YANKEE GO HOME & THE AMERICAN DREAM?
CONFRONTING THE PUZZLING COEXISTENCE OF
ANTI-AMERICAN ELITE RHETORIC AND PRO-AMERICAN
PUBLIC OPINION IN LATIN AMERICA

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In September, 2013, 84% of Ecuadorian respondents told pollsters they had a positive opinion of the United States. However, in the months before, Ecuador’s popular President, Rafael Correa, had publicly railed against United States hypocrisy, meddling, and respect for human rights on numerous occasions. In one speech, Correa rejected US trade preferences, labeling them as blackmail and offering to use the money Ecuador gained from the preferences to provide human rights training to the US government (Correa 2013a). Correa’s direct criticism of the regional hegemon was not new. The South American leader has often been labeled anti-American by western journalists and pundits (for example, see Gupta 2013). How do we reconcile the coexistence of a Latin American public that largely views the US favorably and regional leaders who don’t skip over a chance to point out any of El Norte’s sins or shortcomings? Past research provides a partial answer. Latin American public opinion toward foreign powers is more consistently influenced by objective experiences with economic exchange than by elite rhetoric (Baker and Cupery 2013). However, what about mass influence on elite rhetoric? Why would a popularly-elected leader give so much attention to a position that his people appear not to share?

This paper addresses this puzzle by describing and explaining Latin American elite political rhetoric towards the United States. Two primary research questions are addressed. First, what does elite rhetoric look like in a region commonly-assumed (e.g. Sweig 2006) to be anti-American? What trends can be identified with regards to favorability, level of attention, and substantive focus? Second, in the absence of widespread mass antipathy toward the US, what explains elite criticisms of the country? Is this criticism still predominantly responding to pressure from the electorate? Does it involve top-down efforts to change the views of voters so that they are more in line with those of the speaker? I argue that while focusing on bottom-up pressures provides little leverage, top-down motivations for elite rhetoric towards the U.S. only make sense if we expand the strategic playing field to include external (i.e. non-domestic) audiences. I examine the validity of this argument with extensive original analysis of one of the region’s
more interesting cases, Ecuador. Then, I explore the generalizability of my findings with more limited analysis of two cases that introduce variation across important independent variables. In doing so, I aim to shed light on the strategic motivations behind Latin American elite portrayals of the region’s most important external power, while also contributing to a better understanding of the complex relationship between elite rhetoric and public opinion.

The paper proceeds as follows. I first provide my explanation for why critical elite rhetoric would coexist with largely favorable public opinion. Second, after explaining my case selection, I introduce the data from my original content analysis for Latin American political elites. Third, I present the results of this content analysis for my in-depth study of Ecuador. I conclude by using the results of more limited analysis of Chile and Argentina to discuss the generalizability of my arguments for the region as-a-whole.

_Latin American elite political rhetoric: a strategic choice_

As highlighted in Figure 1, positive opinions towards the United States are surprisingly prevalent among the Latin American masses. However, one is not hard pressed to find direct criticisms of ‘El Norte’ among the rhetoric of the region’s political elite (Bowman 2006; McPherson 2006). Very visible forms of critical elite rhetoric date back to the Latin American independence period and have been present throughout the past 200 years (Britton 2006, Dorn 2006). Most recently, public criticism of the ‘El Imperio’ has been most definitive for the political leaders of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA) bloc. This bloc – including (but not limited to) Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela – has largely built its identity, and reason for being, around the neo-colonial threats argued to be emanating from US behavior. The elites of other countries, such as Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Uruguay have also joined in the criticisms.

I expect that these and other rhetorical choices are not random noise but, instead, reflect strategic decision-making. Latin American leaders have long used very public forms of rhetoric as an essential tool for connecting with their population. A reliance on public appearances and fiery speeches has helped provoke extensive scholarly attention to ‘populism’ in Latin America (e.g. Roberts 1995, Weyland 2001). Examples abound of leaders who depended on their talent on the stage and behind the microphone to gain power. Five-time Ecuadorian Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra is to have said, “Give me a balcony and I will become president.” Today, many Latin American leaders have evolved with the times and are among their countries’ most prolific users of social media.

In this section, I present an explanation for Latin American elite political rhetoric towards the United States. Here, I define elite political rhetoric as publicly-expressed statements from “Persons who devote themselves
Figure 1. The data comes from the Latin Barometer question asking, “I would like to know your opinion about the following countries and powers. Do you have a very good, good, bad or very bad opinion of the United States?” The values are the average percent of those expressing an opinion that had a ‘very good’ or ‘good’ opinion of the US for the surveys carried out between 2006 and 2015.

Positive opinions as % of all opinions, 2006-2015

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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full time to some aspect of politics or public affairs” (Zaller 1992: 6) and belong to political groupings with consistent representation in nation-wide elected politics. Thus, my analysis is directed at highly-visible statements made by highly-influential political actors.

