The reasons of the states to comply with the norm(s) strictly relate to their identities as members of an international community (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). This means that states influence one another by adopting the new norm, and thereby redefining their identity. Identity can be understood in terms of being part of a particular social category, because all members of that social category are expected to follow norms that are particular of that group (Fearon, 1997). The effect of states influencing one another by adopting norms within a specific region is also referred to as *peer pressure* (Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan, 1997, p. 740). This *peer pressure* implies that whereas norm compliance relates to praise, non-compliance receives ridicule; and after all, the costs that come with being labeled as a ‘rogue state’ may result in the loss of reputation, trust, and credibility (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.903).

The underlying motivations for responding to *peer pressure* are: (1) legitimation, (2) conformity and (3) esteem (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). (1) Domestic and international legitimation plays an intertwined role; this means that states care about international legitimation, because it has become essential to the perception of domestic legitimacy (ibid.). That is to say, the costs that come with losing reputation, trust and credibility are inescapable for a country, because citizens judge whether their government is better than other alternatives. In this regard, it is assumed that citizens will compare their own government with other alternatives, and consider what other people, and other countries, say about their government (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.904).

(2) Conformity can be understood as accepting certain group behavior and complying with its standards in order to accomplish a sense of belonging (Axelrod, 1986). Axelrod (1986) suggests that this can be understood as states complying with the norm in order to demonstrate that they have adapted to the environment (p.1105). In addition, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) suggest that other motivations for norm-conforming behavior can be found in theories of cognitive dissonance. They highlight the study of Eagly and Chaiken (1993) whose argument is that cognitive dissonance arises mainly when people notice that their behavior leads to adverse consequences that cannot be easily corrected; and as consequence of this experience, actors try to reduce the dissonance by changing their attitude and behavior.

(3) Esteem emerges from evaluative relationships and is related to both legitimation and conformity. The underlying logic of esteem suggests that state leaders follow norms because they want others to think well of them (so as legitimate), as much as they want to think well of themselves (Fearon, 1997).

So far, it has been discussed that social constructivism allows us to consider that the behavior of the state can be influenced by norms, since these form part of their identity and interests. Thus, from a social constructivist perspective, it follows that a multilateral agreement on a particular political outcome –in this case agreement of the OAS members- can be explained by states transitioning from one norm to a new one. Put differently, the motivation of the OAS members for agreeing on a particular political outcome is, under the light of this theory, the sign that a new norm has been socialized and thus entered the second stage of its life cycle. This leads to the fourth general hypothesis:

**General hypothesis 3:** Changes in political outcomes within an international organization are made, because the state members of the international organization adopt a new norm and thus they transition from one norm to another.

For the subject under investigation, the abovementioned general hypothesis suggests that the OAS shift in discourse regarding the war on drugs could have been caused by a new norm. It follows that norm entrepreneurs could have made use of the OAS as an organizational platform to promote a new norm, and this norm has undergone a *socialization process* through which a *critical mass* of member states of the OAS have complied with the norm. Thus, the shift in discourse represents the transition from one norm to another. In other words, the new discourse of the OAS –the balanced approach- represents the new appropriate behavior held by the new norm, and the previous aspect of the OAS discourse –the offensive approach- represents what was considered to be appropriate behavior for dealing with the drug problem in the Americas. By following this logic, an applied hypothesis can thus be derived from the fourth general hypothesis as following:

**Applied hypothesis 3.1:** The OAS has shifted its discourse on the ‘war on drugs’ from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because norm entrepreneurs have made use of the OAS as an organizational platform to introduce and promote a new norm that has undergone a socialization process through which a critical mass of state members have adopted the new norm.

#### Internalization

The third stage of the life cycle of the norm takes its name from the process that characterizes it, namely a process of norm *internalization*. According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), in this stage the norm becomes so widely accepted that the actors automatically act in accordance to it and view it as common sense. The norm thus loses its controversial characteristic by acquiring the status of ‘taken–for-granted’, and thereby constraining actors’ behavior in the sense that these are no longer engaged in seriously discussing whether or not to conform to the norm (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.904). This is so to the extent of institutionalizing the norm and thus becoming internalized in daily life practices (ibid.). On this matter, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) indicate that the behavior of individuals with professional training may enhance the internalization of the norm. The rationale behind this is that professional training does not only imply the transfer of technical knowledge, but it also engages individuals in valuing some things above others; which implies socializing certain norm(s) above other(s). For instance, training a doctor implies training an individual to value life above all else; and likewise, this example applies to other professions such as lawyers (valuing justice above other things) and so on.

Regarding the subject under investigation this stage of the norm life cycle can be used to explain the OAS shift in discourse in terms of internalizing a norm. To be more specific, if a norm reaches the third stage of its life cycle, it is expected that this norm completely loses its controversial characteristic, and that the actors will act in accordance to it. Consequently, the new appropriate behavior (held by the new norm) is expected to contrast with the previous behavior of the actors. This makes it possible to consider that a shift in the OAS discourse could have been caused by a norm that has been internalized. Hence, another applied hypothesis is derived from the fourth general hypothesis as following:

**Applied hypothesis 3.2:** The OAS has shifted its discourse on the ‘war on drugs’ from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because the state members of the OAS have internalized a new norm; and hence the OAS shift in discourse is a manifestation of the new behavior.

### 2.3.2. Limitations of social constructivism

As presented throughout this section, the theory of social constructivism possesses a strong explanatory power for changes in the international system. Social constructivism allows us to find out what the interests and identities of the actors are by analyzing how their preferences are formed, thereby considering the possibility that these may change. Besides, the holistic approach of this theory allows non-state actors, such as individuals, NGOs, IOs, and TNCs amongst others, to play a role in international affairs. Thus, it enhances our understanding of international politics by allowing us to perform deeper analyses on the constitutive qualities of the states and the role of non-state actors in the international system. Hence, social constructivism seems to be well suited for answering the research question.

Moreover, social constructivism also possesses some limitations. First of all, as Bieler and Morton (2008) have indicated in their work that the theory of social constructivism is able to explain how changes in the international system occur, but fails to answer why these change(s) occur and why a particular outcome occurs instead of another. In other words, this criticism relates to the question of why some norms prevail above others (Bieler and Morton, 2008, p.3-4). Furthermore, they argue that this theory fails to address the link between the material reality and the ideas. Thus, they criticize that social constructivism assumes that ideas are independent of the material reality and that the power structures pushing discourses have been overlooked (Bieler and Morton, 2008, p.4). They also suggest that this matter can be addressed by stressing the importance of the power structures in order to trace where ideas come from (ibid.).

Similarly to Bieler and Morton (2008), Checkel (1998) also argues that social constructivism fails to explain why some norms prevail above others. On this matter, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) noticed that scholars focusing on norms tend to counterpose rationality against normativity; but they claim that the normative context constraints any episode of rational choice just as rationality cannot be separated from politically significant episodes of normative influence (p.888). Thus, they argue that these are not mutually exclusive from one another, but rather intimately related (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.909). By asserting that the utilities of actors could be specified as social or ideational as easily as material, they argue that actors engage in what they term as *strategic social construction*; or put simply, in processes where the relationship between norms and rationality seem more apparent (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, pp.909-915).

Figure 1: general hypotheses explaining the OAS shift in discourse

# 3. Methodology and Operationalization

In this chapter I describe the methodology employed to test the hypotheses that were derived in chapter 2. In the first section, I elaborate on the strengths of the selected method while acknowledging the criticism that it has raised. Afterwards, I set forth the operationalization of the theoretical concepts in the second section.

## 3.1. Methodology

In order to carry out this investigation, a *case study* (also referred to as *intensive approach*) is the most suitable approach for understanding the cause of the OAS shift in discourse. A *case study* allows the researcher to study a social phenomenon in depth because with this approach the researcher can focus on only one specific instance, or on only a handful of instances about the phenomenon under investigation (Swanborn, 2010, pp.1-17).

The general method of a *case study* consists of monitoring the phenomenon by collecting data afterwards with respect to the development of that phenomenon during a certain period of time. The data is retrieved from many sources of information; the main ones being available documents, then interviews with informants, and, if possible, participatory observation. The collected data serves to reconstruct developmental processes and thus enable the researcher to understand the subject under investigation in a retrospective way (ibid.).

In this research the OAS shift of discourse is confronted with alternative explanations. In order to assess which of the hypothesized explanations is more convincing and thus establish what caused the OAS shift of discourse, this research requires a method that specifically allows us to describe the causal mechanisms that led to the analyzed shift in discourse. Wendt (1999) indicates that “*the core of the description of mechanisms is process tracing, which in social sciences ultimately requires case studies and historical scholarship*” (p. 82). Case study methods and specially within-case analysis such as *process tracing* are essential to judge competing explanatory claims and draw conclusions on which of them is more convincing (Bennett and George, 2005; Brady, Collier, and Seawright, 2010, p. 343).

*Process tracing* is a qualitative method defined as a procedure that allows the researcher to identify the steps in a causal process that led to the outcome of a dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context (Bennett and George, 2005, p.239). Its goal is to establish whether the events within the analyzed case fit the predictions of the alternative explanations by tracing backward from the analyzed outcome to the hypothesized causal mechanisms; and vice-versa, from the hypothesized mechanisms to the analyzed outcome (Brady and Collier, 2010, p.209). Its general method consists on generating and analyzing data on the causal mechanisms, events, actions, and other intervening variables that link hypothesized causes to observed effects (Bennett and George, 1997); or simply put, it contributes to overturn or support alternative hypotheses by examining bits and pieces of evidence in a finer detail (ibid.). The strength of *process tracing* relies on its inferential leverage; which basically means that it helps the researcher to establish ‘causal direction’, and to overcome the threat of ‘potential spuriousness’. More specifically, in regard to establishing causal direction, *process tracing* allows the researcher to determine the correlation between the dependent and independent variables; and regarding the threat of potential spuriousness, it helps to establish whether there is a causal chain of steps connecting the variables (Bennett, 2010, pp. 208-209). Arguably, process tracing is a well-suited tool for establishing causality and judge among rival explanations. Therefore, the method of *process tracing* is employed in this research.

Moreover, in this research is acknowledged that *process tracing* is a method that is often criticized by quantitative researchers. The criticisms are mainly made for not improving the (1) *degrees of freedom* and for leading to an (2) *infinite regress* (Mahoney, 2010). The *degrees of freedom* are defined as *"the number of quantities that are unknown minus the number of independent equations linking these unknowns*" (Blalock, 1979, p. 205). (1) This criticism points out that qualitative methods such as *process tracing* lack of *degrees of freedom* and thus they have a limited basis for establishing causality. This is so because, in the view of statisticians, it is necessary to have the same number of cases as equations in order to obtain a unique solution for simultaneous equations (Achen and Snidal, 1989, pp.156-7; Bennett and George, 1997). This criticism thus highlights that the result of using *process tracing* leads to a research design where causality is yet to be determined because we have many independent variables but only few observations on the dependent variable[[15]](#footnote-15) (Eckstein, 1975, p.85; King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p. 52). Furthermore, (2) some scholars consider that the fine-grained and detailed analysis that comes with process tracing can lead to an *infinite regress* because the researcher can end up studying *“causal steps between any two links in the chain of causal mechanisms”* (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p.86); or simply put, the criticism indicates that the researcher runs the risk of falling into an endless task of studying an infinite amount possible causes.

This research acknowledges the criticism directed towards *process tracing*, but it grants reliability to Bennett’s (2010) response to the aforementioned critiques. In contestation to these critiques Bennett (2010) indicates that whereas quantitative methods employ *Data Set Observations*[[16]](#footnote-16) (DSOs), qualitative methods employ techniques such as *Causal Process Observations* (CPOs). CPOs are the key tool for causal and descriptive inference within *process tracing*, and they are defined as specific bits and pieces of evidence in which the researcher focuses on, because they provide leverage for adjudicating among alternative hypotheses (Collier, 2010).

CPOs are based on all kinds of observations that are pieced together in order to plot a map of investigation that help us to understand the cause of the analyzed outcome, and thus portray the degree of correlation between the theory and empirical content. The difference between both, CPOs and DSOs, lies on their probative value. Whereas in quantitative research DSOs are considered to be all equally important, CPOs are unique and differ in their explanatory power. Concretely, CPOs can allow one single observation to provide sufficient evidence to refute or accept a theory (Mahoney, 2010).

Not despising Bennett’s response, this research acknowledges that *process tracing* allows us to uncover variables that quantitative research methods may not have considered before (Brady and Collier, 2010), simply because CPOs are unique observations for an specific case[[17]](#footnote-17). It thus can be said that *process tracing* is not concerned with the amount of evidence, but with the evidence that serves to adjudicate among alternative hypotheses. In sum, Bennett (2010) argues that *process tracing* allows the researcher to take the direct evidence of causal processes into serious consideration, which is not possible in quantitative research. Bennett (2010) thus demonstrates that the previously mentioned critiques are misguided because not all data are created equal and the employed techniques of each method are just different (p.209).

Moreover, the difficulties on collecting reliable data about politically sensitive topics such as the war on drugs in the Americas represent a challenge for the *validity*[[18]](#footnote-18) of this research. In order to cope with questions about *validity*, case studies rely on *data triangulation* of data sources (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Guion, Diehl, McDonald, 2002, p.1; Brady, Collier, and Seawright, 2010, p. 356). By involving the use of different sources of information, *data triangulation* increases the diversity and quantity of available information, thereby increasing the *validity* of the study (ibid.). In different words, by triangulating data from different sources the researcher looks for outcomes that were agreed upon by the sources, for these are assumed to have points of divergence and agreement about the observed facts (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2002, p.1). The underlying logic is that when there are several stakeholders looking at the same outcome from different perspectives, and they agree on what the observed fact is, then the outcome is more than likely to be a ‘true’ outcome. This research, however, will not triangulate data from different sources at all times. Instead, *data triangulation* will only be employed to present evidence extracted from non-academic sources and other non-rigorous analyses, such as notes from news agencies.

As presented throughout this chapter, this research investigates whether or not the hypothesized causal chain of steps connects the OAS shift of discourse to the competing hypotheses by employing *process tracing* in combination with CPOs and thus “*sequenc[e]* *who knew what, when and what they did in response”* (Brady and Collier, 2010, p.209). More specifically, this research builds up an *analytical narrative* that employs *process tracing* by looking for bits and pieces of evidence in several sources, such as official documents from the OAS, human rights reports of IOs, NGOs and several interested national/transnational groups representing civil society.

