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An examination of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America as a form of counter-hegemonic regionalism

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UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
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**An examination of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples
of Our America as a form of counter-hegemonic
regionalism**

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A thesis submission to the University of Limerick for the degree of Doctor of
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Abstract

This thesis utilises a neo-Gramscian theoretical approach to test its hypothesis and determine whether ALBA can be seen as counter-hegemonic regional movement engaged in a war of position against US hegemony and by extension neoliberalism. Critical IPE, particularly Robert Cox's critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change forms the basis of this works theoretical approach or analysis. With the utilization of this approach, this thesis will provide a historical account and critically access the various factors, which have led to the creation of ALBA, its early developments, and its current form. This approach provides a very clear and coherent framework for understanding the various ways in which contestation or resistance against the common sense can occur. Therefore, within the parameters of this neo-Gramscian/Coxian framework, ALBA can be critically assessed, to determine if it can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic regional movement, that is challenging US hegemony and by extension the neoliberal world order.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any other award at this university or at any other university

Signature: _____

Acknowledgements

For my parents Fran and Paddy. I hope I have made you proud.

Para mis padres, espero haberte hecho sentir orgulloso

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List of Abbreviations

ALBA: Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America

AU: The African Union

ASEAN: The Association of South East-Asian Nations

CARIFTA: Caribbean Free Trade Agreement

Comecon: The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance

EC: European Community

EEC: European Economic Community

EU: the European Union

FTAA: Free Trade Area of the Americas

GNCs: Grand-National Companies

GNEs: Grand-National Enterprises

GNPs: Grand-National Projects

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IPE: International Political Economy

ISI: Import-Substitution Industrialization

LAFTA: Latin American Free Trade Association

MERCOSUR: The Common Market of the South

MNCs: Multi-National Corporations

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Association

NRFA: New Regional Financial Architecture

OAS: Organisation of American States

SAP: Structural Adjustment Programme

SUCRE: Unified System for Regional Compensation

TNCs: Trans-National Companies

UNASUR: Union of South American Nations

WB: World Bank

WTO: World Trade Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Hypothesis and research aims

Resistance movements and counter-hegemonic responses to neoliberalism within academic literature have been notably plentiful, particularly throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Coinciding with the launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the Zapatistas launched their uprising. This kind of response for academics such as Worth and Kuhling (2004),

Demonstrated that particular forms of resistance (counter-hegemonic movements) can both address international and local political economy and can directly challenge the supranational structures of neoliberal globalisation through the mobilisation of international blocs around issues of local land rights (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 pp.35-36).

Additionally, academics have used the Seattle protests in 1999 to provide an account of a counter-hegemonic movement that successfully impeded free trade negotiations being held by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle. Within a neo-Gramscian theoretical framework, both forms of resistance represent a counter-hegemonic response against the neoliberal historic bloc, which attempted to destabilise its legitimacy and consent. A counter-hegemonic response,

Begins with a critique of common sense but seeks to transcend rather than re-embed it. This is a task of critical education that seeks to move beyond common sense ideological understandings

to reconstruct a collective will: an ideological worldview conscious of humanities self-constructive powers (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 p.35).

This reconstruction of the collective will can lead to the creation of a common ground on which a counter-hegemonic bloc can be established. While a counter-hegemonic historic bloc has not yet been established, there are many examples, like the aforementioned, that represent counter-hegemonic movements, which are engaged in a war of position against neoliberalism.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine one such movement, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas or ALBA. ALBA was specifically chosen because it is considered by many, and indeed by itself, as the clearest and most prominent example of a counter-hegemonic movement. Therefore, the main hypothesis that this research seeks to test is that ALBA is a form of counter-hegemonic resistance, which is engaged in a war of position against US hegemony and by extension neoliberalism. This research aims to determine the extent that ALBA can be viewed in this light. As ALBA is a regional project and the first of its kind, this research will also investigate how ALBA's self-professed counter-hegemony has affected or influenced the wider dynamics of regionalism with Latin American. Considering the alternative and anti-US/neoliberal structure that ALBA was built on, this thesis also sets out to determine whether ALBA can be seen as a 'post-hegemonic' regionalism movement. Post-hegemonic regionalism refers to a type of regionalism, which has moved beyond the hegemonic model (open regionalism) of regional integration and cooperation, replacing it with a plurality of models that coexist and overlap.

The research also aims to assess ALBA's progression over its fifteen-year lifespan and evaluate how well ALBA's stated goals and objectives have translated into tangible and measurable progress and results, as well as its ability to garner support with the region. Finally, this thesis will carry out an in-depth investigation into the political and economic upheavals in Venezuela since 2017 and critically assess the effect it has had on ALBA.

This research will use a neo-Gramscian theoretical approach to test its hypothesis to determine whether ALBA can be seen as a counter-hegemonic regional movement engaged in a war of position against US hegemony and by extension neoliberalism. Critical IPE, particularly Robert Cox's critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change forms the basis of this work's theoretical approach or analysis. With the utilization of this approach, this thesis will provide a historical account and critically assess the various factors, which have led to the creation of ALBA, its early developments, and its current form. This approach provides a very clear and coherent framework for understanding the various ways in which contestation or resistance against the common sense can occur. Therefore, within the parameters of this neo-Gramscian/Coxian framework, ALBA can be critically assessed, to determine if it can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic regional movement, that is challenging US hegemony and by extension the neoliberal world order.