Political psychologists have long debated why elites say what they do. The factors that explain the issues, and positions elites choose to talk about publicly can be divided into two directionally dependent camps: bottom-up and top-down motivations. Bottom-up motivations describe political rhetoric as responding to the fixed preferences of the electorate as well as the competition between rival groups to capture the support of the electorate and/or special interests (e.g. Meguid 2010). This camp sees rhetoric as largely reactive. Politicians and other political elites say what they think will win them the support necessary to win and maintain political power. This means avoiding radical arguments (Downs 1957)
and giving rhetorical priority to issues that are important to the public (Petrocik 1996) and for which their position is popular (Riker 1993). Since elite actors are using their rhetoric to gain support relative to their political rivals, decisions in this area can be conditioned by the actions of other groups (Damore 2005). Overall, if bottom-up pressures are the primary determinant of political rhetoric, we would expect elites to talk primarily about issues to which the public assigns a high level of importance, and for which a majority of the public shares the position associated with the elite actor.

This conclusion would suggest that political rhetoric about the US, as well as other foreign powers, would be infrequent with critical rhetoric particularly rare. First, all signs suggest that foreign affairs are of low salience to the most Latin Americans. Latinobarómetro’s near-annual survey has consistently included an open-ended question asking participants about their country’s most important problem. The proportion mentioning issues directly linked to foreign policies or actors is consistently well below one percent. Second, as highlighted in Figure 1, the survey data suggests most Latin Americans view the US favorably. Looking again at Latinobarómetro, positive opinions far outweigh negative opinions in nearly all country years in which the survey was conducted.

Focusing on average public opinion can mask salient positions among a small but politically important sector of the society. However, evidence of widespread intense, concentrated anti-US sentiment is also lacking when looking at either public opinion data or political behavior. For example, while negative opinions of the US are uncommon in most country years, strongly negative opinions have been particularly rare. From 2006 – 2015, an average of only 4.9 percent of participants said they had a ‘very bad’ opinion of the US in response to the question used in Figure 1. Further, anti-US protests have also been infrequent and when protests or other relevant political behavior have occurred, it is not clear whether they are due to bottom-up pressures rather than elite leadership. Overall, if rhetorical choices in this area were driven primarily by what political elites expect the public wants to hear, we would expect critical rhetoric to only be common in isolated circumstances. This prediction clashes with the wealth of critical sound bites the region’s leaders have produced about the United States. What else could be driving rhetorical decision-making?

The second camp sees rhetoric as most often being dictated by top-down motivations. In this case, elites use rhetoric as a tool to shape the views of the public so that they are more in line with their own philosophical preferences or long-term strategic goals (e.g. Holian 2004, Johnston et al 1992). Rhetoric can be used to persuade the public to share the speaker’s position on a certain policy or to damage the credibility of rival sources of information, including but not limited to other political elites and the media (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1991, Mcdonald 2010). Political rhetoric may also be used to address the concerns of coalition partners (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). And, in the face of potential divisions within a political
bloc, leaders may take advantage of their increased visibility to set the party agenda on a particular policy position (Whitford and Yates 2009).

In contrast with the literature on bottom-up motivations, the research on top-down motivations for political rhetoric provides a fruitful starting point for a valid explanation of Latin American political rhetoric towards the US. The low public salience of foreign affairs throughout the region suggest a high level of autonomy for elite behavior in these areas since the masses are less likely to punish elites for rhetoric that deviates from their stated preferences, opening the door for persuasion to be pursued. However, I argue that while high levels of autonomy have facilitated persuasion, it is not the domestic masses that are the principle target of this persuasion.

Instead, rhetoric about the US is primarily being targeted at foreign audiences. Governing elites across the region are taking advantage of their autonomy to debate each other over the specific direction of a political end that they all strongly support at a general level: regional integration. The elite-led pursuit of closer ties within the Western Hemisphere has a long history that predates independence. However, the success of most integrationist efforts has been limited by divisions over ideology and the balance of power in the region. During the 21st Century, regional leaders have redoubled their struggle to achieve greater levels of economic and, especially, political integration. However, divisions have once again reared their head. And on this occasion, a key fault line in these divisions has been the extent to which the US should be viewed as a threat rather than a partner or even a model.