*Analytical narrative* is a “*framework for understanding the subject and interview data in qualitative research*” (Sandelowski, 1991, p.161). According to Sandelowski (1991), narratives are understood as stories that include a temporal ordering of events and an effort to make something out of those events: to render, or to signify, the experiences of persons-in-flux in a personally and culturally coherent, plausible manner (p.162). Thus, this method comprises the interpretation of the author regarding the link between the past, present and future.

Furthermore, *analytical narrative* describes a causal structure that contributes to a better understanding of the subject, which is what we are ultimately interested in; and likewise, by describing the causal structure, it allows the researcher to spell out clarity and analytic rigor for explaining the mechanisms that caused historical change to happen (Bates et al., 2000). Additionally, this type of narrativeforces scholars to focus on the stories before transforming these stories into a description or theory. So, in a way, it ‘naturalizes’ the research process (Sandelowski, 1991). Therefore, it is best to use when we are trying to establish which causal mechanism has the most strength (Bates et al., 2000), as it happens to be in this thesis.

In regard to the research design, the analysis of this thesis is built around states that, because of their key positions in the illegal drug industry, are considered to be critical for drug policy. To be more specific, the criterion of selection takes into account the role of the critical states in terms of geographical areas of production, distribution, and consumption of illicit drugs in the Americas. In this regard, and in order to broaden the scope of analysis, the scope of this research covers countries from North, Central, and South America. Hence, by carrying out the selection of states under these terms, a thorough analysis will be performed on the following states-actors: the United States of America as the critical states in North America; Mexico as the critical state in North and Central America; and Colombia as the critical state in South America. Moreover, with regard to non-state actors, this research focuses on the most prominent non-state actors related to the war on drugs in the Americas; and more specifically to the ones with considerable signs of activity in this subject.

The analytical narratives that will be presented in the next chapter are based on secondary data retrieved from official documents of the OAS, official documents of the analyzed governments, scientific literature, news, situation reports publicized by NGOs, and previous analyses from diverse think thanks such as the Council of Foreign Relations and Insight Crime amongst others. This data covers a time-frame of thirty-one years. The coverage begins with the declaration of a war on drugs by the US President Reagan in 1982 and finalizes with the declaration that embodies the OAS shift in discourse, namely the OAS “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*” from 2013.

## 3.2. Operationalization of Theoretical Concepts

Balancing

In this thesis the concept of balancing will be recognized everytime that a state, or group of states, uses their power to inflict damage on another state. Specific indicators to recognize *balancing* behavior may vary from military to diplomatic and/or economic means. So it is expected to observe frail and tense relationships between the states as a necessary but not sufficient condition to identify balancing behavior.

Rationality

The concept of *rationality* is exclusively used for making reference to actions that are carried out under the umbrella of the logic of consequences. This means that an action will be labeled as ‘rational’ if that action is aimed at obtaining the most optimal outcome in terms of utility. In this thesis rationality can be recognized everytime that an action is the most likely to maximize the material profits.

Distributional conflict

The concept of *distributional conflict* is used for making reference to the problem of distributing even gains among member states when cooperation is in motion (Keohane and Martin, 1995). Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of *distributional conflict* will be recognized everytime that that the OAS is faced with the problem of distributing even gains from cooperation among its member states.

Focal points

The concept of *focal points* is used for making reference to a point of agreement that is reached within the institutional context of an IO. When performing the analysis, it is expected to observe a situation of multiple equilibrium on hemispheric drug policy within the OAS; a necessary but not sufficient condition to identify a *focal point*. So, in this thesis, every point of focus that is facilitated by the OAS will be considered as a *focal point*.

Norm entrepreneur

In this thesis the concept of *norm entrepreneur* is used for making reference to individual and collective actors, such as NGOs, who stand for a certain norm or set of norms.

Organizational platform

The concept of organizational platform is used for making reference to networks with links that can be used as channels for reaching the international level. In this thesis, the concept of organizational platform will be recognized when the OAS acts as a platform through which norm entrepreneurs promote a norm.

Socialization process

The concept of *socialization process* is used for making reference to the process through which state actors adopt a norm. This process consists of praise or ridicule by part of another actor. In this thesis, the concept of *socialization process* will be recognized when actors that comply with the norm receive praise, and when actors who refuse to comply receive ridicule.

Critical mass

The concept of *critical mass* is used for making reference to a significant amount of states that have adopted a norm. In this thesis the concept of *critical mass* will be recognized when one-third of the total states of the Americas have adopted a proposed norm.

Internalization

The concept of *internalization* is used for making reference to the last stage of the norm life cycle. In this thesis, the concept of internalization will be recognized by observing the creation of professions, law and bureaucracies tailored to guarantee compliance with the proposed norm. Likewise, this concept will be recognized when policy increasingly reflects the normative biases of those professions.

# 4. Empirical analysis

The first section of this chapter provides the reader with a detailed explanation about the dependent variable; that is, the OAS shift in discourse for the war on drugs in the Americas. Afterwards, the analysis is divided in 3 sub-analysis in which each theory is tested. Within each sub-analysis, a theoretically informed and evidence based narrative pieces together data from multiple sources in a chronological way. Thereafter, the hypotheses derived from each theory are tested against the empirical evidence from each narrative. Lastly, at the end of each sub-analysis, the findings from each analysis are discussed and juxtaposed in order to find a plausible answer for the research question.

## 4.1. The OAS shift in discourse regarding the war on drugs in the Americas

The OAS was founded in 1948 to bring and warrant peace and security in the Americas (OAS, 1948). As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this thesis, the traffic of illegal drugs threatens the peace and stability in the Americas, and consequently it poses a complex and multi-causal challenge to the essential purpose of the OAS. Aiming to counter this threat, the OAS members have made several efforts to increase the effectiveness of its anti-drug measures. In 1986, for instance, the OAS created the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD); a policy forum for dealing with the drug problem in the Americas by strengthening the human and institutional capabilities, and channeling the collective efforts of its member states to reduce the production, trafficking and use of illegal drugs, while promoting regional cooperation and coordination among OAS member states through action programs (CICAD, 2013). Ever since the creation of CICAD, the OAS became an important forum wherein political bargain about multilateral cooperation on drug control policies in the Americas takes place.

After the creation of CICAD, more efforts continued under the institutional framework of the OAS. In 1996, for instance, the OAS members issued the first *“Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere”* to counter the threat posed by the drug problem (OAS, 2011a). This strategy, in addition to other drug control efforts stemming from political bargaining within the OAS, has given the margin for governments to implement hard-line policies based on zero tolerance and an all-out frontal attack to the drug trafficking organizations (OAS, 2011a). The strategy focuses on demand reduction, supply reduction, and control measures (OAS, 2011a; 2013a). The overwhelming focus of the governments on using their military to fight the drug cartels is an expression of the offensive approach. Besides, very little importance is paid to the individual level, such as the social causes and consequences of drug trafficking, human rights violations and escalation of violence (OAS, 2013a). The focus of this strategy is thus on the security of the state and in the international level, and not on the individual level (2010a; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c, 2013a).

The case of Mexico’s deployment of troops to dismantle criminal organizations and disrupt the drug trade within its territory, and the US’ deployment of troops in Colombia to combat the illicit drug production in the latter through ‘*Plan Colombia’,* illustrate the implementation of the hard-line policies against drugs*.* The OAS choice of policy for the drug problem in the Americas is therefore characterized by an offensive anti-drug approach that has been strongly focused on reducing drug supply by dismantling drug cartels through military force in order to disrupt the flow of the drug trade in the hemisphere (see Bagley, 1989-1990; Mercille, 2011; OAS, 2010a; 2011b; 2011c; 2013a). Consistent with the previous claim, the “*Anti-drug Strategy in the Hemisphere*”lists the dismantlement of crime organizations as the first control measurement and key strategy to be adopted by its members. It states within its pages that the problem of the illicit supply of drugs requires the adoption and improvement of measures to eliminate their availability (OAS-CICAD, 2011). In this thesis, it is therefore understood that, at that time, the member states of the OAS agreed on implementing a militant and thus belligerent approach to deal with the drug problem in the Americas.

In 2013, the General Assembly of the OAS gathered in Guatemala to address the problem of the war on drugs once more, although this time with a less militant approach. In this reunion, the 43rd summit of the OAS, the OAS members discussed the need to implement a different approach to counter the threat posed by illicit drug trafficking, and subsequently they reached consensus on adopting a more comprehensive policy to address this matter (albeit this policy has not yet been specified). The declaration issued from this summit, *“Declaration of Antigua Guatemala”*, states throughout its pages that the state members of the OAS have recognized the need of adopting an approach built on a framework of full respect to human rights and calls OAS members to incorporate new areas such as public health, social inclusion and human rights in their regional drug policy (OAS-General Assembly, 2013). Contrarily to the previous drug control efforts, the *“Declaration of Antigua Guatemala”* barely touches upon the OAS commitment to reduce drug supplies and to disrupt the drug-trade. Also contrary to the anti-drug hemispheric strategy from 1996, the Declaration of Antigua conveys a different message, namely that of a ‘comprehensive integrated, strengthened, balanced and multidisciplinary approach with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms that fully incorporates public health, education, and social inclusion, together with preventive actions to address transnational organized crime, and the strengthening of democratic institutions, as well as the promotion of local and national development.’ Put differently, the semantics of the OAS used for drug policy has changed and ´public health´ and ´human rights´ are now key operative terms. Since no policy stemming from this declaration has been materialized so far, in this thesis it is assumed that the OAS’ choice of policy has merely discursively shifted from an offensive approach to a more balanced and comprehensive approach built on full respect to human rights.

To be more specific, the contrast between the offensive approach and the comprehensive approach lies on the emphasis on the welfare of the individual. Whereas the offensive approach was focused on dismantling criminal organizations, the comprehensive approach is focused on ensuring the protection of human rights. This new approach includes different levels of analysis: the individual level, the national level, and the international level. Contrarily, the old approach was focused solely on the national and international level. Arguably, these different approaches represent a shift in the discourse of the OAS for addressing the war on drugs in the Americas, and this research aims to investigate the underlying motivations and political struggles that led to this shift. In order to carry out this investigation, the hypotheses that were derived from the contesting theories in this thesis will be further tested in the same order that these were presented in chapter 2.

## 4.2. Testing Neorealism

From the neorealist perspective it is expected to observe that the shift in discourse follows the rational behavior of the United States, or the rational behavior of the weaker states balancing against the US. In both cases it is required to perform an analysis focused on the behavior of the US government in the context of the war on drugs. Because of this reason, the present analysis maps out the US foreign policy towards Mexico, for being the major point of transit for drugs entering the US, and the US foreign policy towards Colombia, for being the principal source of drugs exported to the US. Before moving on to the hypotheses testing procedure, there are some events previous to the OAS shift in discourse that should be considered from the neorealist perspective. The reconstruction of those events will provide the reader with basic information to understand the policy choices of the US, and therefore to further test the hypothesis derived from this theory.

### 4.2.1. US foreign policy towards Colombia and Mexico

As early as 1971, illegal drug trafficking received public attention in the Americas due to the increased criminality related to drug consumption (Bagley, 1988a; 1989-1990; Morales, 1989). The then US President Nixon started the first campaign against illegal drugs. However, it was not until 1982, when President Reagan declared a war against drugs, that the US took the leadership on crafting and implementing anti-drug policies (Bagley, 1988a; 1988b). Under the Reagan administration, the US government increased funds for narcotics control programs, widened the involvement of its military in this war, and directed counter-drug efforts towards drugs-source and drugs-transit countries in Latin America (Bagley, 1988a; Morales, 1989). The main focus of the US national security strategy at that moment was Colombia, for it had become the main source of drugs entering the US and the largest cocaine producer in the world (Thoumi, 2002). The role of Colombia in the illegal drug-trade began in the 70s and developed from thereon, when Colombian drug-entrepreneurs started exporting small amounts of cocaine into the US (ibid.). The profits that these drug-entrepreneurs obtained from the trafficking allowed them to self-finance the expansion of their operations and develop stable routes, transportation systems, and distribution networks throughout the continent, especially to reach their main drug consumer; the US (GAO, 1988, pp.3-18). Combating illegal drug trafficking thus became a national security objective for the US (Bagley, 1988a, 1992; Morales, 1989).

The power of the Colombian traffickers grew to the extent of igniting a socio-political crisis in Colombia (Bagley, 1989-1990; GAO, 1988). The US leaders soon realized that Colombia’s instability, caused by the corrupting power of the Colombian drug traffickers and their allegiances with communist insurgents, also represented a threat to the security of the US[[19]](#footnote-19) (Bagley, 1988a, 1992; GAO, 1988; Morales, 1989). In response, the US government chose to advance its own hegemonic agenda through a foreign policy of interventionism. In 1986, President Reagan signed a directive that identified drug trafficking as a national security threat and authorized the US Department of Defense to engage in counterdrug operations in drugs-source and drugs-transit countries while empowering other US agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), with expanded paramilitary and intelligence capabilities (Bagley, 1988b; Morales, 1989).The US thus began deploying a massive amount of human and economic resources to set the conditions for a frontal attack on drugs.

Another state that was especially important for the national security strategy of the US was Mexico. From 1970 to 2000, Mexico became an important producer and provider of heroin and marijuana to the US, and the major point of transit of illegal drugs coming from South America[[20]](#footnote-20) (Chabat, 2002). Similar to Colombia, the socio-political stability of Mexico was –and continues to be- severely undermined by the corruption derived from drug trafficking[[21]](#footnote-21). Mexico’s role as a drugs-source and transit country thus added up to the threat faced by the US (ibid.).

In order to overcome the threat posed by illegal drug trafficking and thus ensure its survival, the US required to extend its drug control efforts into Mexico and Colombia. To do so, the US began channeling financial aid to the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru) and Mexico, but not without a restraint. In 1986, the US government implemented a “certification process” through which they set standards to approve or disapprove the efforts of other countries trying to curb illegal drug trade (Spencer, 1998; Chabat, 2002; US Department of State, n.d.). Besides the public shame for failing the US standards, the application of sanctions for noncompliance ranged from suspension of US aid and preferential trade benefits to curtailment of air transportation. In order for a country to be granted with a certification, that country required to meet the following criteria: (1) a budget dedicated to fight drug trafficking, (2) seizures and eradication of shipments, (3) number of arrests, (4) legal and institutional reforms aimed to strengthen the fight against illegal-drug trade, (5) the signing of international agreements, and (6) the country’s acceptance of US collaboration (ibid.).