1.2 Research methodology

Academic research carried out on ALBA has been notably sparse. This shortfall has meant that the available literature on the Alliance is both dated and to a large extent out of touch. As a result, this examination has been conducted in order to produce an up-to-date research paper that sheds light on ALBA's evolution and current situation. Much of the current literature available on ALBA is comprised of government sanctioned ALBA declarations and official progress reports; therefore, a certain bias exists within the available literature. Guided by the desire to produce an up-to-date and accurate account of ALBA's challenges, progression, and likely future, keeping in line with this thesis's overall objective: to determine the extent that ALBA can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic regional movement, this work has used primary research, in the form of semi-structured interviews with various political elites that work within ALBA, as its principal method of assessment. Political elites were specifically chosen because they could offer a unique perspective as to how the regional movement operates but also because they could give an insight into the evolution of the movement, from its beginning to its current form. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of analysis because this research wanted to gain an understanding of ALBA through the political elites own experiences, thus it offers a complete new avenue to explore the inner workings of the regional movement, as well as gaining an understanding of where each participant felt the movement was going. This aspect can be considered extremely important, given the current situation in Venezuela but also if one considers the crisis of the left in Latin America presently. Through the utilization of the material gathered from the interviews, the official ALBA

documents available along with the academic literature carried out on the regional project, the overall aim of this work is to provide an accurate and up-to-date account of ALBA, its progression and challenges.

As stated above, the use of semi-structured interviews with ALBA political elites forms the methodological parameters for this study. The objective of semi-structured interviews is to grasp the interviewee's point of view and allow him or her to talk freely to offer a personal interpretation of a certain event (Marsh and Stoker, 1995, p. 138). Considering that in official terms, ALBA sees itself as a counter-hegemonic response to US hegemony, gaining valuable insight into the personal interpretation of what this means, in addition to the ways in which this has been carried out as well as ALBA's potential future is paramount for understanding the reality of ALBA, particularly given the current economic and political crisis of Venezuela. Using semi-structured interviews as the principal method of analysis provides an important avenue for understanding ALBA, its progression and its problems from an internal perspective. By conducting interviews in this way, this thesis gains an insight into the internal workings of the regional movement, allowing it to determine the extent of the gap between the participating political elites' aspirations for the regional project and the reality of where the movement actually is.

The field research undertaken took place in both London, at the Venezuelan embassy, and in Caracas with various political elites working within the ALBA. It is important to note, that field research took place in 2017 at the beginning of the current Venezuelan crisis. In 2017 the crisis had not yet reached a level of abysmal deterioration that it is currently experiencing. Political elite participants ranged from ALBA's executive secretariat, the head of its social movements, the

Venezuelan ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda who was the former head of Petro Caribe, the head of the political division in the Venezuela embassy in London, as well as the head of the economic division in the Venezuelan embassy in London, who was a former advisor with the SUCRE implementation. All participants were specifically chosen as they could offer a detailed insight into the internal workings of the project, its progression, and its problems. By structuring the interviews around political elites, the research has attempted to understand ALBA from an internal position. More specifically, this research wanted to gain an understanding of ALBA, its positive attributes as well as its challenges, from a specific set of actors that were instrumental in the development of the project, therefore it is attempting to understand what specifically are the challenges ALBA now faces and the root causes of said challenges.

However, although this method for investigation is invaluable for understanding ALBA, it is important to note that because the various political elites are closely associated with specific governments involved in ALBA, namely Venezuela, the findings from the interviews very often represent an official perspective or outlook of the organisation. Thus, a semi-structured interview method was favoured, as the participants were more likely to give their own unofficial opinion on the regional project. With that being said, the use of academic literature in combination with semi-structured interviews, have been used to paint a clearer picture of the reality of ALBA, its internal workings, progression, and challenges.

1.3 Chapter synopsis

Chapter two of this dissertation will provide a literature review that will predominately focus on assessing the work of key academics within the field of the

critical international political economy. The central objective of this chapter is to assess the key features of the neo-Gramscian/Coxian critical theory approach to the study of the contemporary international political economy. By drawing on the work of Gramsci, Gill, and Cox, in particular, this chapter aims to provide a strong theoretical basis, which will allow for an in-depth empirical and critical analysis that aims to determine the extent that ALBA can be considered a counter-hegemonic regional movement.

Chapter three will provide a second literature review, which aims to facilitate understanding the current global trend towards regionalism. The chapter will mainly focus on literature that uses Robert Cox's notion of world order to explain the contemporary rise of regionalism. It will then go on to use relevant academic literature that specifically looks at the relationship between regionalism and neoliberalism in order to determine how the rise of neoliberalism has affected and shaped regionalism in the contemporary era. From here, academic literature that focuses on the evolution of Latin American regionalism and its relationship with neoliberalism will be presented. Lastly, this chapter will look at the available academic literature on the rise of post-hegemonic regionalism in Latin America and will look at the contributing factors that have led to this development. It will then look at the various forms of contestation to neoliberalism that has emerge in Latin America within the post-hegemonic regional order setting. It will specifically focus on the creation of the ALBA in 2004 and look at the various academic literatures that views ALBA as a form of contestation.

Chapter four is an empirical chapter on ALBA. It will firstly look at the rise of the contemporary left in Latin America; specifically, it will look at the emergence of leftist governments in the region and will look at how and why they rose to power.

Following on from this, the chapter will look specifically at Chavez and the idea of 21st-century socialism and investigate how this idea gained momentum with leftist governments across the regional. It will then move on to discuss the role of the left in reshaping Latin American regionalism and look at specific regional integration projects. From here, the chapter will turn its attention to the creation of the Bolivarian historic bloc and the establishment of a post-neoliberal regionalism movement with the creation of ALBA. It will look at the social forces that led to its creation and the history of the regional project. Finally, it will look at the 'pink tide' in the post-Chávez era, paying special attention to the recent electoral losses of two prominent leftist governments in the region and the possible effect a decline of the left will have on leftist inspired regional integration projects such as ALBA.

Chapter five will specifically look at the structure of ALBA and will historically track its evolution from its creation to its present form. It will look at the origins of ALBA, specifically focusing on the factors leading to its creation, namely the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, and the Joint Declaration signed by Cuba and Venezuela in 2004. It will then look at the expansion of ALBA with the incorporation of the Peoples Trade Treaty (TCP) in 2006 and outline the goals of ALBA. From here, this research will look at the organizational structure of ALBA. It will look at the various Councils that make up the alliance, whose functions consist of planning, coordinating and advises on various topics that determine the function of ALBA. This work will specifically look at the Presidential Council, the Political Council, the Economic Council, the Social Council and finally the Social Movements Council. The next part of the chapter will give an account of the various ALBA projects. It will look specifically at areas in relation to telecommunications, banking and finance, oil and social programmes. This will be done in order to give an in-

depth account of how successful ALBA programmes have been. Finally, this chapter will consider whether ALBA can be seen as a complete entity.