Using these competing visions of the US as a dividing line, Latin American elites can be separated into two camps. The alternative bloc – most closely associated with the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador - has pursued regional integration primarily as a mechanism to reduce the influence of hegemonic powers (read, the US) in the region. They view the Organization of American States (OAS) and related institutions as stooges of US interests and as reflecting US norms and values rather than those of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, they have pushed for the creation of alternative regional political institutions, such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), in order to reduce the centrality of the OAS system for regional decision-making and dialogue. They have also combatted the ‘neoliberal’ pro free trade and pro investment principles associated with Washington-based financial institutions and central to US efforts towards deeper integration in the hemisphere. For example, ALBA (note that A = Alternative) was formed in 2004 as an explicit response to US efforts to form a hemispheric free trade bloc, known in the Spanish-speaking world by the acronym ALCA. The late Hugo Chávez worked hard to frame ALBA as the common man’s alternative to imperialist, neocolonialist, hegemonic, and elitist ALCA (“Para Chávez” 2005). The listener never had to work hard to conclude these adjectives were equally aimed at the US.
However, a second group – the traditional bloc - of countries has resisted efforts to replace the OAS system while also cementing the importance of liberal economics for regional integration. Members of this bloc have joined the CELAC and other ‘alternative’ organizations but have also signed free trade agreements with the US and voted against proposals to weaken the OAS or reduce the centrality of the US as host and financier of the OAS system. At the same time, they have also embraced parts of the neoliberal model to forge deeper ties with one another. For example, in 2011, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru formed the Pacific Alliance, a regional block aimed primarily at the liberalization of trade and investments. These countries have not framed their path as an embrace of US power and principles. However, their efforts have been vocally categorized as such by alternative elites. These leaders have portrayed traditional mechanisms as a perpetuation of US veto power and an obstacle in the path of efforts towards a more just, and egalitarian international order (e.g. “Bolivia Acusó” 2013). They see the slow growth of alternative blocs as responding to the persistence of more traditional forms of integration (“Atilio Borón” 2013). Overall, we have clear competition between two different models of integration with the most prominent fault line being the degree to which the US should be embraced as a partner and model.

It is primarily because of this debate – and not because of domestic strategic incentives – that Latin American elites talk more about the US and more critically about the US than would be expected, given the views of the masses. Thus, I expect the elites from the governments of the alternative bloc – here defined to include countries that either a) have joined ALBA or b) have not signed a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with the US – will speak more frequently and less favorably about the US. And, given the external nature of this debate, I expect elite rhetoric about the US will be more frequent when the audience is international, meaning the speech takes place abroad or is given to some sort of visiting foreign group. This positive relationship should be even stronger when the audience is some sort of regional organization or meeting of regional political elites. Furthermore, for governments from the alternative bloc, I expect that rhetoric targeting these external audiences will be less favorable than that targeting domestic audiences. Since the US has most often enjoyed majority mass approval, even in countries with alternative governments, there are fewer incentives to criticize when a speaker is home.

It is important to note that I only expect the above arguments to apply to elites currently in power. I expect elites belonging to the political opposition will speak very little about the US. The primary concern of mainstream opposition members is to gain power, particularly since all Latin American democracies feature a presidential system with a very strong executive. This should make their rhetoric very reactive and tailored to the priorities and the positions of their constituencies.
This framework produces the following hypotheses to be tested in this chapter:

**Hypothesis 1:** Rhetoric will be less favorable and more common when coming from members of governments favoring alternative forms of regional integration.

**Hypothesis 2:** Rhetoric will be more frequent when the audience is external rather than domestic.

**Hypothesis 3:** Rhetoric will be most common when the audience is the meeting of some sort of Latin American regional organization.

**Hypothesis 4:** For members of alternative governments, rhetoric will be less favorable when the audience is external rather than domestic.

**Hypothesis 5:** Elites that belong to or are allied with the ruling party will speak more frequently about the US than will members of the opposition.

**Research Design**

My research design looks to generate a sample that allows for both deep, within-country analysis as well as a broad cross-national testing. The within-country work helps me to explore the complex interactions between different groups at the societal and elite levels while also tackling the challenge of identifying the independent preferences of elite actors. The cross-national analysis helps me best test the validity of my hypotheses concerning government preferences involving regional integration. My options for this cross-national analysis are limited by the absence of adequate existing elite-level and the necessity for gathering and analyzing original data that this entails. With this in mind, I combine an in-depth single case study that relies on original data at the elite and mass levels with more limited analysis of two additional cases that allow me to explore the validity of my cross-national hypotheses.

Ecuador is an ideal selection for the in-depth analysis. First, it is emblematic of the region-wide puzzles discussed above. Despite widespread pro-US sentiments among the Ecuadorian public, little evidence exists of elite praise for the foreign power. Instead, the Ecuadorian president and his government are commonly viewed as anti-American and exploring this case allows me to assess the validity this assumption. Second, my fieldwork in Ecuador, including a nationally-representative survey addressing views of the US, allows me to address the strategic interaction between different elite groups as well as the masses in a way not possible for other cases. Additionally, data on Ecuadorian elite rhetoric is easy to come by. For example, the Ecuadorian government makes all presidential speeches available online and the country’s largest newspaper provides free online access to several years’ worth of opinion pieces. Finally, the case is ideal for mitigating the impact of an alternative explanation for cross-national rhetorical trends not directly addressed in this paper. It could be that a leader’s propensity to criticize the US depends in part on his country’s reliance on the US economically. With this in mind, the nature of Ecuador’s bilateral
ties with the US could facilitate generalizability. Ecuador’s levels of economic exchange with the US are only slightly above the regional average.

Supplementary analysis is completed for elite rhetoric from Chile and Argentina. Chile serves as an example of the block of countries fully-engaged in more traditional forms for regional integration and helps me explore my hypothesis that these countries will speak less often and more favorably about the U.S. than their alternative counterparts. With the most anti-US public in the region, Argentina serves as a difficult test for my argument that rhetoric about the US primarily responds to top-down (rather than bottom-up) motivations. The choice of these particular countries also responds in part to data availability; many governments past and present do not make the speeches of their leaders publicly available.