The Mexican government did meet the criteria of the ‘certification process’ for 14 consecutive years, but also showed reluctance to US dominance. Mexico’s government condemned the US ‘certification process’ as unilateral and unfair, and alleged that the measures were merely based on political will and not on a real reduction in the flow of drugs (Reuter and Ronfeldt, 1992). Additionally, in 1992, the administration of President Salinas (1988-1994) rejected US aid channeled through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) (Chabat, 2002). Nevertheless, Mexico’s government decided to *bandwagon* and join forces with the US in this war through programs such as the *“Northern Border Response Force”* (NBRF), an aerial interdiction program[[22]](#footnote-22). Besides, Mexico moved into a closer relationship with the hegemon when President Salinas signed the “*North American Free Trade Agreement*” (NAFTA) in 1992[[23]](#footnote-23).

Similar to the Mexican government, the Colombian government chose to *bandwagon*. Proof of this is that at the beginning of the Bush administration (1989-1993), President Barco openly admitted the inability of his administration to counter the power of drug traffickers and sent Colombia’s minister of justice to Washington to request $14 million in emergency aid (Bagley, 1889-1990). Subsequently a $65 million emergency aid package was authorized for Colombia, which was mostly consistent of military equipment (ibid.).

Parallel to the US efforts to combat illegal drug trafficking, efforts regarding drug policy were made in the OAS. These efforts began when the OAS General Assembly mandated its first conference on drug trafficking in 1984, and continued from thereon[[24]](#footnote-24). These efforts were certainly important for crafting the hemispheric drug policy of 1996, but they only allowed the OAS to play a tertiary role in the development of the war on drugs. This is so because the leader of drug policy and main financial contributor to the OAS, the US, chose to prioritize its drug-policy-based relationships with Colombia and Mexico over the OAS. In order to illustrate the importance that the US government gave to its relations with Colombia and with Mexico, and how this surpassed the one given to the OAS, it is necessary to first elaborate on the development of the US strategy for this war on drugs, namely at *Plan Colombia* and the *Merida Initiative*.

### 4.2.2. The development of Plan Colombia and the Merida initiative

When Colombia was at the verge of collapse, in 1999, the administration of President Pastrana managed to leverage US assistance. Officials of the Clinton administration visited Colombia to consult on a plan that could be reviewed by the US government, and consequently, the Pastrana administration developed *Plan Colombia* (Veillette, 2005; US Embassy Bogota, n.d.). Consisting of an initial budget of $1,600 million in US aid and $4,000 million from Colombia’s resources, *Plan Colombia* was destined to eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development in the Andean region (ibid.).

Through *Plan Colombia* and previous aid packages, the US government contributed to ameliorate Colombia’s crisis. However, the interest of the hegemon proved to be different than the one of Colombia (Bagley, 2000; Aviles, 2008). Whereas the Colombian government firstly aimed to address underlying social issues, such as inequality, as the priority of the plan, the US government advanced its interest of immediate security. Noteworthy is that the principal objective of the *Plan Colombia* approved by the US is to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking and ‘destroy’ drug trafficking organizations (Salgado, 2000; Garcia, 2001; Marcella, 2001); an objective that was included, but not prioritized, in Colombia’s initial version of the plan[[25]](#footnote-25). Thus, by enforcing its will upon a weaker Colombia, the US government managed to prioritize the militarization of the counter-narcotics struggle[[26]](#footnote-26).

*Plan Colombia* became the centerpiece of the US strategy to combat drug trafficking in Colombia and continued unaltered until 2011, when the administration of President Obama advanced a different anti-drug agenda. In this agenda Colombia is no longer prioritized as the major threat since the epicenter of the illegal drug trade shifted towards Mexico[[27]](#footnote-27). In fact, evidence shows that the US has gradually reduced assistance for Colombia throughout Obama’s presidential term. For instance, President Obama’s budget proposal for 2011 did not even mention expenditure in *Plan Colomb*ia (Colombiareports, 2010; Colombia News, 2011; CIPCOL, 2011). Also, in 2012, a 15 percent reduction of US military aid to Colombia was announced through Obama’s budget proposal for fiscal year 2013, which states that Colombia will only receive $30 million in aid[[28]](#footnote-28) (Colombia Reports, 2012; Whitehouse, n.d.; Beittel, 2012).

The significant decrease in the US aid destined to Colombia indicates that the Obama administration has placed a different focus on Colombia. This new phase on the US-Colombian relationship is commonly known as *Plan Colombia II* and can better be explained through its main goals, which are: strengthening democracy, overcoming threats to democratic stability, promotion of human rights, promotion of economic development and social development, and fight against poverty[[29]](#footnote-29) (National Department of Planning and Department of Justice Security, 2007). So, differently from the previous military approach of the first plan, the approach of *Plan Colombia II* is focused on addressing the underlying social dimension of the drug problem.

With regard to Mexico, the strategy of the US developed in a similar way. After the Salinas administration, the administration of President Zedillo (1994-2000) gave continuity to the NBRF; from which Mexico’s armed forces began to receive counterdrug training and technical assistance based on a US-DEA model[[30]](#footnote-30) (ibid.). After Zedillo’s term, the administration of Fox (2000-2006) kept the *bandwagon* strategy and fought drug trafficking through the armed forces. During the Fox administration, the bilateral efforts on drug policy did not achieve major progress, since the focus of the US security shifted to wage a war against terrorism[[31]](#footnote-31). However, military cooperation was discussed in the context of the *“Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America”* (SPP), a US initiative to protect NAFTA by military means (Villareal and Lake, 2009, Fogal, 2007; Government of Canada, 2013). The SPP was never implemented, but the military *Northern Command* (NorthCom) was created to protect the US territory and its national interests within a perimeter encompassing Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico (Garcia, 2005; NorthCom, n.d.); a similar, yet broader, framework than the SPP.

After President Fox, President Calderón took power and declared an all-out war on drugs to deal with the chaos derived from drug trafficking. Following Calderon’s declaration, the Mexican government deployed about 45,000 military and federal police to combat drug traffickers throughout Mexico (Washington Post, 2009; Beittel, 2010; Reuters, 2013). The decision to involve the Mexican armed forces on a massive crackdown against drug traffickers was supported by the US government. Three months after Calderon’s declaration, in March 2007, US President George W. Bush reunited with his Mexican counterpart in the city of Merida (Mexico) to discuss a bilateral security agenda (US Embassy Mexico, n.d.). Derived from that meeting, the *Merida Initiative* was created as a three-year anti-narcotics and security package primarily destined for Mexico[[32]](#footnote-32). The bulk of this package was directed to train and equip the military and police forces officially involved in counter-drug operations[[33]](#footnote-33) (US Embassy Mexico, n.d.).

The unprecedented partnership between Mexico and the US was renewed when the US congress launched the *Beyond Merida* strategy in 2010 (US Department of State, 2011). In essence, this strategy was crafted to give continuity to the *Merida Initiative* and took shape around four pillars that were brought up in Obama’s budget request for the fiscal year of 2011. These pillars are: 1) disrupting and dismantling criminal organizations, 2) institutionalizing the rule of law, 3) building a 21st century border, 4) and building strong and resilient communities (ibid.). The first two pillars represent a refinement of the initial framework of the *Merida Initiative*, but the final two seem to expand those efforts.

As soon as Enrique Peña Nieto began his presidential term, in 2012, he vowed to make substantial adjustments to Mexico’s security strategy. More specifically, President Peña Nieto vowed that Mexico’s armed forces will be gradually withdrawn from the streets to be returned to their quarters (CNN, 2012; Stratfor, 2013; Politica y Empresas, 2012). Shortly after, President Obama announced his first visit to Mexico to reunite with his counterpart to discuss the bilateral relationship. On this matter, the Assistant Secretary of the INL, William Brownfield, commented that during this visit President Obama will reiterate his commitment to keep supporting Mexico through *Beyond Merida* (Olson and Wilson, 2010; US Department of State, 2011)*.* After Obama’s visit to Mexico, the *Beyond Merida* strategy continued unaltered (US Department of State, 2011).

As described above, the hegemon managed to get Mexico and Colombia to *bandwagon*. This behavior is consistent with neorealist theory, because according to this logic, entrusting its safety to others is not the rational choice for the US government. As a matter of fact it is difficult to overlook that the US does not entrusts its safety to other states in the region. Instead, the US government chooses to deal with drug trafficking through agreements in which it holds control over the relationship, such as *Plan Colombia II* and the *Beyond Merida* strategy.

In the same way, neorealist logic can explain why the aforementioned agreements became the centerpiece of the anti-drug strategy of the US government. From this logic, it follows that by choosing to operate through small multilateral and bilateral relations, the US government avoids engaging in the greater multilateral arena of the OAS. This is a rational choice for the US government, because by operating in that way, it avoids submitting its top security decisions to consultation with possible foes that may form coalitions to frustrate its strategy for retaining hegemony. Hence, for neorealists, it is by no means a surprise that the US did not use the OAS to carry out its top security decisions on drug policy. Neorealist theory thus seems to hold so far. The next step is to test the applied hypotheses derived from this theory.

### 4.2.3.Testing applied hypothesis 1.1

The first applied hypothesis 1.1, The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because it is in the best interest of the US to shift the discourse, can be rejected. However, before rejecting the hypothesis I will give consideration to the reasons that fit under neorealist logic. From the neorealist perspective, the US has sufficient motives to stop the offensive approach. The reasons are the following:

First of all, it is rather convenient for the US to keep their alliance with Colombia because the latter is of great geostrategic importance to the hegemon. Colombia is the nearest country to the Panama Canal where the US enjoys access to military bases (Herz, 2011; USDOT, n.d.). The US is the main user of the Panama Canal, which represents an artery for US trade; meaning, a conduct for fueling its latent power. Proximity of the US military to the Panama Canal is therefore important to guard US assets, but the US military cannot guard them in Panama itself, for that can be interpreted as an invasion[[34]](#footnote-34). So, it is imperative for the US to have military presence in the nearest the area, namely Colombia.

Secondly, the offensive policy has proven to be ineffective and even counterproductive, at least in the eyes of the current administrations of Colombia and Mexico (OAS, 2013a). If the US continues leading with an offensive approach, meaning for example that Colombia’s government would have been pressured to deal with traffickers through military strength, the relationship between the governments of the US and Colombian would have been damaged. The same goes for the relationship with Mexico’s government. Concretely, advancing the offensive approach gives reason for Colombia and Mexico to form a coalition to *balance against* the US. So, in a cost-benefit analysis, it is rational for the hegemon to shift its policy for the war on drugs to a less offensive one, because a shift of this sort will likely preserve the relationship of the US with Mexico and Colombia in similar terms; meaning, a relationship in which both Latin American governments continue to *bandwagon*.

Thirdly, because of the current economic crisis that the hegemon endures, the war that it is waging in the Middle East, and its shift in priority regarding the main security issue (which is now a ‘war against terrorism’), it is rational for the US to reduce its funds to the war on drugs. Military action is expensive, especially if several wars are to be maintained simultaneously; so the hegemon has to look for alternatives that require fewer funds.

The aforementioned reasons fit under neorealist logic. However, I found no evidence indicating that the shift in the OAS discourse was dictated by the US. Here it is worth remembering that neorealist theory predicts that IOs will follow the policy choice of the preponderant state that sustains it (Waltz, 2000). In this regard, I did find evidence that the OAS has been primarily sustained by US funds since its creation. From the neorealist perspective, this fact leads to assume that the OAS is subject to the constraints of the US, meaning, that the US utilizes the OAS as its instrument of foreign policy. Once again, I do not find sufficient evidence to support a claim of this sort, and therefore I cannot accept applied hypothesis 1.1 as a plausible explanation.

### 4.2.4. Testing applied hypothesis 1.2

Applied Hypothesis 1.2, *The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because a coalition of weaker states have balanced against the US, and in turn, the US has shifted the policy course of the OAS to please its adversaries and keep its hegemonic position,* can also be rejected. The reasons are the following:

First, in the context of the war on drugs in the Americas, a coalition or alliance balancing against the US should always include either Colombia or Mexico, or both countries. Since Colombia, Mexico, and the US are the main countries affected by drug trafficking with their roles as, respectively, principal producer, corridor, and consumer of illegal drugs, they are the most relevant state actors concerned about hemispheric drug policy (OAS, 2013a). From this perspective, it was expected to find either an alliance with, or an alliance against the US. When searching for coalitions of states in the Americas, I found evidence demonstrating that a group of Latin American states stand united against the hegemon, namely the members of the “*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra America*” (ALBA). However, as shown in the previous section, I also found evidence indicating that Mexico and Colombia are allied with the US, and that neither of the Latin American governments has supported the anti-US coalition.

Secondly, the relations between the governments of the states of Latin America cannot always be characterized as friendly. The acuteness of the *Andean Crisis* stands out as an example of the frictions derived from the different political stances between some South American countries[[35]](#footnote-35). Here it is worth noting that the Colombian government proved to be the biggest ally of the US in South America when the Uribe administration granted the US with access to Colombia’s military bases (Herz, 2011; Horowitz, 2011). Venezuela, on the other hand, can be seen as the bastion of anti-US imperialism since Hugo Chavez came to power. When analyzing the relation between Colombia and Venezuela, we can observe that the relationship is tense, since the current Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro, accused the Colombian government of conspiring against Maduro’s administration (Reuters, 2013: BBC, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2015). So, when contrasting the different political stances between Colombia and Venezuela against the good and stable relation between Colombia and the US, I find that Colombia is not allied with Venezuela’s anti-US movement.

Moreover, Mexico also has had frictions with Venezuela and other South American countries for adopting a pro-US stance. Different state leaders, Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela amongst others, showed discontent towards the Fox administration for supporting the US initiative for the creation of the “*Free Trade Agreement of the Americas*” (FTAA)[[36]](#footnote-36).