Chapter six will begin with a section on methodology. It will give a detailed account of why and how semi-structured interviews were used with the research. The overall objective of this research's chosen methodology is to gain valuable insight into the internal workings of the regional movement, from various ALBA political elites' perspectives. This will aid in this research's objectives to determine the extent of the gap between the participating political elites' aspirations for the regional project and the reality of where the movement actually is. Chapter six will also determine the extent that Venezuelan foreign policy has influenced ALBA. It specifically will determine how the deterioration of ALBA's primary financial backer has affected the project's ability to attract members, in light of the current economic and political upheavals that the Maduro government is presently experiencing. Finally, chapter six will investigate the level of commitment from Caribbean member states to ALBA's and determine whether their commitment goes beyond financial gain brought about by membership of Petrocaribe and Petro ALBA. It will determine the extent that ideological alignment has played in Caribbean membership.

Chapter Seven will situate ALBA understanding its demise and potential future within a neo-Gramscian framework. The chapter's overall purpose is to determine the extent that ALBA can be viewed as a form of resistance that is engaged in a war of position against open regionalism, US hegemony and, by extension, neoliberalism. It will then investigate ALBA as a form of counter-hegemony, paying specific attention to its effectiveness and potentialities. From here, chapter seven will look at ALBA's specific form of regionalism and investigate the effectiveness of

its internal structure and commitments from its member states. It will then look at Venezuela's central role to ALBA and investigate the extent that their ALBA's future potentialities are dependent on Venezuela's ability to financially back the regional movement. Lastly ALBA's specific brand of 'post-neoliberal' regionalism will be explored. It will investigate whether the Alliance should, in fact, be categorized as such and determine ALBA's alternative regional structure, which claims to confront and contest various neoliberal processes across various domain, can in fact undermine or even potentially replace open regionalism.

Chapter eight of this thesis will highlight the core points of synthesis and discuss research limitations in addition to putting forward its recommended avenues for further research.

Chapter 2: Cox, Gramsci and understanding counter-hegemony

2.1 Introduction

The central objective of this chapter is to assess the key features of the neo-Gramscian/Coxian critical theory approach to the study of the contemporary international political economy. By drawing on the work of Gramsci, Gill and, Cox, in particular, this chapter aims to provide a strong theoretical basis, which will allow for an in-depth empirical and critical analysis. An analysis that aims to determine the extent that ALBA can be considered a counter-hegemonic regional movement. The following sections will lay the theoretical foundations for this project. This will be done to highlight the usefulness of using a neo-Gramscian approach for this study. Although critics of the approach have and continue to question the legitimacy of transposing Gramsci's political thought to the international (Femia, 2005), (Germain and Kenny, 1998), while others have been critical of the method of its application (Robinson, 2005), (Worth, 2008), (Ayers, 2013). Scholars such as Gill (1989) and Cox (1981) have utilised the approach in order to show how consent and power are created and sustained in international politics. At the centre of this approach lies the influential work of Robert Cox (1981), specifically his work on world order and the role of hegemony in international politics, which will now be discussed in detail in order to prove the validity of the neo-Gramscian approach.

2.2 World Order

The notion of world order within international politics is generally viewed as the configuration of power and order. Within the realist tradition of International

Relations (IR), the international system is characterized by its anarchic nature thus; states are the main power players in international politics. The central belief of realism holds that international politics embodies a struggle for power between states, where each is attempting to maximize their national interests, as a result, states are self-help entities that are power-seeking by nature. Accordingly, order within the inter-state system is maintained through the use of the balance of power mechanism, whereby a state acts to prevent any one state from dominating.

By contrast, one of the most unique and influential approaches to world order has been offered by the work of Robert Cox. Critical of realist approaches to understanding international politics, Cox's interpretive approach to world order provides a general framework for understanding the nature of world orders from a historical, philosophical, and geopolitical perspective, which has illuminated how politics can never be separated from economics. In essence, his concept allows for an understanding of how the nature of a specific world order has historically been determined by a 'configuration of forces'. Beginning with a series of early articles Cox investigated questions of world order and political economy from a historical materialist perspective. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Sorel, Vico, Collingwood, Braudel and most importantly Gramsci, provided Cox with a strong historical foundation that paved the way for his exploration into and his understanding of the nature of world orders.

For Cox (1981), the notion of world order represents more than just a "world system' as it is more indicative of a structure having only a certain duration in time and avoiding the equilibrium connotations of 'system'" (Cox, 1981 p.141).

For Cox, the notion of world order refers to “the particular configurations of forces which successfully define the problematic of war and peace for the ensemble of states” (Cox, 1995 p.100). As Worth (2011) explains,

The idea of *World Order* is one in which embedded norms and laws are transposed onto the international stage...a *World Order* represents a specific era, or if you like a historic bloc, that was determined through social forces, organised through a combination of production, ideology and institutionalism (Worth, 2011 p.376).

Cox’s use of world order allows him to bridge the national with the international by linking material capabilities, ideas, and institutions. He suggests that a prevailing order is marked by this ‘configuration of forces’. He explains that these forces reciprocally interact to establish a historical structure. Here, ideas should be understood as shared beliefs or as the collective image of social order. Material capabilities understood as natural resources as well as production, technological and organisational capabilities. Lastly, institutions should be understood as a force, which is utilised or acts as a means to stabilize and maintain a particular order. Cox (1995) explains,

I deliberately avoid using a term like ‘international relations’ since it embodies certain assumptions about global power relations that need to be questioned. “International relations” implies the Westphalian state system as its basic framework, and this may no longer be an entirely adequate basis since there are forms of power other than state power that enter into global relations. “World order” is neutral as regards the nature of the entities that constitute power; it designates

an historically specific configuration of power of whatever kind (Cox, 1995 p. 494).