Data

Ecuador, like any other country, is home to a multitude of local and national political elite and a variety of mediums for communicating with the public. In choosing what rhetoric to analyze, I considered three factors. First, which political actors have the greatest visibility? Second, do the political elite selected represent each of the predominant political groupings in the country? Third, is rhetorical content easily and consistently accessible over the temporal period covered by my analysis?

Using these criteria, I chose the following political actors and mediums for my analysis. Representing the Ecuadorian government is President Rafael Correa. This decision makes sense because of the strong executive powers afforded by the country’s 2007 constitution, and Correa’s unrivaled visibility and influence in political affairs (Zeas 2014). The analysis of the president’s rhetoric was completed on a random selection of 30 percent of the speeches given in each year since Correa’s January, 2007 inauguration. Overall, I analyze 200 speeches occurring over a time period of nine years and eight months. Opposition actors include Guillermo Lasso, the runner-up in the February, 2013 presidential elections, Jaime Nebot, the mayor of the Ecuador’s largest city, Guayaquil, and El Universo, the country’s most widely-read newspaper and Correa’s opponent in several recent court cases. Both Lasso and Nebot lack Correa’s publicly-available on-line speech library so all social media content (Twitter, Facebook, and blogs (Lasso only)) since the accounts were opened was analyzed. I include El Universo alongside Lasso and Nebot because many Ecuadorians see it as the most persistently visible face of a fractured opposition. For El Universo, I randomly-selected ten percent of all editorials accessible online (beginning on January 1, 2009 and running until August 31, 2016) and combined them with an equal number of randomly-selected opinion columns from the same time period.

Analysis for Chile and Argentina was limited to presidential rhetoric. More specifics about data and selection can be found below and in Table 1. All content was coded based on relevance, level of attention
### Table 1: Content Analysis Information

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<th>Actor</th>
<th>Information Type</th>
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<td><strong>ECUADOR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rafael Correa</td>
<td>Official speeches</td>
<td>1/15/2007 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>200 speeches</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Universo</td>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>1/1/2009 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>281 editorials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opinion columns</td>
<td>1/1/2009 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>281 opinion columns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaime Nebot</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>7/24/2011 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>Thousands of tweets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>5/28/2009 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>Thousands of posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guillermo Lasso</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1/31/2013 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>Thousands of tweets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1/14/2010 – 8/31/2016</td>
<td>Thousands of posts</td>
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<td><strong>CHILE</strong></td>
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<td>Michelle Bachelet</td>
<td>Official speeches</td>
<td>3/12/2014–8/31/2016</td>
<td>91 speeches</td>
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<td><strong>ARGENTINA</strong></td>
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given to the US, favorability, topics mentioned, and favorability per topic mentioned. Favorability was coded on a scale of one to five with one indicating content that was explicitly negative, two indicating implicitly negative, three for neutral or equally-balanced, four for implicitly positive, and five for explicitly positive.

**Results**

I first detail the results from Ecuador in two sections. I begin by describing the trends in political rhetoric toward the United States in order to establish who is talking, how frequently they are talking, and what they are talking about. Next, I look specifically at what these results suggest for my hypotheses and my general argument that this rhetoric will respond to top-down motivations and external considerations rather than bottom-up domestic motivations.

*Identifying trends in political rhetoric toward the United States*

The descriptive trends in rhetoric towards the US cast further doubt on claims alleging the importance of elite rhetoric for shaping public opinion. While the public looks north and generally likes what they see, ‘El Norte’ doesn’t enjoy the consistent rhetorical support of any of Ecuador’s primary political actors. My content analysis also reveals that elite criticism of the US is very common, particularly so for President Rafael Correa. The Western media often presents Rafael Correa as an anti-American without offering more than a bit of anecdotal evidence. The following paragraphs present this evidence, revealing Correa, at the very least, to be a frequent critic of the US.

There are three principal descriptive patterns worth mentioning. First, Correa dedicates a substantial portion of his speeches to talking about the United States. The US is mentioned in 53 percent of speeches. Of those speeches, over seven percent of total content is related to the US. However, the amount of attention given to the US is not indicative of a general tendency to speak about international issues and actors. In fact, in the speeches reviewed, President Correa dedicated over 40 times as many words to talking about the US as he did to China, the country’s second largest trading partner, second largest source of FDI, and primary source of public finance. Second, the average favorability of US content is negative. The average relevant segment had a score of 2.35/5, leaning negative although not dramatically so. However, this score is skewed by the fact that Correa’s positive references to the US tend to be much more brief than his criticisms. For example, if we look only at the 30 speeches in which at least seven percent of content addresses the U.S., the average evaluation falls to 1.66/5. This clearly puts him at odds with the general population.