Because the latent power of Mexico has largely benefited from trading with the US, the decision of the Mexican government to support the US on the creation of the FTAA is a sign of alliance. In detail, the US is Mexico’s biggest trade partner and this trade is facilitated through NAFTA. This treaty represents an important economic flow for the Mexican economy and fuels the latent power of the country. This means that part of Mexico’s latent power is constrained by, and dependent on, trade with the US, for if the US would cut-off that flow, it is most likely that the Mexican economy would be severely damaged. In top of this, *Beyond Merida* and *NorthCom* form the basis of a formal military cooperation between the US and Mexico; a cooperation from which Mexico benefits by obtaining military equipment and technical assistance necessary to ensure its survival.

The relationship between the governments of Mexico and the US can be contrasted against Mexico’s frail relations with the ALBA countries. When making this contrast, I find that Mexico’s foreign policy reflects that the Mexican government has had, and continues to have, more interest in collaborating with the US government than with its Latin American peers. So, instead of allying with an anti-US coalition to *balance* against the hegemon, this analysis proves that, like Colombia, Mexico has rationally adopted a *bandwagon* strategy. In sum, the evidence of the presence of the anti-US coalition, ALBA, was necessary to consider hypothesis 1.1, yet not sufficient to confirm it.

### 4.2.5. Testing general hypothesis 1

For the purpose of this research, and as a consequence of the lack of evidence to support applied hypothesis 1.1 and 1.2,general hypothesis 1:Policy choices of international organizations are determined by policy choices of the hegemon that sustains and is part of this international organization, can also be rejected.

According to neorealist theory, IOs follow the policy choice of the preponderant state that sustains it (Mearsheimer, 1994-95; Grieco, 1988). This means that the condition to test general hypothesis 1 lies on proving that the OAS is primarily sustained by the most powerful member state. In this regard, I did find evidence demonstrating that the OAS has been primarily sustained by US funds since its creation. Once I found that this condition was met, I expected to find evidence demonstrating that the OAS gives priority to the interests of the US. However, when analyzing the interests of the US, Colombia, and Mexico, I found that by adopting a more tamed approach to the war on drugs, the OAS directly benefits the countries that have been mostly affected by the side effects of the previous approach, namely Mexico and Colombia (OAS, 2013a).

Also, when comparing the US government preference for *Plan Colombia* and the *Merida Initiative* over its preference for acting through the OAS, I found evidence that contradicts general hypothesis 1. I found that, in 1978, the OAS blocked an initiative of the US to intervene in Nicaragua’s internal conflict through the Inter American Peace Force (IAPF) (OAS, 2015a). This decision can be considered as crucial for the US security interest, since fighting communism was the primary goal of the US at that time, and Nicaragua’s internal conflict was ignited by a communist guerrilla (Herz, 2011). This evidence is not directly relevant to the context of the war on drugs, but it serves to prove that an IO does not necessarily follow the policy choice of the most powerful state. In turn, this explains why the US grants preference to *Plan Colombia* and *Merida Initiative*. Therefore, the evidence discrediting general hypothesis 1, in addition to the lack of evidence supporting hypothesis 1.1 and 1.2, gives me a strong reason to assume that neorealist theory offers a rather incomplete explanation for the OAS shift in discourse.

### 4.2.6. Discussion on neorealism and the findings derived from the analysis

While reading throughout the hypothesis testing procedures, the reader may have noticed that some of the evidence used to test the hypotheses is not directly related to the war on drugs in the Americas. In specific, evidence about the existence of the ALBA coalition, NAFTA, and Mexico’s support for the US initiative to create the FTAA, serves to understand the policy choices for the security of the analyzed countries, but moves far away from the subject under investigation. This is so because neorealist analysis is not dependent on the context. This means that neorealists assume that all social phenomena at the international level can be explained simply by analyzing the power relations between the states.

By focusing on state relations based on the balance of power, neorealist theory offers a simple explanation for the OAS shift in discourse. The strength of this theory lies precisely there, on its parsimony. However, I found that neorealist theory misses to consider analyzing the phenomenon in its context, and leaves out too many variables that may influence the OAS shift in discourse. For instance, by placing states as the only important actors, neorealism ignores that non-states actors, such as transnational criminal organizations (drug cartels), are powerful actors in the international arena. As I found in this analysis, drug cartels have the power to endanger the security of not just one, but several states. Neorealism is silent in this regard.

Also, I found that the neorealist assumption about states behaving as unitary actors is fundamentally wrong. Neorealists assume that people always follow a *logic of consequences*, thereby always acting rationally and in the same manner as everyone else. This leads neorealists to assume that state leaders will always make rational decisions in accordance to the preferences of the citizens; thus enabling states to work as units. I find that this assumption ignores not just the dynamics of politics at the domestic level, but also the free will of humans and their individual differences. In turn, this demonstrates the weak predictability and explanatory power of neorealism, because every time that the behavior of a state leader deviates from the *logic of consequences* to make decisions based on norms, ideas, or beliefs, the theory will be faced with an anomaly.

Furthermore, the long-term cooperation that the OAS embodies can already be seen by some as an anomaly for neorealism. Neorealists, on the other hand, would likely claim that cooperation in the OAS will inevitably fail, because some state will cheat on its peers at some point. However, multilateral cooperation in the OAS has been uninterrupted since this regional IO was put in motion in 1948. Therefore, I consider that the theory of neorealism does not actually set forth the specific conditions under which it holds, such as when it is proven that cooperation fails.

Neorealism seems to give accurate explanations for the traditional type of conflict at the international level. However, I find that neorealist theory tends to oversimplify reality, and this does not come close to providing a deep understanding of the analyzed phenomena. The purpose of this research is to explain the OAS shift in discourse, but also to reach a deep understanding of the analyzed phenomena. In this regard, it is imperative to analyze a more complete landscape of the subject under investigation. Thus I found that simplicity is also a weakness of neorealism, because simple explanations provide a rather incomplete ‘X-ray’ of the analyzed phenomenon.

## 4.3. Testing Neoliberal Institutionalism

From the neoliberal institutionalist perspective it is expected to observe that the shift in discourse followed a *constructed focal point* provided by the OAS to solve a distributional conflict. This requires performing an analysis focused on the activities of the OAS in the context of the war on drugs. Because of this reason, the present analysis maps out how regional multilateral cooperation on drug policy developed through the OAS. Before moving on to the hypotheses testing procedure, there are some events previous to the OAS shift in discourse that should be considered from the neoliberal institutionalist perspective. The information extracted from those events will provide the reader with a basic knowledge to understand the development of drug policy in the OAS, and therefore with evidence to further test the hypotheses derived from this theory. The following part will reconstruct these events.

### 4.3.1. Multilateral cooperation in the Americas

The history of European interventionism in the Americas damaged the capacity of the states of the Americas to trust one another (Herz, 2011). As Herz (2011) notices, mutual mistrust derived from the anarchical conditions at the international level can explain the political frictions between the states of the Americas, but conflict has not always defined the regional landscape. Since the early decolonization, states in the Americas sought and achieved to develop peaceful relations through cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral forms. In fact, the experience of states in signing several treaties, setting up cooperation agencies and participating in Inter-American conferences, paved the way for the creation of the OAS (ibid.).

The initial efforts on regional cooperation can be traced back to the Hispanic-American movement from 1820 led by Simon Bolivar, who sought to create a confederation of Hispanic-American states to protect themselves from hostile European intervention (Martí, 1983). The representatives of Central and South American countries demonstrated their interest in obtaining *absolute gains*, for what they reunited at the Congress of Panama (1826) to draft Hispanic-American treaties regarding security and economic cooperation. At this congress, the *“Treaty of Perpetual Union, League and Confederation”* was signed, and thus a notion of solidarity emerged in the region (Herz, 2011).

Throughout the rest of the 19th century, delegates of South and Central American countries continued seeking *absolute gains* through the creation of an Inter-American system, but a more concrete step was made when the US decided to get involved in regional multilateralism. After undergoing its civil war, the US became a great power in the international arena and sought to develop closer ties with Latin American countries, for which it hosted the first International Conference of American States in January of 1890 (OAS, 2015a). Two months after, the delegates of the participating countries created the “*International Union of American Republics*” to promote closer economic relationships between countries in the region (Horwitz, 2011). The international conferences continued throughout the next couple of decades, and by 1910 the name was changed to “*Pan American Union*” (ibid.). During this period regional multilateral cooperation experienced a diversification in areas of common interest and more agencies were created[[37]](#footnote-37).

The increased level of regional cooperation experienced at the beginning of the 19th century allowed states of the Americas to stabilize their expectations about dealing with the aggressive behavior of their peers (Herz, 2011). In this context, in 1933, the inter-American conferences widened their scope to include mutual security concerns (Roorda, 1998). Later, in 1938, states in the region engaged in a closer cooperation when the delegates agreed to mobilize their ministers of foreign affairs to deal with security threats to the region through the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Herz, 2011).

Because of the outbreak of the Second World War most of the countries in the region reunited in the Meetings of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. However, it was not until the “*Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace*” held in Mexico (1945) that the states’ interest on reciprocal assistance was formalized trough the resolution “*Act of Chapultepec*”[[38]](#footnote-38). Apart from this resolution, a basic constitution for a regional organization was drafted during the conference held in Mexico (Kunz, 1945). Then, after adjusting that basic constitution, the heads of state of 21 American states gathered in Bogota at the Ninth International Conference of American States (1948) and signed the charter through which the OAS was created (OAS, 2015a).

The OAS was entrusted by its founders with ensuring the peace and stability in the Americas, but since it was created at the dawn of the Cold War, the purpose of the OAS translated into the containment of the influence of the Soviet bloc in the hemisphere (Shaw, 2004; Horwitz, 2011). During the early years of the OAS, the member states shared an interest in containing communism in the Americas, thereby allowing the OAS to function effectively[[39]](#footnote-39) (Horwitz, 2011). However, the pro-communist revolutions in Central America during the 70s, made it clear that the interests of some Latin American governments did not always match the interest of the US (Herz, 2011). The US leaders recognized the mismatch of interests and decided to pursue unilateral interventions in the decade after[[40]](#footnote-40) (Horwitz, 2011). In turn, this led Latin American leaders to distrust the multilateral partnership, and to distance themselves from the OAS to the extent that some redirected efforts to create their own *ad hoc* agreements, such as “*Esquipulas II*” (Herz, 2011).

Because of the OAS failure to condemn US interventions in Latin America, and the marginal role it played in those, this regional organization was portrayed as a tool of US foreign policy (Shaw, 2004). During the Cold War, that view of the OAS can hold, because the US interventions fostered distrust and hindered regional multilateral cooperation in the security sphere, but cooperation through the OAS never ceased (Herz, 2011). As Herz (2011) recalls, there are events in which the OAS played a leading role, and even blocked US initiatives. For instance, the OAS managed to stabilize expectations of aggressive behavior when it supported the signing of a treaty of amity to end the border dispute between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in 1948 (ibid.). Also, in 1978, a US initiative to intervene in Nicaragua’s internal conflict through the IAPF was rejected by the OAS[[41]](#footnote-41) (OAS, 2015a).

### 4.3.2. The development of hemispheric drug policy

Since the Hispanic-American initiative of Simon Bolivar, the definition of threat to the Americas had been exclusively applied to extra-continental threats (referring to European and Soviet intervention). However, since the early 1980s, states of the Americas were facing an internal security threat posed by illegal drug trafficking. The manifestations of the threat varied from region to region[[42]](#footnote-42), yet, all these derived from drug trafficking (OAS, 2013a). The non-conventional type of threat posed by illegal drug trafficking thus proved not to be restrained by national boundaries and began causing instability throughout the continent.

When the Cold War ended and the US obtained global hegemony, illegal drug trafficking replaced communism as the top priority of the US security agenda, and as the top priority of the OAS. Under the Reagan administration, the US took the lead on crafting and implementing counter-drug measures, but these proved deficient to suppress drug trade at that time (Bagley, 1988). Because of the failure regarding curbing illegal drug trafficking, state leaders of the drug producing, transit, and consumer countries acknowledged that the transnational aspect of drug trafficking required them to engage in closer cooperation (Herz, 2011). Thus, the inability of the states of the Americas to deal individually with the new security demands, led them to grant a greater importance to regional multilateral cooperation, and thereby to the OAS (Herz 2011; Horwitz, 2011; Shaw, 2004).

Faced with new security demands, the OAS member states managed to overcome long-standing distrust. In this context, the OAS underwent a process of revitalization that led to an intensification of regional multilateral cooperation during the 1990s (Shaw, 2004). In fact, more Inter-American secretariats were created after all the states in the region became members of the OAS[[43]](#footnote-43) (OAS, 2015a). Also part of this process of revitalization is that, at the first “*Meeting of Heads of States of the Americas*” (1994), the member states engaged in closer cooperation by adopting an action plan and new guideline for the role of the OAS.

In this renewed role, the OAS began implementing Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) that facilitated a shared *flow of information* between state members (Herz, 2011; OAS, 2015). As part of the CSBMs agenda, the OAS sponsored conferences on military relations that served as a forum to leave aside unsubstantiated suspicions. In 1995, for instance, at the conference on CSBMs held in Santiago de Chile, state members of the OAS agreed to issue pre-notifications about their military exercises and to allow the presence of foreign observers during those exercises. Then, at the conference held in San Salvador (1998), the state members sought to create a common methodology to measure military expenditure, and thus facilitate a comparison of this sort of expenditure throughout the region[[44]](#footnote-44). Since then, 18 countries, including the US, have published ‘white papers’ about their military expenditure (OAS, 2015a). Thus, by fostering reciprocal relations, the OAS achieved to mitigate the negative effects of anarchy.

Transparency on military expenditure helped the OAS enhancing multilateral cooperation during the 1990s, but cooperation was still challenged by illegal drug trafficking. In detail, the transnational aspect of illegal drug trafficking required the drugs source, transit and consumer countries to cooperate not just closely, but also in a coordinated manner. However, cooperation on drug policy between some states was often distant, informal and damaged by political tension derived from mismatches of interests on the way of approaching this issue. Clear examples of this are the political tensions between the US and Mexico, caused by the US certification process, and the unregulated presence of the DEA in Mexico[[45]](#footnote-45) (Buxton, 2011).

In an early attempt to coordinate the drug policies of its member states, the OAS General Assembly mandated the first conference on drug trafficking in 1984. Then, in 1986, the member states adopted a guideline for drug policy-making, namely the *“Inter-American Program of Action of Rio de Janeiro Against the Illicit Use and Production of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Traffic Therein”* (OAS, 2015a)*.* Also, in 1986, the OAS efforts to coordinate drug policy took a more significant step when its General Assembly established CICAD as the hemispheric forum for cooperation and coordination on the drug-policy area (ibid.).