IR theorists such as Waltz (1964), asserts that international order can only exist provided it rests on one powerful state which dominates all other states through its dominance in military and economic capabilities. By contrast, Cox's approach emphasises the significance of the internal characteristics of states that informs states behaviour within the international. He suggests that not only macro forces arising from the global order influence state behaviour, but also, pressure from civil society influence state behaviour. For Cox, International Relations is a "misleading way of describing the object of our search for knowledge" (Cox in Jones, 2001 p. 45). In an attempt to situate his approach outside of the realm of interstate relations, he places an emphasis on world order where states make up only a single element. By viewing the discipline of IR in terms of global order, Cox escapes the state-centrism of the discipline (Budd, 2013). For Cox, the notion of world order represents more than just an 'inter-state system as it is relevant to all historical periods', in this way an inter-state system should be understood as only one historical form of world order. Cox's central criticism of Waltz's neorealism is focused on the question of theory. From Cox's perspective "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox, 1981 p. 128), therefore, theory can never be objective. For Cox, Waltz's neorealism has provided a theory that serves to justify the behaviour of great powers endeavouring to maintain a bipolar system. Cox (1995) notes, "there is an unmistakable Panglossian quality to a theory published in the late 1970s which concludes that a bipolar system is the best of all possible worlds. The historical moment has left its indelible mark on this purportedly universalistic science" (Cox, 1995 p.57)

Cox also criticizes Waltz's theory for abandoning the traditional realist diverse combination of positive and interpretive methodologies in exchange for a solely positivist problem-solving theory. A problem-solving approach, according to Cox, takes the world as it is, it sees it as a fixed order, and does not differentiate between present and past systems. In this sense, Cox argues that the approach is ahistorical because it sees the political and social order of the present system as being a mirror image of the past and future. He argues that this type of theory is unable to account for the possibility of historical change or structural transformation, as the theory is founded on a statist ideological obligation which serves to assert and maintain the US's position in a bipolar system (Cox, 1995).

The following section will assess the validity of the heterodox theoretical approach to IPE, looking specifically at the post-positivist turn, critical theory and critical IPE.

2.3 Post-positivism, critical theory and critical IPE approach

In order to test this work's hypothesis and determine if ALBA can be seen as a counter-hegemonic regional movement that is engaged in a war of position against US hegemony and by extension neoliberalism, this work will apply a neo-Gramscian/critical theory framework for its critical analysis. Before justifying why this theoretical approach is a useful method of explanation and how it fits with the chosen methodology employed in this thesis, it is firstly necessary to understand its emergence within the field of international political economy and how this emergence has influenced and led to development of heterodox theoretical approaches geared at explaining changes within the political and economic landscape.

Situated within the broad theoretical discipline of IR, International Political Economy (IPE) began to emerge as a sub-field of International Relations in the late 1960s. It has been suggested that IPE arose as a reaction to the significant changes of the political and economic landscape following the disintegration of the post-World War II economic order, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the resulting floating of major currencies, the oil crisis and the ensuing debt crisis affecting a number of developing countries. As suggested by Strange (1998) IPE

Concerns the social, political, and economic arrangements affecting the global systems of production, exchange and distribution and the mix of values reflected therein. Those arrangements are not divinely ordained, nor are they the fortuitous outcome of blind chance. Rather they are the result of human decisions taken in the context of manmade institutions and sets of self-set rules and customs (Strange, 1998 p. 18).

Since the late 1980s, IPE has generally proceeded to develop along very diverse and separate paths or 'cultures'. This split can be mainly attributed to discontent with mainstream theorizing within IPE. As Staniland (1985) notes, there was "an increasing openness to Marxist and other heterodox ideas", demonstrated by the appearance of the 'critical school', in response to the failure of orthodox IPE to wholly explain why changes occur (Staniland, 1985).

In response, IPE diverged into two schools of scholarly enquiry. The first school tends to focus on empirical research questions, in an attempt to comprehend the underlying dynamics of actors within the international system and as for the second, the primary focus lies on an "ontological enquiry into its historical evolution" (Shields et al., 2011).

This division, over time, has extended into the 'British' post-positivist school and the 'American' or positivist school, leading to the 'fourth great debate' between the two schools. Post-positivism is a broad term that refers to an interpretive approach or critique of scientific approaches that treat facts and assumptions as independent features of theory or permanent conceptual tools for measuring and objectifying phenomena (Sojo, 2005). As Cohen (2007) has pointed out, "The American and British schools of IPE are two cultures divided by a common subject" (Cohen, 2007 p. 200).

Generally speaking, the differences between the two schools can essentially be characterised by how each school assesses global politics, either through adopting an interpretive approach or a reflective one. The American school is largely thought of as the orthodox or prevailing form of IPE. It is inclined to be extremely reductionist and positivist, with regards to its epistemological approach. By contrast, the British variant tends to reject reductionism epistemology, favouring the pursuit of broader, normative questions (Weaver, 2009). Methodologically, the American school has tended to favour positivist economical approaches to social science enquiry, focusing a narrowly restrictive set of questions. The preferred paradigms used within the school are essentially state centric and analysis tends to be based on the twin core values of positivism and empiricism. As McNamara (2009) notes, the American school is "largely converged around a single theoretical perspective, liberalism; a single ontological position, rationalism; and a single method, quantitative analysis" (McNamara, 2009 p. 73). British IPE, by contrast, rejects the usefulness of positive social science enquiry; instead it favours a post-positivist approach that centres its inquiry on broad normative questions ethical matters, morality, social justice and equality (Cohen, 2007). Generally speaking, the

dominant style of the British school tends to be “open intellectually, normative in ambition and critical in inclination” (Cohen, 2007 p. 209).