Third, the substantive focus of Correa’s rhetoric about the US diverges sharply from what his voters most commonly associate with ‘El Norte’. The answers to both open and close-ended questions from my original survey
David Cupery reveals that the average Ecuadorian primarily thinks about the US with regards to what it represents economically. They see it as a place of wealth and opportunity that produces innovative products. Correa on the other hand, only mentions the US economy in around ten percent of his speeches and even this content leans negative (2.38/5). References to United States’ products or technology are nearly completely absent from the speeches. The disconnect between the general population and their president even applies to what the public dislikes about the US. In response to this open-ended question in my survey, 27 percent of respondents mentioned racism or discrimination to actual or prospective migrants. However, these issues were never mentioned by Correa in the 200 speeches analyzed.

Instead, Correa’s attention to the US is largely focused on the dangers of US power, US interference in Ecuador and other sovereign nations, and US control of international institutions. His chief narrative – present in over one quarter of his speeches – is that the US acts as it pleases while expecting other countries to follow the rules it has created through its dominance of the international system. The US is portrayed as a rule-breaker that cannot be trusted. An example of this type of argument can be seen in a speech given to the July 30 meeting of the regional bloc ALBA in Guayaquil.

“What they [the United States] require of others, they never practice, but if others did what they do they would call them dictators, criminals, autocrats... Imagine if Cuba had been the one that spied! What would have happened? They would have even invaded Cuba! They would finally have a pretext for invading!” (Correa 2013b)

This paper makes no judgment of the validity of Correa’s arguments. However, it is interesting that he returns to these topics over and over, when his voters don’t seem to share his views and may not even be shaped by them. Are there other strategic incentives at play?

Since Correa is so critical of the US, and the masses so positive, one might assume there is another influential elite source singing frequent praises of Washington, Hollywood, and the like. Instead, the country’s most influential opposition politicians and most widely-read newspaper are either silent or lean negative in their coverage of the United States. Guillermo Lasso, runner-up to Correa in last year’s presidential election, has produced thousands of tweets and Facebook posts over the past few years. However, this ample social media presence only includes a handful of brief references to the US. The same is true for Jaime Nebot, the longtime mayor of Ecuador’s largest city, Guayaquil, despite being a vocal critic of Correa and the mayor of the country’s commercial hub. Overall, this absence of relevant rhetoric from the opposition provides support for hypothesis 5, that rhetoric towards foreign powers will be more frequent for members the government, relative to the opposition.

Might the press provide the counterpoint to Correa’s criticisms of the US? El Universo hasn’t followed the lead of Lasso and Nebot and given the US the silent treatment. The US showed up regularly in editorials
(seven percent) and opinion columns (19 percent). However, the favorability of the coverage was negative more often than positive. The 56 opinion columns with references to the United States had an average favorability score of 2.8/5. The corresponding score for the 21 relevant editorials was 2.75/5. The content for all articles is fairly evenly divided between discussions of the US as an international actor, US ties with Ecuador, and domestic issues.

Explaining trends in political rhetoric toward the United States

There is a clear disconnect between elite rhetoric and mass opinion in Ecuador. However, is it fair to dismiss other domestic motivations as an explanation for rhetoric towards the US? Before addressing my hypotheses I dig deeper into the data to see whether the high frequency and low favorability of Correa’s rhetoric towards the US could respond to pressures from particular mass segments, interest groups, or other domestic elite actors. The evidence – discussed below – suggests that they do not.

First, my survey shows that highly critical mass opinions of the United States are very rare in Ecuador, even among Correa’s partisans. In fact, only 2.5% of those who identify with Correa’s party – Alianza País (AP) express a ‘very negative’ view of the country. It is also unlikely that Correa’s rhetorical tendencies are explained by pressures from opposition politicians, interest groups or coalition partners. First, past research has concluded that competition for issue ownership is particularly unlikely when support for a position – in this case criticism of the United States – is low and the issue is of low salience to the public (Meguid 2010; Damore 2005). Thus, the Ecuadorian political opposition’s silence on a low-salience issue provides little incentive for the government to stake its claim to a position that even its voters do not support. Using the rhetoric as a coalition building tool is also unlikely, given the strong executive powers authorized by the Ecuadorian constitution and the large majority Alianza País has enjoyed in the National Assembly during most of Correa’s presidency (“La Nueva Constitución” 2008, Polga-Hecimovich 2013).