As a consequence of the increased acuteness of the problems caused by drug trafficking throughout the Americas, the OAS General Assembly expanded CICAD’s membership to all the eligible states in 1997[[46]](#footnote-46) (Herz, 2011; Horwitz, 2011). Here is worth noticing that including more members increases the chance of a facing a *distributional conflict*. However, the OAS managed to stabilize the expectations of the new members of CICAD by coordinating their efforts on areas of mutual interest. Proof of this is that cooperation diversified to include more areas related to drug policy. For instance, CIDAD created an “*Expert Group on the Control of Money Laundering*” was created in 1999 (D’Souza, 2011). Also, the traffic of small arms is a topic that entered the hemispheric security agenda since the 80s, but due to its association with the violence generated by drug trafficking, CICAD took the lead on drafting the “*Model Regulations for the Control of the International Movement of Firearms*” from 1988[[47]](#footnote-47) (Berdal and Serrano, 2002).

Moreover, the operational side of counter-drug efforts is not alien to the OAS. Despite the fact that the OAS is not geared to carry out military or police operations to combat illegal drug trafficking[[48]](#footnote-48), CICAD aids the member states to achieve cooperation on the operational side of reducing the drug supply (Horwitz, 2011). In this context, CICAD supported the creation of the Andean Regional Counterdrug Intelligence School (ERCAIAD) in 1999. ERCAIAD[[49]](#footnote-49) is the specialized center for academic and operational training of police forces and other related agencies entrusted with the task of combating drug trafficking in Latin America (OAS, 2010a).

The revitalization of the OAS led the region to experience an unprecedented level of cooperation on drug policy, but the OAS still required coordinating this cooperation to deal with a *distributional conflict*. During the first decade of the new millennium, the governments of Colombia, Mexico, and the US demonstrated their interest in prioritizing the dismantlement of drug trafficking organizations[[50]](#footnote-50). However, their interests changed as the conflict escalated. In Mexico, the efforts of the government to dismantle drug cartels shook the socio-political stability of the country to the extent of putting Mexico’s government at the verge of collapse[[51]](#footnote-51). So, Mexico’s government needed to seek for different alternatives. Similarly, the interest of Colombia’s government changed. Since 2010, Colombia’s President Santos announced the openness of the Colombian government to look –together with other governments- for a different approach to the war on drugs. The interest of the US government, on the other hand, remain focused on stopping drugs from entering US territory and on dismantling drug trafficking organizations, for they were also considered as terrorists organizations by the Bush administration.

Aware of the situation, the then General Secretary of the OAS, Jose Miguel Insulza, called to update the Hemispheric Drug Strategy in 2009 (Brownfield, 2011). Once again, CICAD took the lead and approved a new anti-drug hemispheric strategy in May 2010. Here is worth noticing that, unlike the previous strategy, this new hemispheric strategy recognizes illegal drug trafficking as a serious threat to individuals and not just to states. Also, this new strategy indicates that in order to deal with the drug problem in the Americas, the member states required a ‘comprehensive’ drug policy built around education and prevention (OAS, 2010a).

Also in 2010, the OAS General Assembly reunited for their 40th regular session in Lima (Peru) to address the topic of ‘Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Americas’. In this reunion, the heads of delegation committed to ‘comprehensively’ address the new types of security threats, such as transnational organized crime and the drug problem, through an approach built on a full respect to international human rights law (OAS, 2015b). In specific, and as stated in the “*Declaration of Lima*”, the heads of delegation committed to ‘urgently’ devote more resources to address social issues in the area of integral development, such as extreme poverty, inequity and social exclusion (ibid.). The next year, the 41st General Assembly took place in San Salvador and was focused on the topic of ‘Citizen Security in the Americas’. In this reunion, the delegates of state discussed themes related to combating organized, but their commitments can be better summarized in the 1st and 4th points of the “*Declaration of San Salvador*” (2011), which states that: (1) it is their [referring to state members] priority to continue directing actions to strengthen citizen security, as a component of public security, in their countries; and that (4) the individual is at the center of citizen security and should therefore be a partner in the definition and implementation of ways to build more secure communities.

Afterwards, in November 2011, CICAD approved the “*Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs”* (2011-2015) (OAS, 2011b). Significantly different from the approach of the previous strategy, the plan of action of the new strategy indicates that gender issues, poverty, social exclusion and the well being of individuals must receive special attention when addressing the drug problem (ibid.). Contrasting with the strategy from 1996, in the document of the new hemispheric strategy it is acknowledged that the drug problem demands a comprehensive, balanced and multidisciplinary approach based on shared responsibility among all states (ibid.).

At this moment, a *multiple equilibrium* on the new direction of hemispheric drug policy was reached. More specifically, through the general assemblies and other reunions, the members of the OAS were trying to stir cooperation in several directions. Whereas in some reunions the members committed to pay attention to respecting human rights and gender equality, amongst others; in other reunions the members committed to focus on integral development, citizen security, and/or prevention.

Also aware of this situation, the heads of the states of the Americas gathered at the Sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena (2012) and issued a communiqué through which they acknowledged that combining uncoordinated efforts is insufficient to deal with the drug problem, and that it is necessary to identify measures on the basis of an integrated and balanced approach. The heads of state of the Americas thus agreed to entrust the OAS with the task of preparing a report on the drug problem in the region with an assessment of the results of the policies dealing with it (OAS, 2012).

General Secretary Insulza presented the report, titled “*Report on the Drug Problem in the Americas*”, on May 2013 in Bogota at the 53rd CICAD regular session. This report can be considered as a game changer in drug policy since it suggests that the member states should consider new alternatives to counter the drug problem, alternatives that range from legalization of drugs to decriminalization of use and possession. The report contains a description of four possible scenarios about the course to take in hemispheric drug policy, which overall suggest a less of a punitive approach[[52]](#footnote-52) (OAS, 2013a).

A month after the report was presented by General Secretary Insulza, the 43rd session of the General Assembly took place in Antigua Guatemala (OAS, 2015b). In this reunion, the delegates of states discussed the central topic of a new approach to combat drug trafficking in the Americas and stated their postures on this matter. After deliberating on the new path for drug policy, the delegates of state agreed to the previous suggestion about crafting an integral and balanced policy within the framework of full respect to human rights (ibid.). In specific, the declaration derived from this reunion, “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*” (2013), was drafted in accordance to the previous recommendations from CICAD, in conjunction with the commitments made in the 40th and 41st regular session of the General Assembly. Those recommendations can be summarized in giving priority to the protection of human rights over the military offensives, and a greater allocation of resources for addressing the social issues hindering the integral development of communities in the Americas.

### 4.3.3. Testing applied hypothesis 2.1

Theapplied hypothesis 2.1: The OAS has shifted its discourse regarding the war on drugs from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because by acting as an autonomous international institution, the OAS has stepped into the distributional conflict between its member states to construct a focal point based on a more balanced approach, can be rejected as a plausible explanation for the OAS shift in discourse. The reasons are the following:

In this analysis I found that a situation of multiple equilibrium on hemispheric drug policy was present before the OAS shift in discourse occurred. Since neoliberal institutionalist theory posits that the cause behind the construction of a focal point is: a situation of multiple equilibrium (Keohane and Martin, 1995);I had reason to expect finding evidence demonstrating that the OAS shift in discourse is product of a constructed focal point. On this matter, I found evidence indicating that the balanced approach of the OAS discourse was not imposed by the hegemon (as neorealist theory predicts), but crafted within the institutional context of the OAS.

More specifically, in 2010, CICAD took the lead in drafting and approving a new hemispheric policy, from which a plan of action was crafted. This plan of action is a guideline on how to materialize the new hemispheric drug policy, and represents the first effort of the OAS to build a more balanced and comprehensive approach (OAS, 2011b). Thereafter, at the Sixth Summit of the Americas from 2012, the heads of state requested the OAS to elaborate a report on the drug problem in the continent, and to evaluate the policies dealing with this problem (OAS, 2013a). This report, elaborated by CICAD, included different scenarios of multilateral cooperation, of which a less punitive strategy was is identified as the rational choice (ibid.). This report can be seen as having had a great influence, since less than a month after presenting it, the OAS General Assembly met in Antigua (Guatemala) to address, for the first session ever, the problems posed by drug trafficking. Derived from this session, the constructed focal point based on a balanced approach was formalized through the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*”.

Derived from that reasoning, I found that the fact that the balanced approach took shape in the institutional context of the OAS means, for neoliberal institutionalists, that the balanced approach can be seen as the point of focus where cooperation was channeled. This gives me reason to assume that adherents of neoliberal institutionalist theory would likely claim that the OAS shift in discourse was caused by a *constructed focal point* provided by the OAS. However, this explanation is unacceptable for the purpose of this research; simply because explaining that the OAS shift in discourse was caused by the will of the OAS to do this, adds little to our understanding of international relations, particularly about how IOs work. For that matter, this explanation would only indicate that the OAS acted with autonomy.

### 4.3.4. Testing general hypothesis 2

For the purpose of this research, and as a consequence of ruling out the applied hypothesis 2.1,General hypothesis 2: International institutions providing constructed focal points aimed at solving coordination problems between its state members will influence the political discourse of that international organization, can also be rejected. The reason is the following:

By analyzing through the neoliberal institutionalist perspective, I found that the balanced approach of the new discourse of the OAS was shaped in the institutional context of the OAS. As described when testing hypothesis 2.1, for neoliberal institutionalists this constitutes proof that the balanced approach is a *constructed focal point* wherein cooperation was channeled. This sort of explanation may suffice for researches that choose to focus on ‘explaining’ the OAS shift in discourse, rather than ‘understanding’ why this came about. However, the purpose of this research is not only to explain how the OAS shift in discourse came about, but also to understand why this shift occurred.

If general hypothesis 2 was to be accepted, the explanation provided by this hypothesis will only inform that the OAS undertook an autonomous action, and that this action was the cause of the shift in discourse. Put differently, in abstract terms, general hypothesis 2 will only inform that changes in the political outcomes of IOs are made possible by the capability of the IO to construct focal points to coordinate cooperation; which in turn allows neoliberal institutionalist to claim that IOs can act with autonomy. However, general hypothesis 2 falls short from the abovementioned purpose of this research; simply because to explain that the shift in the OAS discourse was caused by the OAS capability to coordinate cooperation, tells us nothing of why this shift occurred. The explanation offered by neoliberal institutionalism thus adds little to our understanding of international politics in general, and particularly about the causes that led the OAS to shift its discourse for the war on drugs. Therefore, general hypothesis 2 is ruled out as a plausible explanation for the purpose of this research.

### 4.3.5. Discussion about neoliberal institutionalism

Neoliberal institutionalist theory allowed me to map out a broader and more complete landscape than neorealist theory did. In this broader landscape, and opposed to the neorealist assumption about anarchy inhibiting cooperation (Mearsheimer, 1994-95; Grieco, 1988); I found that by providing a sense of *continuity* through its renewed role, the OAS stands out as the organization that facilitated cooperation, and thus helped states to mitigate the negative effects of anarchy. In detail, by implementing CSBMs, the OAS stepped in to stabilize expectations of aggressive state behavior, thereby providing states with an escape from the *prisoner’s dilemma*.

Furthermore, in this analysis I found that cooperation in the OAS was faced with a problem of *multiple equilibrium* on hemispheric drug policy. On this matter, Keohane and Martin (1995) claim that institutions can step in to provide *constructed focal points* to make a particular outcome prominent. This leads institutionalists to claim that institutions can have independent effects on the state, and therefore that institutionalist theory is promising (ibid.). Neorealists such as Mearsheimer (94-95), on the other hand, respond by arguing that institutionalist theory offers a false promise, because institutions do not function independently from the state. However, I found that this point of debate is problematic, since both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists have not attempted to set forth an agreed definition of what constitutes the autonomy of an IO, and what does not.

For instance, derived from this analysis I found that neoliberal institutionalism leads us to assume that any action undertaken within the institutional context of an IO, and aimed to channel cooperation towards a particular outcome, can be considered as focal point provided by that IO (see Keohane and Martin, 1995). This assumption is problematic, because it is too difficult to distinguish if the credit for a focal point should be given to the IO or to the state[[53]](#footnote-53). On one hand, adherents of neorealist theory would likely argue that the OAS is comprised of individuals from different nationalities, which serve the interest of the state to which each of them belongs. Neoliberal institutionalists, on the other hand, would claim that the role of institutions lies precisely there, in facilitating the flow of information necessary to solve coordination problems. In sum, this problematic gives me reason to assume that the neo-neo debate is not likely to make significant progress until a strict definition of what constitutes the ‘autonomy’ of an IO is set forth and accepted by both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists. Such definition can help to settle down the debate about whether or not an IO can have independent effects on state behavior.

Moreover, neoliberal institutionalist theory allowed me to consider that the OAS can have an influence on situations of *multiple equilibrium,* and thereby on state behavior. So, in this regard, the scope of neoliberal institutionalist analysis moves away from the flawed neorealist assumption about the state being the sole important actor in the international system. Indeed, this theory helps to demonstrate that non-state actors play important roles in international politics, and thus makes a greater advance for the IR scholarship than neorealist theory does. However, neoliberal institutionalist theory is still too focused on the state as the primary actor.

By keeping focus on the state as the central actor, neoliberal institutionalists fail to explore the institutional dynamics and decision-making processes happening inside the IOs. As mentioned earlier, I deem it necessary to analyze the OAS institutional dynamics in order to better understand not just how the OAS works from the inside, but also to understand how it is possible for an IO to have independent effects on the state; which is the main tenet of the second line of inquiry of this theory.

## 4.4. Testing Social Constructivism

From the social constructivist perspective it is expected that the theory of the life cycle of the norm provides a plausible explanation to the OAS shift in discourse. To test the theory of the norm life cycle, it is required to perform an analysis focused on a norm in the context of the war on drugs at the domestic and international level. Because of this reason, this analysis elaborates on the activity of norm entrepreneurs at the domestic and international level in the context of the war on drugs and within the OAS. Before moving on to the hypotheses testing procedure, there are some events previous to the OAS shift in discourse that should be considered from the social constructivist perspective. The information extracted from domestic and international events will provide the reader with a deep understanding of the development of drug policy in the OAS, and therefore will serve as evidence to test the hypotheses derived from this theory. The following part will reconstruct those events.