Closely associated with the British school, critical theory emerged as an alternative approach to IR and later to American IPE. Its emergence in International Relations was the result of dissatisfaction with the mainstream theorizing within the field. Essentially it was a response to the failure of the classical traditions to explain why changes occur (Staniland, 1985). Initially, Marxian inspired critical theory emerged as a critique of ‘rationalist’ or ‘problem-solving’ neo-realist IR with the work of Cox, Ashley, and Hoffman, which eventually extended itself into the sub-discipline of IPE. In its initial stage critical theory “enlarged the parameters of the discipline by showing how efforts to reconstruct historical materialism offer direction to International Relations in the post-positivist phase” (Smith et al., 1996 p. 281) In its present stage, in contrast to the orthodox realist-liberalist duopoly of American IPE, critical theory overtly embraces theoretical diversity and as a result, it has sought to expand its subject matter, by studying a broader range of actors and processes beyond the traditional emphasis on states and markets. As Shields *et al* (2011) points out, “The development of critical perspectives in IPE have brought with it interpretations that have drawn from Marx, Gramsci, Polanyi, Schumpeter and from post structuralism (especially Foucault) and have been applied to a wide variety of cases” (Shields et al., 2011 p. 1).

Both the work of Strange with *States and Markets* (1988) and Cox with his 1981 and 1983 seminal articles, represent for many, two major advances in the critical IPE literature. Cox’s specific brand of critical theory, a critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change has been extremely influential with regards to IPE. His work provided an alternative method that critically evaluated orthodox

approaches to IPE. Drawing on the work of Gramsci, particularly his conceptions of hegemony and of state and society, rooted in historical materialism, Cox was able to develop a comprehensive framework for better understanding social change. This framework for understanding has since provided the basis of the 'neo-Gramscian school', which has become highly significant within critical IPE. As Jones 2001 notes, Cox's "critical theory has not only contributed to the critique of the mainstream but has also made substantive contributions of its own to the study of world politics" (Jones, 2001 p.2).

With the publication of a series of seminal articles in the late 1970s and 1980s, established Cox as a captivating and ground-breaking theorist who explored normative questions of political economy, hegemony and world order from a distinctly historical materialist outlook (Hoogvelt et al., 1999). Furthermore, his work provided an alternative method that critically evaluated orthodox approaches to IPE. The development of Cox's approach to "new International Political Economy" (Tooze and Murphy, 1991) was undoubtedly aided by his incorporation and further development of Gramscian theory. Although Cox took inspiration from other theorists, such as Sorel, Vico, Collingwood, and Braudel, he drew heavily from Gramsci's political thought. For Cox, the political thought of Gramsci offered an expansive conception of hegemony and of state and society, rooted in historical materialism. Drawing from this, Cox developed a comprehensive framework for better understanding social change. This framework for understanding has since provided the basis of the 'neo-Gramscian school', which has become highly significant within critical IPE. Drawing on key concepts such as historical materialism, hegemony, world order, historic bloc, common sense and the idea of consent, all of which will be discussed in detail in the proceeding chapters, sets the

parameters of this dissertation. This framework incorporates the dynamic interaction and mutual influence between three layers: social forces, forms of states and world order. As Worth (2011) notes, Cox's engagement with Gramsci's work was largely undertaken in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of hegemony than that used by positivist International Relations scholars at the time, and has since provided the basis of the 'neo-Gramscian school' that has become highly significant within critical IPE (Worth, 2011). The neo-Gramscian theoretical framework, which draws on the aforementioned concepts as tools of explanation for understanding, will be utilised in the proceeding chapters, as it offers significant analytical and explanatory scope for better understanding the social forces and interests and that have led to the creation of ALBA but also for understanding ALBA's development and future prospects, as a counter-hegemony regional movement.

The following section will investigate both the concepts of world order and hegemony in relation to the international from various theoretical approaches to understand why Cox's notions of world order and hegemony are relevant to this research.

2.4 Hegemony and World Order

The concept of hegemony within International Relations has traditionally been understood as a condition whereby a dominant state controls and shapes the international system by exerting its authority, influence and power (Keohane 1984; Gilpin 1987). However, for many, this interpretation, which has become the cornerstone within the conservative school of realism, is quite limited and repressed in scope. Drawing on the political thought of Antonio Gramsci, the

concept of hegemony becomes more expansive and unrestrained, as suggested by Williams (1977), Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be explained as

An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation (Williams, 1977 p.110).

Throughout his work, Gramsci uses the notion of hegemony to denote the predominance of one social class over others. The dominance of a particular hegemonic class within a society is maintained, by securing the consent of subordinate groups.

Thus, a hegemonic order is created and maintained when consent, rather than force or coercion is established, by a ruling or dominant class. Hegemony in this sense not only represents the ability of a dominant class to gain political and economic control, but also reflects their ability to project their own ideas and beliefs onto the masses in such a way that their beliefs and ideas become the norm and are accepted as 'common sense'. As suggested by Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett (1992), common sense is "the way a subordinate class lives its subordination" (Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett, 1992).

Drawing on the ideas of Gramsci, Cox expanded the concept of hegemony and transposed it to the international, in an attempt to illustrate how power and consent are maintained in global politics. Cox utilises his original concept of world order as a framework to understand how hegemony is framed within international politics (Worth, 2011). From Cox's perspective, a world order represents a

moderately resilient pattern of global relationships that may or may not be orderly in the traditional sense. Cox argues that the presence of stable world orders can be explained by the internationalisation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. With the application of Gramsci's concept to International Relations, Cox identifies and differentiates between two kinds of world orders, 'hegemonic' and 'non-hegemonic'.

As Hobson (2000) explains,

The social-hegemonic powers of the dominant class within a powerful national economy 'spill over' from the domestic to the international sphere. When this spill over occurs, the hegemonic state establishes institutions and economic regimes, that inevitably serve to legitimate and materially advance the needs of its bourgeoisie (Hobson, 2000 p. 131).