It is also unlikely that Correa is using his rhetoric in response to pressure from within Alianza País. The party was originally formed as a loose coalition of the type of movements – socialists, indigenous organizations, unions, and revolutionaries – that, in many parts of Latin America, have often adopted a critical position toward the United State. However, with time, AP has come to look more and more like a traditionally-structured political party, shedding some of the more radical elements of its initial coalition (Marti i Puig and Bastidas 2012) and emphasizing party discipline by publicly punishing dissent (Gaudichaud 2012). Furthermore, according to the former Director of Research for one of the government ministries involved in political strategy, the remaining divisions within the governing party mainly surround the handing out of jobs within the country’s
Figure 2. Favorability scores range from 1 – explicitly negative – to 5 – explicitly positive. ‘% Relevant’ is the average proportion of speech content directly related to the United States for that audience type. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

![Correa’s US Rhetoric by Audience Type](image)

growing bureaucracy. When they do extend to policy positions, international affairs are of, at most, marginal importance.¹⁵

In the absence of pressures for rhetoric to be reactive to any domestic group, Correa has the freedom to use his rhetoric to pursue his independent preferences, which I expect to include higher levels of regional integration and, specifically, the alternative forms of regional integration prioritized by the ALBA block. Correa’s rhetoric toward the US does in fact reveal a clear substantive prioritization of the issue of regional integration; his criticisms of the US often address Washington’s undue influence over regional and international organizations. For example, Correa has referred to the Organization of American States as the US ‘Ministry for Colonialism’ (Correa 2013d), and often frames the World Bank, IMF, and Inter-American Human Rights system as concerned primarily with protecting US interests (e.g. Correa 2011).

The quantitative importance of this issue – and of the external context overall – is revealed in Figure 2. This figure disaggregates his speeches by audience type and compares the average level of attention given to the US and the average favorability of US content. When Correa is abroad or speaking to an international audience in Ecuador, his attention to the US increases, and the favorability of this content falls. This trend is even sharper when looking just at instances when Correa was addressing regional organizations, such as UNASUR. For these audiences, an average of 15.8 percent of total content is dedicated to the United States compared to only 1.3 percent when Correa’s audience is exclusively Ecuadorian. While it seems reasonable to expect that the international content of a speech would increase with an international audience, increasing by a magnitude of twelve
stands out! Moreover, there is less reason to expect that the favorability of Correa’s rhetoric towards the US should change when the audience is international. However, this is most certainly the case. US content in speeches given to regional organizations has an average favorability score of 1.59/5. When Correa’s audience is exclusively Ecuadorian, average favorability climbs to 2.71/5. The evidence suggests Correa’s anti-US rhetoric is often targeted at non-domestic audiences because of external strategic incentives, including those detailed above. Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 are strongly supported.

Multivariate regressions provide a more robust test for these hypotheses. They also allow me to continue to explore the interaction between elite rhetoric and mass opinions, including whether there is any evidence of bottom-up domestic pressures or efforts to use the US as a scapegoat or distraction. For these regressions the unit of analysis is speech. 200 of Rafael Correa’s speeches – sampling detailed above – are used and the dependent variable is the percentage of the speech that is relevant to the United States. I include two independent variables controlling for the importance of audience type. The first takes the value of one if the audience of the speech is Ecuadorian voters. The second takes a one if Correa’s speech is given at a meeting of a regional organization, such as Mercosur or CELAC. I also control for domestic electoral pressures by using lagged quarterly presidential approval. If Correa’s rhetoric was reacting to domestic sentiments, we would expect his critical rhetoric to become less frequent (in line with public sentiments) when his approval rating fell. However, if he were attempting to use rhetoric proactively for short-term gain (e.g. scapegoating) we would expect a negative relationship between presidential approval and the frequency of this rhetoric. I also include two alternative measures for domestic motivations. I control for proximity to an election by including a count variable for the number of days until the next national election in one model and a dichotomous variable for whether a speech is given within six months of an election in another model. The results of these regressions are shown in Table 2.

The regressions provide strong support for the importance of audience type. In fact, only including whether or not President Correa’s audience is primarily Ecuadorians in Ecuador explains about twenty one percent of the variance for the dependent variable. Whether Correa is speaking to a regional organization also has a significant – and nearly as substantial – impact. As expected, the variables testing for domestic motivations fare poorly in the multivariate regressions. Presidential approval – whether current, lagged, or differenced, monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc- never nears being a significant predictor. The variables measuring proximity to an election also fail to gain significance. Here again, the evidence strongly suggests that Correa’s anti-US rhetoric is not aimed primarily at his largely pro-US voters.
Table 2: Entries are standardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. N = 200

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience is Ecuadorian voters</td>
<td>$-.384^{**} (.066)$</td>
<td>$-.381^{**} (.066)$</td>
<td>$-.38^{**} (.066)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience is a regional organization</td>
<td>.239$^{**} (.066)$</td>
<td>.239$^{**} (.066)$</td>
<td>.235$^{**} (.066)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 6 months of election</td>
<td>$-.059 (.061)$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$-.052 (.062)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of days until next election</td>
<td></td>
<td>.056 (.061)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged presidential approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.046 (.062)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .001 *p < .01

Cross-national comparison

To what extent is this just a story about Ecuador? And, is there support for my cross-national hypotheses? To address these concerns I conducted original content analysis for two additional countries: Chile and Argentina. This analysis is limited to the most visible and theoretically relevant actors in each country: the presidents. For Chile – a country firmly in the traditional camp – analysis was completed for presidents Sebastian Piñeira and Michelle Bachelet from a random-selection of speeches occurring over a period of six and a half years. For Argentina – a country where widespread anti-US mass sentiment provides a difficult test for my top-down explanation for rhetoric – analysis was completed for a random-selection of speeches occurring over eight years.