### 4.4.1. The social consequences of the fight against drugs

The war on drugs in the Americas is a non-traditional type of war; meaning, a war that is not waged between states, but includes non-state actors. In this war, drug cartels stand out as powerful non-state actors, for they have demonstrated their capacity to jeopardize the security of not just one state, but of an entire hemisphere (OAS, 2013a). In fact, the drug cartels and their association with diverse transnational criminal activities drove Colombia to near-collapse during the 80s, and more recently a similar situation can be observed in Mexico (Hartlyn, 1993).

By operating through a method of carrots and sticks, known in Spanish as *plomo* *o* *plata* (silver or a bullet), the drug cartels began corrupting government institutions and causing governability problems in Colombia since the 80s (Morales, 1989). The cartels’ method consists of bribing incumbent officials and law enforcement personnel in exchange for impunity, while resistance to bribery is handled through violence (ibid.). Through this method, the drug traffickers managed to increase their corrupting power, which in turn ignited a socio-political crisis in Colombia (Bagley, 1989-90). The method of *plomo o plata*, however, is not exclusive of the Colombian cartels since there is vast evidence indicating that drug cartels operate in virtually the same manner throughout the Americas (OAS, 2013a).

The US government, under the Reagan administration, recognized the security threat posed by illegal drug trafficking and launched a domestic and international crusade against illegal drug trafficking (Bagley, 1988). The anti-drug measures undertaken by the Reagan administration were focused on disrupting the illegal drug trade by increasing the participation of law enforcement agencies such as the DEA and the US military in counter-drug operations within and outside US borders (ibid.). However, the US government was not the only government interested in disrupting the drug trade.

In response to the security threat posed by drug trafficking, the governments of Colombia and Mexico, amongst others, began collaborating with the US government, which channeled financial aid to the Latin American governments through conducts such as the INL (Bagley, 1988, Morales, 1989; Chabat, 2002). The cooperation between Colombia and the US developed as the turmoil escalated in Colombia. By the end of the 80s, the then president of Colombia, Virgilio Barco, waged an all-out war against drug traffickers, but the cartels fought back with impressive firepower and began terrorizing the civilian population (ibid.). Consequently, Barco requested international support to combat drug trafficking, to which the Bush administration responded by authorizing an aid package that was mostly consistent of military gear (Bagley, 1989-1990).

The cooperation between the US and Mexico, and between the US and Colombia, continued throughout the 90s and closer ties were forged between those governments. By 2000, the Colombian government moved into a closer cooperation with the government of the US when they launched *Plan Colombia* and seven years later the same step was taken by Mexico’s government when the *Merida Initiative* was launched (US Department of State, n.d.; US Embassy Bogota, n.d.). The start-up of the *Merida Initiative* is seven years apart from the start-up of *Plan Colombia*, yet these plans share a significant similarity since both were initially tailored to combat drug trafficking through military might; an expression of an offensive approach.

The offensive drug policies implemented by each country proved ineffective since these have largely damaged civil society while the illegal drug industry remains unshaken. During the 80s, the US courts were overwhelmed by drug related trials and convictions, and often corrupted government offices (Bagley, 1988). In Colombia, the implementation of the hardline policies turned out to be counterproductive, since hunting down the drug traffickers brought a wave of violence against all the population (Bagley, 1989-1990; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Mercille, 2011).

In Mexico, as in Colombia, the massive crackdown on the drug cartels did not aid in suppressing drug trafficking and did not manage to stop the rise of violence derived from it (Mercille, 2011). Part of the violence associated with drug trafficking can be attributed to quarrels between drug cartels. However, a considerable amount of cases are also attributed to the battle between cartels and law enforcement agencies (Human Rights Watch, 2014; Amnesty International, 2013). As a matter of fact, in both Mexico and Colombia, the battle between drug cartels and law enforcers has been the direct cause of thousands of civilian casualties (Harvard University Institute of Politics, 2012; Molzahn et al., 2013).

The battle of the armed forces against the cartels has also damaged the legitimacy of government institutions throughout the continent. In this context, it is difficult to ignore that institutional corruption related to drug trafficking is deeply entrenched in the (government) institutions, since high government officials, military personnel, law enforcement agents, and even bank executives have been closely linked to the cartels’ criminal activities in multiple cases (Human Rights Watch, 2014; Mercille, 2011). Besides, the performance of the law enforcement agencies has been repetitively disapproved by civil society for their countless human rights abuses that range from forced disappearance to torture; abuses that have also been committed against innocent bystanders (Human Rights Watch, 2013; 2014; Amnesty International, 2013).

Poorly investigated cases of the disappearances, extortion, kidnap, torture, and assassination of businessmen, high politicians, journalists, students, law enforcement agents, and immigrants portray a dramatic, yet accurate, description of the harm that the war on drugs has brought on society (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Amnesty International, 2013). Concretely, violence has reached beyond the battle between legitimate armed forces and drug traffickers to become a constant that has affected every sphere of social life throughout the continent (Amnesty International 2013; OAs, 2013a).

### 4.4.2. International Civil Society, Transnational Advocacy Networks and Human Rights

The violence generated by drug trafficking became unacceptable for the international civil society, and so did the performance of the governments dealing with the drug problem. In this regard, the adverse consequences of launching massive crackdowns on the drug cartels have been subject of public scrutiny, and to a certain extent, civil society in the Americas has repetitively shown discontent about the approach of their governments in the fight against drugs (Human Rights Watch, 2011; 2013; Amnesty International, 2013).

By sharing information and opinions through conducts such as newspapers, radio, TV, and social media, international civil society became a notoriously active non-state actor in this war. As a matter of fact, groups of students, businessmen, religious leaders, academics, and unions of employees, amongst others, have been debating about the best way to approach the problem of drug trafficking in formal and informal forums for decades (International Crisis Group, 2008; Pardo and Tokatlian, 2010; Nueva Sociedad, 2011; LEAP, 2011).

Indeed, the participation of the international civil society in the war on drugs begun by showing unconformity with the performance of the governments, but this participation has gone far beyond repetitive expressions of discontent (ibid.). Since the beginning of the new millennium, civilians have been channeling their efforts to try to influence drug policy, and thereby the performance of their governments (ibid.). By setting up NGOs and contributing to already established ones, civilians have been constantly advocating for what they deem to be an ‘appropriate’ response to the causes and effects of illegal drug trafficking. The areas of advocacy diverge from decriminalization and legalization of use of drugs to focusing on protecting human rights. However, a less punitive approach for fighting the war on drugs is identified as a point of convergence (Open Society Foundations, 2013; White, 2011; Glennie, 2011).

In this context, advocates of human rights norms stand out as the most active group of civilians. Within this group, NGOs such as *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International* play the most active role, especially because these NGOs monitor and evaluate policy implementation in an independent way throughout the continent. Derived from their monitoring activity, specialists working in these NGOs have documented and publicized countless cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by the drug cartels and paramilitary forces such as FARC, but also by the law enforcers (Human Rights Watch, 2011; 2013; 2014; Amnesty International, 2013). In their periodic reports, these NGOs have repetitively *shamed* governments by qualifying the behavior of their law enforcers as morally unacceptable, and for their inefficient work in protecting human rights; thereby putting the *socialization process* in motion (ibid.). These NGOs thus disseminate information that serves to compare and contrast data that allows society to make more accurate judgments of their situation, and ultimately to try to influence it.

Consistent with the previous claim is that the international civil society has shown increased signs of activism through these NGOs, but also independently from them. As a matter of fact, there is a considerable amount of cases of public protests through which civilians demand the restoration of peace in their communities, and accountability for the deaths and forced disappearances of thousands of innocent bystanders; cases in which law enforcers have been primary suspects and appointed by civilians as guilty (CSDP, n.d.; AlterNet, 2013; Reuters, 2012). Additionally, self-defense groups have emerged in rural areas where the states have less presence and therefore are less able to guarantee the safety of those communities. These self-defense groups are financed and supported by their communities to act as *vigilantes* to protect them from the drug cartels’ activities such as extortion and recruitment (Asfura-Heim & Espach, 2013; Taylor, 2014; Mohar, 2014). Governments have thus been pressured by civilians to act more efficiently in solving the problems derived from drug trafficking, and particularly to ensure the protection of human rights (UN, 2015; Fantz, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2011b).

From the cases of protest we can extract that civil society has been particularly active at the domestic level. At the international level, however, civil society has also organized through *transnational advocacy networks* to put pressure on the governments. In detail, these advocacy networks are composed by individuals from different nationalities with different backgrounds organized through NGOs and that communicate constantly to stand united in a common cause; in this case the promotion and protection of human rights (Human Rights Watch, n.d.; Amnesty International, n.d.; International Crisis Group, n.d.).

Individuals working through these networks have sought to *persuade* policy-makers and decision-makers to sympathize with their cause, thereby *introducing* human rights norms into the context. However, since the task of persuading individual by individual is no less than difficult, entrepreneurs of human rights norms have strategically targeted the OAS, for it stands out as the principal and most resourceful IO concerned with safety, and thus also with the drug problem, in the Americas (Youngers, 2013; IJRC, 2014; Malinowska-Sempruch and Holiday, 2013).

Here is worth noting that since the creation of the OAS, a *critical mass* of OAS members signed the “*Inter-American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man*” (1948); a declaration through which they affirmed that the “*protection of human rights will guide law in the Americas*”, and that “*an initial system of protection should be increasingly strengthened in the international system*” which constitutes proof of a *norm cascade*. Then, in 1959, the OAS created the IACHR in order to promote and protect human rights in the Americas. Since then human rights norms were ‘internalized’ at the international level, for they have been included in documents, practices, and bureaucracies of the OAS (Herz, 2011). The agreement of the state members in the ‘non-controversial’ creation of the IACourtHR is a clear example of the *internalization* of human rights norms.

### 4.4.3. The OAS as an organizational platform

The OAS stands out as the region’s principal organization coordinating hemispheric drug policy. Funded by quotas from its thirty-five state members, the OAS allocates a vast amount of economic resources (Horwitz, 2011). Furthermore, this IO serves as a high political forum wherein state leaders, ministers of foreign affairs, and ministers of defense from the Americas reunite to discuss the course of action in tackling down hemispheric security threats such as drug trafficking. Its ample scope and vast resources thus have made the OAS into an attractive *organizational platform* for entrepreneurs to promote norms at the international level. In order to better understand the relationship of the OAS with the norm entrepreneurs, it is necessary to understand the internal dynamics of this organization.

In the early years of the OAS, the discussions on hemispheric security were sustained at the Inter-American Conferences, but these meetings were replaced in 1970 by the regular sessions of the General Assembly (Shaw, 2004). The General Assembly was created as the permanent body of the OAS to deal with hemispheric security matters and it requires the delegates appointed by each member to convene once a year to make decisions on the general course and policies of the OAS by means of declarations and resolutions. Thus, the OAS general assembly bears the responsibility in decisions on hemispheric security. Moreover, the responsibility of directing the General Assembly, and also the General Secretariat, belongs to the General Secretary, who is elected by the members of the General Assembly for a five-year term (Herz, 2011).

As the top body of the OAS, the General Assembly is the supreme organ of decision-making in this regional organization and its function is directly supported by the Permanent Council. However, the decision-making processes in the OAS are not exclusive for the delegates of states. Recognizing the Inter-American Democratic Charter[[54]](#footnote-54), the OAS has included the direct participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the activities of the General Assembly amongst other organs of the OAS since 1999 (Herz, 2011).

CSOs are defined by the OAS as *"any national or international institution, organization, or entity made up of natural or juridical persons of a non-governmental nature"* (Article 2 CP/RES. 759)*.* CSOs have been institutionalized in the OAS and provided with a framework for participation by means of the Permanent Council’s Resolution *CP/RES. 759, “Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities”.* This resolution provides a guide for registering a CSO in the OAS. Registered CSOs can issue recommendations and assist in the implementation of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, and designate representatives to participate in public meetings of the Permanent Council, CIDI and their subsidiary bodies, amongst other activities. The OAS thus grants civil society with channels for direct communication and space to participate in decision-making processes. Currently, there are 424 CSOs that participate in the OAS, including *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International* (OAS, n.d.).

Furthermore, it is possible for all CSOs, whether or not they are registered, to attend meetings of the General Assembly, the Permanent Council, CIDI, and other specialized conferences of the OAS. As a matter of fact, the heads of delegation agreed by adopting CP/RES. 840 (1361/03) at the 43rd General Assembly in 2003 that a dialogue with the General Secretary and the CSOs should be sustained and institutionalized as a meeting of the General Assembly. In this regard, CP/RES. 840 (1361/03) resolves that a dialogue among heads of delegation of the member states, the Secretary General, and representatives of CSOs will directly precede the meeting of the General Assembly. Thus, the OAS does not only acknowledge the role of civil society in dealing with the most relevant issues of the Inter-American agenda, but also empowers civilians by granting them a space to amplify their voice.

The shift in discourse of the OAS is by no means a surprise for the international civil society since the components of this new discourse are correlated to their demands. In fact, when addressing the drug problem in the Americas, representatives of CSOs have made their demands clear through constant recommendations for changing the approach to the war on drugs (Youngers, 2013; Malinowska-Sempruch and Holiday, 2013; OAS, 2011). Within this context, the recommendations issued by CSOs are specific, yet not limited, to the areas of multidimensional security, integral development and human rights.

Entering into detail, at the already institutionalized dialogue between the heads of delegation and representatives of civil society on the theme of the General Assembly on ‘Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Americas’ (2010), the representative of CSOs working in the area of human rights and security recommended that “*all security policy must fundamentally have a respect and guarantee for human rights* (OAS, 2011, p.47)” and that: “*in this regard, civil society considers that the opposite of this are policies that prioritize security of the state (…) reflected in the growing initiatives and implementation of plans of militarization as the only solution to social conflicts*” (ibid.). Additionally, the representative of CSOs working in the area of peace recommended that in order to overcome the obstacles for creating a culture of peace, such as narco-trafficking, it is necessary to use multilateral approaches; and with regard to Colombia that it is necessary to contribute to the political, ‘non-military’ approach to the internal armed conflict in this country (ibid.).