According to Cox (1987), this leads to the establishment of a stable 'hegemonic' world order. A 'hegemonic' world order for Cox cannot be constructed on force and affluence alone. To be hegemonic, Cox explains,

A state would have to found and protect a world order that was universal in conception, i.e. not an order directly expressing the interests of one state but an order that most other states could find compatible with their interests given their different levels of power and lesser ability to change that order. The less powerful states could live with the order even if they could not change it (Cox, 1981 p. 45).

Cox illustrates his point with the examples of *Pax Britannica* – ushering in the first hegemonic era and *Pax Americana*, which like its predecessor, established a hegemonic world order based on liberal international regimes. According to Cox, a

'non-hegemonic' world order occurs when the hegemonic state loses its legitimacy and its ability to generate support amongst the masses. When this occurs, the hegemonic state

Has to resort to non-legitimate and coercive forms of dominance.

Hegemonic leadership is transformed into naked domination based on strength and violence, thereby ushering in a new non-hegemonic world order ... In sum, the fundamental cause of these processes lies with domestic class struggles within the 'historic bloc', which eventually transform the hegemonic world order into a non-hegemonic one (Cox, 1987 p. 216).

Here a brief explanation of the concept of the historic bloc- a term Cox borrows from Gramsci, is necessary, in order to understand how both a hegemonic and non-hegemonic world order are formed. The 'historic bloc' in its most basic form refers to the reciprocal relationship "between ideas, politics, ethics, and the social relations that result from the material conditions of production" (Cox, 1983). A hegemonic social class and a state that 'maintains cohesion and identity within the bloc through the propagation of a common culture' are necessary prerequisites for its formation and continuation, thus it should be seen as a national phenomenon (Cox, 1983). These prerequisites are vital in order to guarantee that the interests of the subordinate classes are provided for, although it must be said that the interests of the subordinate classes are only accommodated as long as they do not threaten the interests of the dominant class (Leysens, 2008). Thus, a historic bloc can be characterized by a concentration of class interests and the implementation of a specific mode of production beyond national borders.

As Worth (2011) notes, academics such as Bellamy (1990), Germain and Kenny (1998), have suggested that the application of Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the international arena is inappropriate and incompatible, as his idea was developed within a specific national and historical context, and the "international arena lacked a concrete hierarchical form in which hegemony could be constructed" (Worth, 2011). However, as Budd, Gill and Cox himself have argued, Cox's transposition of hegemony to the international, is consistent with Gramsci's own internationalized use of hegemony. As Budd (2013) has pointed out, Gramsci has indeed suggested that hegemony "occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces that comprise it, but in the entire international and world field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations" (Budd, 2013 p. 32). Within this global context, Gramsci suggests, "the history of subaltern states is explained by the history of hegemonic states" (Gramsci, 1971). Aligned with Gramsci, international hegemony for Cox represents more than just state dominance rather it is an expression of broadly based consent. Cox (1981) proposes that hegemonic world orders are,

Based on a coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order (including certain norms) and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality (i.e. not just as the overt instruments of a particular state's dominance) (Cox, 1981 p. 139).

It is this configuration or fit between ideas, institutions and material capabilities at a world order level that forms the basis of categories of power that lead towards the absence (instability) or presence of hegemony (stability). For Cox, hegemony

within this framework or structure should be understood as an expression of broadly based consent, "which is initially established by social forces occupying a leading role within a state, but is then projected outwards on a world scale" (Cox, 1981 p. 139).

Hegemonic structures are established under the circumstances of a certain configuration of forces. Cox distinguishes between three types of reciprocal interacting forces, which make up a hegemonic structure. Firstly, material capabilities, which are understood as natural resources as well as organisational and technological capabilities. Secondly, ideas are seen as common beliefs or as the collective image of social order. And lastly, institutions are used to stabilize a certain order.

Hegemony at the international level is thus not merely an order among states. It is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production, which penetrates all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of international social relationships, which connect the social classes of the different countries. World hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must all three (Cox, 1995 p.137).

In order to understand why Cox's notions of world order and international hegemony are relevant to the current world economy and to this research, it is necessary to examine the rise of the neoliberal world order.

2.5 Neoliberal World Order

As Cox has suggested, the hegemonic era of *Pax Americana* was constructed and established by the US after the Second World War. Its ascendance to international hegemonic status has its origins in the changes that occurred with regards to the social relations of production, namely under Fordism and through the establishment of the Keynesian welfare state, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Once the US gained consent for Fordism at home, the system was transposed to the rest of the world, through 'embedded liberalism' (Ruggie, 1983), in a successful attempt to gain international consent for a *Pax Americana* world order (Chodor, 2014). As Cox (1987) notes, the economic system of embedded liberalism sought to guarantee equilibrium between ensuring that markets remained open to foreign goods while at the same time shielding economies from outside shocks, that could undermine, weaken or destabilise the Keynesian economic model (Cox, 1987). The above dual political-economic project ushered in a new American-led capitalist system that in turn produced a type of liberal capitalism, which gave way to the creation of a *Pax Americana* hegemonic order and the 'golden age of capitalism' (Chodor, 2014).

As Overbeek (1993) notes, the 'organic crisis' of *Pax Americana* and world capitalism was evident by the mid- 1970s and cannot be traced to any one single event. He explains, "It was a fundamental crisis of 'normality' affecting all aspects of the post-war order: social relations of production, the composition of the historic bloc and its concept of control, the role of the state, and the international order" (Overbeek, 1993 p.14). The *Pax Americana* crisis presented itself in a series of political, economic and ideological crises. The economic crisis was reflected in the global recession and a sharp rise in unemployment in the US. These events