The results for Chile are supportive. My theory (see hypothesis 1) predicts that, compared to an alternative government like Ecuador, the Chilean government will speak less often and more favorably about the U.S. This is certainly the case. In sharp contrast to the 53% of Correa’s speeches that address the U.S., the percentage is only 7.7% for the Chilean presidential speeches and just 3.3% if we look only at Bachelet. And, while Correa’s content leans sharply negative, both Chilean presidents have more good than bad to say about the US. Overall, their US-relevant content has a favorability score of 3.55/5. Looking specifically at external audiences, there couldn’t be a sharper contrast with the rhetoric coming from Correa. Although the sample includes speeches given to Pacific Alliance, CELAC and OAS institutional meetings, the Chilean presidents do not address...
Figure 3. Favorability scores range from 1 – explicitly negative – to 5 – explicitly positive. ‘% Relevant’ is the average proportion of speech content directly related to the United States for that audience type. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

the U.S. in these or any other speeches given abroad. This runs counter to hypotheses 2 and 3, which predict greater attention to the US for external audiences. However, it also illustrates how it is the alternative – rather than traditional – governments who have the incentive to rhetorically engage the U.S. at the regional level. They are the side looking to change the behavior of their neighbors in order to combat a status quo where the US serves as a partner or model for regional integration.\(^{17}\)

Does Argentina’s lower mass favorability towards the US mean that any critical elite rhetoric is best explained by bottom-up pressures rather than my top-down, external explanation? This appears unlikely. Similarly to Ecuador under Correa, the Argentine government under both Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (CFK) and her predecessor (and late husband), Nestor Kirchner, was a vocal supporter of the creation of a new group of regional organizations excluding US representation and, therefore, influence. While not a member of ALBA, Argentina fits squarely in the alternative camp. And, as highlighted in Figure 4, it is this push for regional integration and not any domestic antipathy towards the U.S. that looks to be driving presidential rhetoric. US-relevant speech content is fifteen times more likely when the audience is a regional organization rather than the Argentine public. The favorability of U.S. content is also significantly lower – 1.65/5 rather than 2.51/5 – when CFK is addressing.

Looking past the numbers and at the content of the speech, we can see that CFK, like Correa, is very critical of a US-led institutional order. She justifies the need for new financial institutions by referring to geopolitics and the need for multipolar world in the face of US attempts at domination
Figure 4. Favorability scores range from 1 – explicitly negative – to 5 – explicitly positive. ‘% Relevant’ is the average proportion of speech content directly related to the United States for that audience type. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

(Fernández de Kirchner 2014). Later, she frames US efforts to create a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas as a project of subordination that was only overcome by the collective efforts of a new group of Latin American leaders (Fernández de Kirchner 2015). My analysis of the Argentine case is not extensive enough to rule out that a portion of critical elite rhetoric responds to mass or other forms of bottom-up pressures. However, it certainly does suggest that the most visible forms of this rhetoric respond in large part to external incentives and, specifically, the government’s push for the creation of an alternative regional institutional framework.

Conclusion

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa’s frequent criticisms of the US contrast sharply with the views expressed by his voters. The substantive focus of his US rhetoric also differs sharply from what the public most commonly associates with the northern giant. These points of divergence make his rhetoric appear foolish from a strategic standpoint. However, quantitative and qualitative analysis of Correa’s rhetoric highlights that strategic motivations for anti-US rhetoric can exist even when its tone and content contrast with public opinion. External audiences can matter. In Correa’s case, it appears his US bashing is motivated in part by a desire to move the region’s dynamic yet fragmented processes of integration away from seeing the US as a partner and/or model. My theoretical framework also works well for explaining the cases of Chile and Argentina. For Chile, absent efforts to create a new framework for regional integration, what little the country’s presidents say about the US tends to be favorable. And, for Argentina, despite hosting the region’s most anti-US electorate, rhetorical patterns still look to be driven the government’s efforts to
convince its neighbors of the need for alternative regional institutions. However, a more definitive answer about the generalizability of my findings would require both deeper and broader cross-national analysis, something that is difficult because of limited data availability.

Past research has highlighted that the common portrayal of Latin America as a bastion of anti-Americanism is misplaced (Baker and Cuperly 2013). Most Latin Americans see more to like than dislike when they look north and pay little heed to any criticisms of ‘El Norte’ coming from the region’s presidents or intellectuals. This paper provides further evidence for the lack of a strong relationship between views on the street and the declarations of the elite when it comes to the US. It highlights that rather than scapegoating or stoking mass fury, elite criticisms respond primarily to efforts dating back to Simon Bolivar to create closer ties between the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to limit the power and influence of ‘Los Yanquis’. At the end of the day, I expect it is these efforts, rather than those views on the street that will have the most impact on the interests of Washington and Wall Street and on overall US-Latin American relations.