During the aforementioned dialogue, the recommendations from the representatives of CSOs in each of their respective areas coincided in disapproving the militarization of security policies in the region. However, it is not a coincidence that their recommendations came in unison since they had previously discussed their perspectives in the “*Civil Society Forum for Preparation to the 40th General Assembly*”, wherein they expressed their concern to “*ensure that the purpose of peace should lead, within the framework of the OAS and in a concerted manner, the Member States to avoid expressions of militarization*” (p.51), and that the draft of Lima should address the need to develop greater cooperation mechanisms that enable the state members to ‘comprehensively’ address, with full respect for international human rights law, the new threats to the security of their populations (ibid.).

The efforts of the international civil society to shift the OAS strategy for the war on drugs continued throughout the subsequent couple of years and several recommendations were issued in this direction. The recommendations range from urging the governments to avoid the militarization of citizen security and provide security as a human right, to the strengthening OAS programs on training security forces in human rights and avoid the proliferation of private security agencies (Youngers, 2013; Malinowska-Sempruch and Holiday, 2013; IRCJ, 2014). On this matter, the recommendation that best summarizes the efforts of civil society is their expressed concern to “*review the strategy and counter narcotics policies to achieve effective results … also solving the social and health problems at its base. This strategy cannot be addressed from a military perspective, but from a comprehensive policy which prioritizes social investment and prevention*” (OAS, 2011, p. 52).

Furthermore, when looking into the decision-making processes that led to the OAS shift in discourse, embodied in the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*” (2013), we can identify that the representatives of CSOs, heads of delegation, and the Secretary General met to discuss the new direction of the hemispheric anti-drug approach on a day prior to drafting the aforementioned declaration (OAS-GA, 2013). In this regard, the aforementioned recommendations from CSOs are not only consistent with the new discourse of the OAS, but also constitute the specific semantics employed in the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*” (2013). Therefore, it is argued from this perspective that the constant demands of civil society to shift the approach to the war on drugs are directly correlated to the new discourse of the OAS.

### 4.4.4. Testing hypothesis 3.1

For the purpose of this research, the applied hypothesis 3.1: The OAS has shifted its discourse on the ‘war on drugs’ from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because norm entrepreneurs have made use of the OAS as an organizational platform to introduce and promote a new norm that has undergone a socialization process through which a critical mass of state members have adopted the new norm, can be rejected. The reason is the following:

Since the creation of the OAS, a *critical mass* of 21 state members of the OAS signed the “*Inter-American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man*” (1948) (Horwitz, 2011). Through this declaration the members of the OAS affirmed that the protection of human rights will guide law in the Americas, and that an initial system of protection should be increasingly strengthened in the international system. This evidence is necessary to consider hypothesis 3.1, for it qualifies as proof that a *norm cascade.* This norm cascade, however, occurred before the OAS shift in discourse for the war on drugs. So, this evidence does not actually indicate that the norm cascade of human rights directly influenced the OAS shift in discourse.

Nevertheless, in this analysis I found that, in 1959, the OAS created the IACHR in order to promote and protect human rights in the Americas. Since then human rights norms have been included in documents, practices, and bureaucracies of the OAS (Herz, 2011). In turn, this evidence indicates that human rights norm have already reached out the second stage of the norm life cycle.

### 4.4.5. Testing hypothesis 3.2

For the purpose of this research, the applied hypothesis 3.2: *The OAS has shifted its discourse on the ‘war on drugs’ from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because the state members of the OAS have internalized a new norm; and hence the OAS shift in discourse is a manifestation of the new behavior,* can be confirmed as a plausible explanation. The reasons are the following:

In this analysis I found a direct correlation between the demands of the organized international civil society and the political outcomes of the OAS. In specific, by performing an in-depth analysis on events at both the domestic and the international level, I plotted a map of the efforts of the international civil society to promote human rights norms in the context of the war on drugs in the Americas. Additionally, by looking into the institutional dynamics of the OAS and contrasting these with the development of the promotion of human rights norms, I traced back and forth the correlation between the OAS shift in discourse and the promotion of human rights in this context.

Once I identified a strong presence and active advocacy of norm entrepreneurs outside and inside the OAS, I had sufficient motive to consider the general hypothesis. In this regard, I found that human rights norms have been institutionalized in the OAS before the OAS shift in discourse occurred (Horwitz, 2011); which is a necessary condition to consider that human rights norms could be located either at the second or third stage of their cycle.

After performing a detailed analysis on the internal dynamics of the OASI found that a *critical mass* of states has adopted human rights norms as a habit in policy-making within, and outside, the OAS (OAS, 2011b; 2011c; 2013a). Also, I found that compliance to human rights norms by part of the states of the Americas is by no means controversial. For this, I presented evidence indicating that CSOs have been issuing constant recommendation directed to drop the offensive approach for the fight against drugs, and furthermore, that the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*” replicates the exact same semantics in which the recommendations from the CSOs were written (OAS, 2011c). This evidence proves that human rights norms had a direct influence in the OAS shift in discourse. Therefore, this evidence was sufficient to confirm applied hypothesis 3.2, and consider it as a plausible explanation.

### 4.4.6. Testing general hypothesis 3

For the purpose of this thesis, general hypothesis 3: Changes in political outcomes within an international organization are made, because the state members of the international organization adopt a new norm and thus they transition from one norm to another, can be accepted as a plausible explanation. The reason is the following:

By mapping out the correlation between the activities of norm entrepreneurs and the role of the OAS in the war on drugs, I found that the dynamics of the OAS are influenced by norms; in this case human rights (OAS, 2011c; 2013a). Furthermore, in this analysis I thus found that human rights norms became *internalized* long before the breakout of the war on drugs; but more importantly, I found that despite their internalization, human rights norms are still being promoted in the context of the war on drugs (ibid.). This promotion, instigated by the little attention that governments paid to ensure these norms *de facto*, caused an increased activism at the domestic level, which then reached the international level through the OAS (ibid.). This evidence does not only prove that human rights norms are located in the third stage of the norm life cycle, but also proves that the OAS shift in discourse was caused by norm entrepreneurs promoting human rights norms through the OAS. Put differently, this proves that political change at the international level can be explained by a norm located at the third stage of its life cycle.

### 4.4.7. Discussion about social constructivism and the norm life cycle

By tracing the correlation between norms and political change, I found that OAS shift in discourse for the war on drugs was directly influenced by norm entrepreneurs advocating for human rights. Consequently, the constructivist analysis allowed me to prove that the holistic approach of social constructivism provides a remedy for the ill-equipped positivist view of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. For example, neither neorealist theory nor neoliberal institutionalism allow to seriously consider the particularities of the context of the war on drugs, but the constructivist analysis demonstrated that a context-dependent investigation is necessary to understand the cause of the OAS shift in discourse.

Also worth mentioning is that both positivist theories wrongfully assume that the behavior of every individual, and thus of every state, is guided by a logic of consequences. However, by outlining how the advocates of human rights norms influence the dynamics of the OAS, I demonstrated that individuals can behave according to a *logic of appropriateness*, and thereby that morale does play a role in international politics. This notion is largely ignored in both neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist theory.

Furthermore, social constructivism allowed me to include social dynamics at the domestic level to perform a deeper and more complete analysis than both neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism can provide. The positivist theories ignore the social dynamics at the domestic level. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, domestic events, such as such as violations of human rights, do influence the international level. The strength of the theory of the norm life cycle thus lays in the weakness of the neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism.

The broad scope of social constructivismis a viable alternative to overcome the limitations of the mainstream IR approaches. In particular, the life cycle of the norm allowed me to find a plausible explanation for the OAS shift in discourse. However, I found that this theory is not entirely consistent with social constructivist theory. More specifically, I found that this theory neglects an active role of agency in the second and third stage of the norm life cycle, because the authors assume that once the norm cascades, the norm would be inevitably internalized at some point. Therefore, the authors assume that the norm will achieve a ‘taken-for-granted’ character. This is exactly the step that denies the role of agency, because it sees people and states as passive, and merely as recipients of the norm. This assumption does not take into account that individuals or other actors may have different interpretations of the norm in the second or third stage; in these stages the norm is a fixed standard. This goes against social constructivist theory, which assumes that norms are not fixed, but an open-ended process of interaction.

In this research I noticed that human rights norms reached the third stage in the Americas long before the OAS shift in discourse occurred and that the internalization of norms at the international level is not consistent with domestic behavior. I found that non-compliance to human rights norms at the domestic level is correlated to the norm entrepreneurs’ decision to continue advocating for human rights norms even when these norms have already reached the third stage of their cycle. Therefore, I found that the theory of the norm life cycle presents the abovementioned internal inconsistencies.

It can thus be said that by seeking to specify the causal direction and thus achieve a parsimonious explanation, the theory of the norm life cycle fails to address the different interpretations of norms that individuals can have. In this regard, the theory provides a superficial understanding to the study of normative and political change. Hence, the constructivist critique on ‘simplicity’ to the positivist view can also be applied to the norm life cycle theory. To remediate this inconsistency, it is recommended to reformulate the theory to include the domestic level at all stages of the norm life cycle.

# 5. Conclusion

This thesis began by noting that the OAS shifted its discourse for approaching the war on drugs in the Americas from a traditional offensive approach to a more balanced and comprehensive approach. Departing from this observation, in this thesis I investigated the underlying causes that led the OAS to shift its discourse for the war on drugs in the Americas. In order to investigate this, the following research question was formulated:

Why did the Organization of American States shift the discourse on its strategy for fighting the drug wars in the Americas from an offensive to a more balanced approach?

After testing the theories of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism/norm life cycle, in chapter four, I found that the first two theories have a very limited explanatory power. On the other hand, I found that the theory of the norm life cycle provides a plausible answer to the research question. In general, by performing a detailed and in-depth analysis at the domestic and international level, I found that human rights norms have undergone the norm life cycle. In detail, the constructivist analysis allowed me to find that human rights norms have been included in international agreements ever since the OAS member states signed the “*Inter-American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man*” in 1948. This constituted proof that human rights norms underwent the second stage of their life cycle and gave me reason to consider applied hypothesis 3.1. In turn, this led me to perform a deeper investigation about the development of human rights norms in the OAS for what I found that bureaucracies and professions have been created to promote human rights norms through OAS organs, such as the IACHR and the IACourtHR. More importantly, through this investigation I found that human rights norms were internalized at the international level, but also that the entrepreneurs of human rights norms (organized through CSOs) have been actively promoting these norms in the context of the war on drugs through the OAS since 2010. Thereafter, I found that the “*Declaration of Antigua Guatemala*”, which embodies the new discourse of the OAS, contains the exact same semantics and recommendations that were issued by groups from civil society. Thus, I demonstrated that the promotion of human rights norms through the OAS is directly correlated to the OAS shift in discourse.

With basis on the abovementioned evidence, I found that Applied hypothesis 3.2: *The OAS has shifted its discourse on the ‘war on drugs’ from an offensive to a more balanced approach, because the state members of the OAS have internalized a new norm; and hence the OAS shift in discourse is a manifestation of the new behavior*, holds as a plausible answer for the research question. Thus, in this thesis I argue that the OAS shift in discourse for the war on drugs was directly influenced by norm entrepreneurs advocating for human rights norms.

For the purpose of this research, and as a consequence of confirming applied hypothesis 3.1, the general hypothesis 3: Changes in political outcomes within an international organization are made, because the state members of the international organization adopt a new norm and thus they transition from one norm to another, is also confirmed as a plausible answer.

Here is worth noting that general hypothesis 3 was derived in abstract theoretical terms. This is so because the aim of the theory is to explain multiple phenomena in different contexts; or put differently, it aims to be formulated in a way that it holds certain degree of generalizability. For this investigation, this means that the generalizability of the norm life cycle extends to cover the context of the OAS role in the war on drugs, and particularly serves to explain the political outcomes from the OAS. This general hypothesis was validated by this research. However, the degree of explanatory power and generalizability depends on the number of phenomena that it can explain. In this regard, this case study merely represents one contribution to support general hypothesis 3.

Moreover, the theory of the life cycle of the norm allowed me to provide a plausible explanation for the causes of the OAS shift in discourse, and thus I demonstrated that the broad scope of social constructivismis an alternative to overcome the shortcomings of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. However, the norm life cycle is not immune to criticism. By testing the theory of the norm life cycle against empirical evidence, I found that this theory is not entirely consistent with social constructivist theory. In specific, I found that the theory norm life cycle neglects an active role of agency in the second and third stage of the cycle, because the authors assume that once the norm cascades, the norm would be inevitably internalized. I found this to be no less than problematic, because by taking that cognitive step, the authors assume that the norm will achieve a ‘taken-for-granted’ character. This step is exactly the one that denies the role of agency, because it sees people and states as passive recipients of the promoted norm. In detail, the inconsistency is that this assumption does not take into account that individuals or other actors would likely have different interpretations of the norm when this is located at the second or third stage. This goes against social constructivist theory, which assumes that norms are not fixed, but an open-ended process of perception and interaction.

Derived from the previous reasoning, I consider that by seeking specify the causal direction, the theory of the norm life cycle fails to address the dynamics derived from the different interpretations of norms that individuals can have; which may have an impact on the behavior of individuals and of states. From this perspective, it follows that the post-positivist critique regarding the ‘simplicity’ of the positivist view can also be applied to the theory of the norm life cycle. Consequently, it can be said that the theory provides a superficial understanding to the study of normative and political change. In order to remediate the outline inconsistency of this theory, I recommend revising the assumptions to better reformulate the theory by including the dynamics at domestic level at all stages of the norm life cycle.

On a slightly different topic, the biggest challenge faced when conducting this research belongs to the question of validity in qualitative research. The validity of qualitative research is intrinsically related to the objectivity of the data. On this matter, a particular challenge in this research was posed by the process of collecting data. First of all, reliable data is not always readily available, and particularly data about politically sensitive topics such as the war on drugs is not easily attainable. Secondly, most of the current IR literature and research addressing the topic of the war on drugs in the Americas is often based on *aesthetic journalism* that resembles a novel much more than a practice of conveying unaltered information. In turn, this makes it even more difficult to extract reliable information and discern between valid sources. So, once presented with this type of challenge, any researcher will inevitably have to triangulate information from different sources, which is a time consuming task.