highlighted the limits of the Fordist mode of production (Harvey, 1989) and as a result, the capitalist sector began to pursue different avenues to rid themselves of the restraints of the Fordist and Keynesian system, in an attempt to revive profits (Hooley, 1992). Most notably, the sector pursued strategies that would facilitate capital mobility, in order to relocate production to the periphery where production and cost were more advantageous. As Chodor (2014) explains, "this generally meant 'going global' by relocating the labour-intensive parts of the production process to the periphery" (Chodor, 2014). The globalisation of the financial system brought about vast benefits for corporations while at the same time lessened the legitimacy of the Fordist/Keynesian historic bloc, thus, capitalist economic interests were able to undermine the balance of social forces within the historic bloc. The political crisis of the 1970s was a direct result of the failure of the Keynesian state. The global recession, which led to a dramatic increase in unemployment, resulted in an increase in state social spending. The increase in social spending, however failed to bring about sustain economic recovery; it resulted instead in a fiscal crisis which resulted in a loss of confidence in the Keynesian model and fuelled growing resentment towards the state. The ideological crisis was fuelled by both the economic and political crises. As Gramsci (1971) suggests, "organic crises would first arise on the terrain of civil society in the form of challenges to dominant class power over question that did not seem intuitively political, but which in fact were signs of things to come" (Gramsci, 1971). Such challenges were emerging from two sides domestically. Counter-cultural movements gained momentum and began to question the hegemonic common sense, specifically on matters concerning the moral conduct of the US in Vietnam (Hall and Jaques, 1983) and how western governments along with corporations

seemed to be ruling society in repressive and unjust ways, and were far from representing the peoples will (Harvey, 2007b). From the other side, conservatives losing faith in the ability of the Fordist/Keynesian model exacerbated the ideological crisis. This concern was transposed to the international and resulted in the organic crisis of US hegemony. As Hall and Jaques (1983) note,

If the crisis is deep – ‘organic’ – these efforts cannot be merely defensive. They will be formative: aiming at a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new ‘historic bloc’, new political configuration and ‘philosophies’, a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological...These new elements do not ‘emerge’: they have been constructed. Political ideological work is required to disarticulate old formations, and to rework their elements into new ones (Hall and Jaques, 1983 p.43).

Social forces from the most powerful states of Western Europe argued that Keynesian economics, the idea of the welfare state, as well as the “embedded liberalism” of *Pax Americana* needed to be replaced with a more dynamic version of global capitalism. This more dynamic version of global capitalism would offer a much-needed solution to the problems of growth, prosperity and stability. This resulted in the emergence of a neoliberal world order and the reinstatement of US hegemony, although as Strange (1987) has argued, instead of asserting itself as the dominant hegemonic power within the international system in the traditional sense, the US used international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as a mechanism to assert its power (Strange, 1987). With the emergence of a new world order, neoliberal capitalism slowly began to replace Keynesianism as the global economic model. Neo-classical economists

Milton Friedman and Alan Walters of the Chicago School developed this liberal shift, emphasizing the doctrine of monetarism. As Gamble (2001) points out, neoliberalism rose to stardom as an economic critique of, and an alternative model to Keynesian economics, however, the idea of monetarism put forth, "was a part of a wider critique of state involvement in the economy associated with the Austrian School and in particular with Friedrich Hayek" (Gamble, 2001 p. 75). Hayek's free-market theory which "assumed it best to leave as many decisions as possible up to the market", in combination with Friedman and Walters emphasis on monetarism (a method to control inflation), allowed for the neoliberal capitalist model to be internationally recognised as the most viable political and economic strategy for restructuring capitalism (Goddard et al., 2003b). Thus, neoliberalism slowly became the new dominant "common sense, the paradigm shaping all policies", making Keynesianism obsolete and bringing capitalism into a new global era (Gamble, 2001 p.129).

In the 1980s and again in the 1990s neoliberalism or the Washington Consensus, as it became later known as, rose to prominence in the developing world, with the adoption of this economic and political neoliberal strategy by key International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and belatedly the World Trade Organization (WTO). According to Leysens (2008), institutions are produced to maintain and stabilize a particular order, "Institutions encapsulate and give voice to the universal norms that are part of the common sense ideology of a hegemonic world order...as such they mirror perspectives that favour dominant state and economic classes" (Leysens, 2008 p.49). These international organisations influence over developing economies domestic policymakers was significantly enhanced, along with their

heightened authority to enforce punitive measures, following the debt crisis of the 1980s.

Consequently, the power of these institutions over the poorer countries greatly increased just as their influence on the developed countries was disappearing. Thus, countries seeking financial aid or debt rescheduling from the Bank or the IMF must now not only adopt approved macroeconomic stability programmes but also agree to “structural and political reforms, which extend the influence of the markets- via liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation, etc.- and reduce the economic role of the state (Kozul-Wright and Rayment, 2007 p.16).

As a result, the adoption of the neoliberal economic model by key IFIs, as Harvey (2007b) points out, “Neoliberalization has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment” (Harvey, 2007b p.145). The adoption and implementation of neoliberal policies in developed and developing countries have varied greatly. As a result neoliberal policies, contrary to its prevailing ‘win-win’ rhetoric, have tended to produce and reproduce winners and losers, within the international economic arena, generating a favourable economic climate for western economies, whilst creating for the most part, an unfavourable environment for many developing economies. “Neoliberalism has not proven effective at revitalizing global capital accumulation, but it has succeeded in restoring class power. As a consequence, the theoretical utopianism of the neoliberal argument has worked more as a system of justification and legitimization” (Harvey, 2007b p.145). Although it is apparent that neoliberalism has succeeded in restoring class power to ruling elites, it has also been instrumental in the reordering of class structures domestically and in creating the

necessary conditions for capitalist class construction and dominance, both domestically and within the international economic system.

The various policies and processes that are currently grouped together under the term [Neoliberalism]... are largely a consequence of the dynamics of the capitalist economies of North America and Western Europe and in many important respects are organised to perpetuate their continued dominance” (Kozul-Wright and Rayment, 2007 p.16).