Endnotes
1 Data is from the author’s original survey, carried out by Opinión Pública Ecuador from September 16- September 19, 2013. 84 percent of those giving an answer had a ‘good’ or ‘very good’ opinion of the United States. For all respondents – including those not providing an answer – the proportion is 80 percent. The survey’s sample is 1,200 and is representative of the 97 percent of the population that does not live in the Amazon Basis provinces or the Galapagos Islands and has a margin of error of 2.39 percent.
2 All Latin Barometer data and codebooks can be accessed at: http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp
3 Some of the issues most frequently mentioned – e.g. unemployment and insecurity – could certainly have at least an indirect relationship with the behavior of the United States. My nationally representative Ecuadorian survey asked, “What area should receive more attention from the Ecuadorian National Government, domestic issues or international relations?” A follow-up question asked respondents whether the area indicated should receive “a lot more attention or just a little more”. For this question, over 80% of those providing an answer chose domestic issues, with 62% saying that domestic issues should receive a lot more attention than international relations.
4 For example, those who have taken the step to join a political party often hold more ideological or radical views, even compared to the party leadership (May 1973). Moreover, these individuals may organize to engage in visible forms of non-electoral political participation, mechanisms found to be important for explaining elite political behavior under certain contexts (Cleary 2007).
For the US, as we would expect, this percentage goes up significantly following the US invasion of Iraq but still only peaks at 9.4 percent for the region as-a-whole. There is some variation by country. However, from 1995-2015, the percent of ‘very bad’ opinions of the US only tops ten percent in under ten percent of country years.

One can certainly find examples of anti-U.S. protest. However, three caveats apply. First, this protest has been sporadic and limited to a few countries (e.g. Argentina and Bolivia). Second, protest against the US, has often been wrapped up as part of a larger protest in defense of an incumbent (e.g. Hugo Chávez or Evo Morales) or against a certain set of polices (e.g. structural adjustment or free trade). Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these examples of mass political behavior are mass driven rather than elite led (Mcpherson 2008).

These pressures may still play a role for particular elite actors in particular contexts. First, to state the obvious, bottom-up pressures will be more likely in countries and time periods where negative opinions of the U.S. are more widespread. Second, widespread negative opinions are more likely to imply bottom-up pressure for critical rhetoric for leftist political actors as there is a fairly strong positive correlation between leftist self-identification and a negative opinion of the US at the mass level.

Overall, the sample includes speeches from 1/15/2007 to 8/31/2016. Correa’s official presidential speeches can be found at: http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/discursos/

Lasso is on Twitter as @LassoGuillermo. Nebot’s Twitter name is @jaimenebotsaadi. Lasso’s blog can be found at: http://guillermolasso.ec/blog

El Universo’s editorials and opinion columns can be found at: http://www.eluniverso.com/opinion

Analysis of former Chilean President Sebastian Piñera’s speeches were limited to the 40 selected speeches he made available on his personal website at: http://www.sebastianpinera.cl/presidente/discursos-escogidos/discursos-destacados. Only speeches from current (and former) president, Michelle Bachelet’s second term are available online at: https://prensa.presidencia.cl/discursos.aspx. Of the 905 available from 3/12/2014 to 8/31/2016, 10% were randomly selected and
analyzed. Finally, for Argentina, former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has made many of her speeches available at: http://www.cfkargentina.com/category/cfk/discursos/. However, all but 46 of these occurred during the last 3 years (2013-2015) of her eight year presidency. To increase the weight of the more limited number of speeches from her first five years (starting 12/10/2007), half of these and only 10% of the remainder were randomly selected and analyzed.

Each speech, article, post, and tweet was first reviewed in its entirety to identify whether any relevant content was present. This was done for the majority of content by searching for different pre-determined ‘signaling words’. These are words that, in most contexts, would signal to the average member of the public that the speaker was referring to the United States. When relevant content had been identified the next step was to determine the start and end points of this content in order to delineate a relevant segment. Start point was the beginning of the first sentence containing either the signaling word or content necessary to understand the reference to the U.S. The end point was reached when the speaker had finished the last sentence with directly-relevant content or any contextual information that was necessary for understanding the direct references to the country. This contextual information was only included if it immediately followed the directly-relevant content. If more than a sentence had occurred before the speaker returned to relevant content, that subsequent content was coded as a separate observation. When multiple relevant segments were present in a speech or article, the content was also aggregated so that data could be analyzed at the speech or article level. In these cases, the favorability of each segment was weighted by its relative length. All rhetoric analyzed was originally produced in Spanish. All quotes reproduced in this chapter were translated by the author.

This interview was conducted by the author on December 12, 2013. The name of the interviewee has been withheld, as requested.

Presidential approval data come from Ryan E. Carlin and Cecilia Martinez-Gallardo. 2016. Executive Approval Database. Data points were drawn from a total of five different sources. Composite values were calculated using WCalc. For more information on how quarterly values were calculated see: Carlin, Love, and Martinez-Gallardo (N.D.)

The high relevance score for speeches given to international audiences in Chile is due entirely to one speech given by President Piñeira during Barack and Mishelle Obama’s 2011 visit to Chile.

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