Another obstacle faced in this research stems from the methodological approach. In this research, I do acknowledge that the research design of this thesis can be criticized by quantitative researchers for utilizing the method of *process tracing*. In specific, this research can be criticized for not improving the *degrees of freedom* and for leading to an *infinite regress,* namely the limitations of process tracing (refer to Chapter 3)*.* In this regard it is worth mentioning that this thesis is *probabilistic* and not *deterministic* in its nature. So, differently than what quantitative methods are used for, *process tracing* allowed me to place an emphasis on analyzing the details of the context of the war on drugs in the Americas. As can be noticed throughout the social constructivist analysis, fine detailed analyses allows qualitative researchers to consider evidence that would otherwise not be considered by quantitative methods and that ultimately enhances our ‘understanding’ of the subject under investigation.

Furthermore, the design of this research suffers from another limitation. The time frame that was covered in this research is limited to June 2013, when the OAS shifted its discourse for addressing the war on drugs. During their 43rd regular session, in 2013, the OAS General Assembly committed to shift the focus of drug policy, but at this moment this commitment could only be seen as a shift in a discursive way, and not *de facto*. In this regard, a question about the possibility that what we are observing is a political rhetoric is interesting to investigate. However, due to the limitations of the time frame covered by this research, this thesis cannot determine if the OAS shift in discourse is merely a political rhetoric.

In order to determine whether or not the OAs shift in discourse represents a political rhetoric that lacks true meaning, further research should be designed under a larger time frame than the one covered in this thesis. Additionally, it is recommended that the research should be focused on evaluating the degree of correlation between the actions of the states with the activity of the OAS within the context of the war on drugs. Such an evaluation will allow us to determine whether the newly pronounced approach of the OAS toward the war on drugs is actually implemented by the governments of the state members of the OAS. In turn, the results derived from such research will help to either strengthen or reject arguments about normative behavior in international politics.

To increase the validity of this study, further research could also draw on the findings derived from this thesis. Since this research builds on data extracted from secondary sources, further research should include data from primary sources. For instance, the influence of the personnel from the OAS such as the Secretary General is unknown. In this regard, collection of primary data in the form of interviews to personnel of the OAS working in the drug policy area is strongly recommended. This could help to better discern between the hypothesized mechanisms that influenced the OAS shift in discourse with more clarity.

To finalize, readers can extract from this thesis that the OAS is not an all mighty authority in the Americas. However, readers may also find that the OAS does offer channels for civil population to amplify their voice, and more importantly, with channels for civil society to directly influence policy choices at the international level (in the Americas). Put differently, civil society in the Americas cannot account with the OAS to bring a solution to the problems derived from the war on drugs; but it can account with the OAS as an important provider of means and resources destined to enhance cooperation and facilitate coordination at the domestic and international level, which is essential to solve those problems.

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1. The *security dilemma* can be better understood in the sense that the independent action taken by one state to increase its security makes all other states less secure. It follows that if a state builds up its strength in order to make sure that others cannot threaten it, the other states will see that the first one is getting stronger, and will consequently build up their strength seeking to protect themselves against the first (Nye and Welch, 2013, p.20). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This conceptualization of institutions differs from the one adopted by sociologists, which refer to institutions as a set of norms rules and values. For example: religion. Moreover, institutionalists such as Lisa Martin and Robert Keohane often refer to these as International organizations (IOs) (see Keohane and Martin, 1995; Martin, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The ‘*Prisoner’s Dilemma’* is a game in which players have an incentive to defect no matter whether the other player cooperates or defects. The dilemma is that, if both defect, both do worse than if both had cooperated. So, if both players think that in any case they will be better by defecting, then they will do worse; but if they could trust each other not to defect, they would both be much better (Axelrod and Keohane, 1985, p.229; Nye and Welch, 2013, pp.20-21). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This strategy consists of reciprocity; the first state that makes a move will do what the second state last did to the first. If state “A” cooperates in its first move and state “B” defects, then state “A” will later defect in its next move; but if state “B” cooperates, then state “A” will cooperate, and so on (Nye and Welch, 2013, p.22). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Keohane (1998) argues that institutions create the capability for states to cooperate in mutually beneficial ways by reducing the costs of making and enforcing agreements –what economists refer to as *transaction costs* (Keohane, 1998, p.86). See also Keohane, 1984, pp.89-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This criticism is directed towards a radical approach in social constructivism that denies material reality. However, the type of social constructivism used in this thesis is a moderate one. For examples about a radical approach refer to Boghossian’s discussion on Rorty in Boghossian’s book ‘Fear of Knowledge’. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As the American sociologist William Thomas asserted long ago: *“if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”* (Thomas, 1928) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. To be more specific, Barnett (2008) indicates that prominent examples of *social facts* can be portrayed in our agreement on the value that we attach to money, human rights or sovereignty (p.163). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For instance, as both scholars pointed out, the norm that medical personnel and the wounded in war should be treated as noncombatants are indebted to Henry Dunant –the man who helped found the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Other examples of norm emergence can be illustrated in the case of the “Cross-National Acquisition of Woman’s Suffrage” (Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan, 1997); and “Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines” (Price, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Finnemore and Sikkink indicate that in order to challenge the existing norm, activists make use of deliberately inappropriate acts, or activism –such as hunger strikes and protests- as tools for framing an issue (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. As the proponents of the norm life cycle illustrate, in the case of the ban of landmines, the states that did not produced or used land mines would not have been critical for the substantive norm goal; and vice versa, the states that produced and used landmines were granted as “critical states” because of the overall implications of their adherence to the norm. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Here, for instance, Price (1998) recognizes that the decision of South Africa (under Mandela’s administration) to support the treaty that banned the use of landmines was not only influential for other African states, but also globally; consequently, South Africa was seen as a critical state on this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For reference of cases about norms that become institutionalized before reaching a tipping point see Goldstein and Keohane, 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) noticed: we can recognize that the ICRC did not disappear; instead it helped teaching the new rules of war to other states while monitoring compliance. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This criticism represents one of the main divisions between qualitative and quantitative research and it is strictly related to the method for establishing causality in each type of research. Whereas quantitative researchers focus on a large amount of cases (large N analysis) that are collected in a set; qualitative researchers focuses on a single or few cases (small N analysis). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A clear definition of Data Set Observations (DSOs) is put forward by Collier, stating that DSOs are all the scores in a row, in the standard data set of quantitative researchers (see Collier, 2010)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A prominent example of the discussed advantages of process tracing can be found in Campbell (1975). Here, this renowned methodologist recognizes the value of this type of tools by abandoning his criticism about the lack of degrees of freedom, and subsequently arguing in favor of a similar qualitative method. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. In qualitative research, the questions of *validity* relate to whether the findings of the study accurately reflect the real situation in the sense that these are backed-up by empirical evidence (see Creswell and Miller, 2000; Guion, Diehl, and McDonald, 2002, p.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In 1984, the then US ambassador to Colombia, Lewis Tambs, pointed out a direct link between Colombian drug traffickers and communist insurgents, after a busted cocaine cargo revealed that the cocaine production facilities were receiving protection from communist insurgents, thereafter referred to as ‘*narcoguerrillas’* (Morales, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. During the mid and late 80s, Mexico became the source of 70 percent of the marijuana and 25 percent of the heroin imported by the US, and also the territory through which 60 percent of the cocaine entered the latter (Chabat, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The complicity of Mexico’s federal judicial police in the torture and murder of the DEA agent, Enrique Camarena, in 1985, uncovered the intimate relationship between corruption and violence associated with drug trafficking (Treventon, 1988; Esquivel, 2013; 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Other examples are the “Financial Information Exchange Agreement” that was signed in 1994 to combat money laundry from the drug cartels and the PGR-DEA bilateral investigations on drug precursor chemicals. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The economic neoliberal project of NAFTA facilitates the free trade of goods and services between Mexico, US and Canada. Within NAFTA the US is the most favored nation and therefore fuels US latent power. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In 1986 for instance, the OAS General Assembly created CICAD as the OAS specialized body to deal with all aspects of drug trafficking. The OAS has issued declarations and model regulations in the drug policy area ever since (OAS, n,d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Several analysts indicate that President Pastrana was aware that he needed to address the humanitarian crisis in Colombia and therefore that combating drug trafficking was a secondary concern. Furthermore, they note that the Clinton administration reengineered Plan Colombia to focus on combating drug trafficking through supply-side programs and expanded the plan to a wider strategy of strengthening the role of the state in the fight against drugs. Worthy of mentioning is that the Spanish version of the Plan did not exist until several months after the document was issued in English. (see Acevedo, Bewley-Taylor and Youngers, 2008; Bagley, 2000; DeShazo, Primiani and McLean, 2007; Vaicius and Isacson, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In fact, entire sections of the plan were dedicated to place drug production as central to Colombia’s political violence, and the importance given to strengthening the Colombian armed forces and the rule of law were framed as the solution to Colombia’s crisis (Aviles, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The power of the Mexican traffickers increased after the drug-interdiction efforts of the US in the Caribbean during the 1990s. These efforts led the Colombian traffickers to shift their routes to Mexico, which consequently allowed Mexican traffickers to increase their share of the market (Thoumi, 2002). By 1996, the overwhelming power of the Mexican cartels turned Mexico into the world headquarters for the drug trade (Constantine, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Colombia received $37 million of US aid in 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. This second phase was firstly proposed by the Uribe administration in the report “Colombia’s Strategy for Strengthening Democracy and Promoting Social Development” from 2007. This report reviewed previous counterdrug efforts and suggested to divert the investment in ‘Plan Colombia’ (National Department of Planning and Department of Justice and Security, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. In this context, both countries launched the *US/Mexico Bi-National Drug Control Strategy* in 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. A more flexible immigration reform in the US was Mexico’s top issue in the bilateral agenda, but Mexico did not achieve to coerce the hegemon to comply. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Others recipients are Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic (US Department of State, n.d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Less than a quarter of this assistance was destined to judicial reforms, institution building and other areas related to the underlying social causes of the drug problem (ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Here is worth remembering that there are deep-seated tensions between the US and panama about the control over the Panama Canal since 1964. In 1989 for instance, the US invaded Panama with justifications such combating drug trafficking and protecting the integrity of the “Torrijos-Carter Treaty”; a treaty that guaranteed neutrality on the use of the Panama Canal (Herz, 2011). This invasion led to an inexplicable number of casualties of Panamanian citizens, which were *“at least four-and-a-half times higher than military causalities in the enemy, and twelve or thirteen times higher than the casualties suffered by U.S. troops”* (Human Rights Watch, 1991)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In 2008, Colombia’s military trespassed into Ecuador to kill members of the *‘Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia’* (FARC) by bombing a camp. President Correa from Ecuador interpreted the bombing in Ecuadorian soil as a *casus belli*. Consequently, Ecuador broke diplomatic relations with Colombia, but the crisis escalated when Venezuela’s President, Hugo Chavez, supported Ecuador by placing military battalions on its border with Colombia, expelled Colombian diplomats, and restricted imports from Colombia (Herz, 2011; Horwitz, 2011)). Uribe responded by indicating that their governments have been harboring FARC members. Thereafter, the tensions increased when Chavez expressed political recognition to FARC by referring them as freedom fighters (Walser, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Derived from the support of Mexico’s government to the US initiative of the FTAA, Hugo Chavez referred to President Fox as a ”puppet” of US imperialism. The different political stances of both governments thus ignited a diplomatic crisis that led these governments to reduce their diplomatic missions to business attachés. Other leaders who expressed their disapproval of the Mexican posture were Lula Da Silva, from Brazil, and Fernandez de Kirchner, from Argentina (Washington Post, 2005; Wall Street Journal, 2005; Associated Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The first inter-American bureau established by the Pan American Union was the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PAHO), which is the first international health organization in the world and continues functioning nowadays. The inter-American Communication Commission (1923), the inter-American Children’s Institute (1927), and the inter-American Commission for Women (1928) –the world’s first of its kind- are other examples of the diversification in areas of mutual interest, yet the list continues (Herz, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The “Act of Chapultepec” was later made permanent through the “Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance” (IATRA). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A clear example is the insulation of Cuba from the Americas, which followed after the *‘Missile Crisis’* (1962) and was made possible through the OAS (Herz, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The US interventions include the invasion to Granada (1983), and to Panama (1989) (Horwitz, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Here it is important to notice that fighting communism was the primary goal of the US, and that Nicaragua’s internal conflict was ignited by a communist guerrilla. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. North America experienced an increased rate of criminality related to drug consumption, Central America experienced increased levels of violence stemming from quarrels between drug cartels for control over the routes of transport for drugs, and South America experienced numerous problems derived from the production and distribution of illegal drugs (OAS, 2013a). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Since Cuba was still banned from the OAS, this was the only state in the region that held no membership. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Argentina published its first “white book” one year after in 1999. Four years later the committee on hemispheric security approved guidelines for developing national defense policies and doctrine papers designed to assist member states in their preparation of white papers (Horwitz, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Another example can be observed when the US did not granted certification to the Colombian government for three consecutive years, after President Samper was accued of receiving bribes from the drug cartels (Crandall, 2001; Chepesiuck, 1999; Dugas, n.d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. One year later, in 1998, all of the 34 state members of the OAS became members of CICAD (Herz, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. These model regulations served as a basis for the “Interamerican Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions” (1999); a multilateral treaty that was signed by 20 states, from which the majority has ratified it (Arms Control Association [ACA], 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The only Inter-American Peace Force, the IAPF, was created and used in 1965 after the US intervention in the Dominican Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. ERCAIAD has trained about 150,000 enforcement personnel (OAS, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. During this period, Mexico, Colombia and the US increased efforts the militarization of the counter-drug struggle. The implementation of *‘Plan Colombia’* and the *‘Merida Initiative’* are examples of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. At this moment, the escalation of violence derived from drug trafficking became a central topic for the Mexican government. According to estimates from Human Rights Watch (2009), this military offensive led to 40,000 deaths since 2006, thereby deepening Mexico’s socio-political crisis. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Notice that this report does not include a scenario focused on dismantling criminal organization. The only scenario prioritizing law enforcement, the *‘Together’* scenario, acknowledges the failure of hard-line policies and suggests a more tolerant approach to minor criminal behavior (OAS, 2013, pp.30-31). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Adherents of neorealist theory would likely argue that the OAS is comprised of individuals from different nationalities, which serve the interest of the state to which each of them belongs. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Article 6 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter states that “it is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development.” [↑](#footnote-ref-54)