Furthermore as Gill (1995) points out, market driven economic restructuring in the developing world has tended and continues to produce domestically, a deepening of social inequality, an increase in the rate and intensity of the exploitation of labour, a rise in social polarization, gender inequality, a sweeping sense of social and economic uncertainty, and, “not least, pervasive disenchantment with conventional political practice” (Gill, 1995b p.420). It is this deepening of social inequalities and the pervasive disenchantment with neoliberal orientated political practices that have led to a critical reassessment and rejection of neoliberalism by many people and groups globally. In the west for example the rejection and criticisms have come in the form of “the occupy and alter globalisation movements springing up in many areas of the neoliberal core- in the United States and in Western Europe- to agitate for a more democratic and socially just world order than that experienced under neoliberal capitalism (Chodor, 2014). As Worth and Kuhling (2004) suggests,

Movements at the level of the global, national, regional and local that contest these changes can be seen to act as a counter-movement, which intersects with a larger, democratising counter-hegemonic project as it

seeks to contest the ideological norms and practices that have been embedded through the logic of the free market (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 pp.33-34)

The purpose of this section was to give an account of how and in what ways the neoliberal world order has created a deepening of social inequality, an increase in the rate and intensity of the exploitation of labour, a rise in social polarization and a sweeping sense of social and economic uncertainty. Through highlighting the negative connotations closely associated with the neoliberal world order, this research will now be able to investigate how opposing forces have attempted to dismantle the common sense through resistance and counter-hegemonic movements. The following section will look specifically at the notion of counter-hegemony and how it relates to the current world order.

2.6 Counter-hegemony

Drawing from the work of Gramsci, although the term was never used by Gramsci, counter-hegemony generally refers to what Boggs (1984) has suggested as “a creation of an alternative hegemony on the terrain of civil society in preparation for political change” (Boggs, 1984). Thus, it refers to an attempt to create the possibility of social transformation and a new hegemonic order by critiquing and by attempting to dismantle the “common sense”. According to Gramsci (1971), ‘organic crisis’ plays a critical role in creating the possibility for a new hegemonic order. For Carroll (2010), organic crisis occurs when “the structures and practices that constitute and reproduce a hegemonic order fall into chronic and visible disrepair, creating a new terrain of political and cultural contention, and the possibility (but only the possibility) of social transformation” (Carroll, 2010 p.170).

According to Cox (1999), civil society should be considered both a terrain that sustains the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but also it represents a terrain on which resistance to hegemony, allowing for an emancipatory counter-hegemony to be formulated (Cox, 1999). For Gramsci (1971) civil society represents an avenue by which one could first understand the power and strength of the status quo and secondly through this understanding it was then possible to develop a strategy for its transformation (Gramsci, 1971). Although in Gramsci's writing, civil society has several different meanings, generally he defines it as a function of the state "State=political society+civil society" (Gramsci, 1971). According to Cox (1999), "The emancipatory potential of civil society was the object of his thinking" (Cox, 1999 p.97). When attempting to understand the dynamics and mechanisms of counter-hegemony activities, two important concepts are vital to its understanding, war of position and war of manoeuvre/movement. For Gramsci, the latter represents a type of warfare that results in an attack of the state. He uses the example of the Bolshevik revolution to illustrate this type of resistance to hegemony. As Worth and Kuhling (2004) explain, "In a war of movement, the entire legitimacy of hegemony is contested by an ideological attack not only on the major agencies and structures of the order, but also on the complex forms of civil societal common sense that hold the order together" (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 p.35).

For Gramsci (1971) such an assault, would not be by itself sufficient to challenge the powers of the dominant classes in the west as it was entrenched in the "fortress and earthworks" of civil society (Gramsci, 1971). For a war of manoeuvre to achieve any level of success, in relation to creating a space for an alternative hegemonic project, a full-frontal attack of the state is necessary. By contrast, a war of position is subtler in form. It represents a more restrained method of

contestation and resistance, which is “strategically aimed at transforming common sense and consciousness” (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 p.35). A war of position endeavours to destabilise the hegemon by exposing the tensions, failures and contradictions of the existing within the historic bloc, thus it attempts to delegitimize the engrained common sense, in an attempt to elicit consent for a more favourable hegemonic project. Although the organic crisis of Keynesianism/Fordism in the 1970s, which eventually led to its replacement with neoliberalism is an example of a war of position, it represents a strategic move by the dominant class attempting to hold on to its power in the face of crisis. This strategic move is what Gramsci terms, as a passive revolution whereby neoliberal organic intellectuals, successfully restructure society from above, constructing a new historic bloc, through securing consent, while reproducing and extending the power position of the dominant class through a passive revolution. A war of position in a counter-hegemonic sense involves attempts to restructure society from below, in an effort to establish or potentially establish a new hegemonic project. A war of position within a counter-hegemonic movement

Seeks to restructure ideological self-understandings so that they can inform a revolutionary praxis. A counter-hegemonic war of position, therefore, also begins with a critique of common sense, but seeks to transcend rather than re-embed it. This is a task of critical education that seeks to move beyond common sense ideological understandings to reconstruct a collective will: an ideological worldview conscious of humanities self-constructive powers (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 p.35).

The resulting reconstruction of the collective will can enable it to create the common ground on which a counter-hegemonic historic bloc can be established. Although presently, a counter-hegemonic historic bloc has not been established, there are many examples of counter-hegemonic movements engaged in a war of position against the neoliberal historic bloc, attempting to destabilize its legitimacy and consent. In 1994 the Zapatistas launched their uprising to coincide with the launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which as Worth and Kuhling (2004) explains,

Demonstrated that certain forms of resistance can simultaneously address international and local political economy...the Zapatistas constitute an example of a counter-hegemonic movement that directly challenges the supranational structures of neoliberal globalisation through the mobilisation of international blocs around issues of local land rights (Worth and Kuhling, 2004 pp.35-36).

Likewise, the Seattle protests in 1999 can be seen as a counter-hegemonic movement, which successfully blockaded free trade negotiations being held by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle. As Gill (1993) argues, "the [Seattle] protests form part of a worldwide movement that can perhaps be understood in terms of new potentials and forms of global political agency" (Gill, 1993 p.137). In agreement with Gill, many others have argued that both the Zapatista uprising and the Seattle protests are "iconic representatives of one of the most important social movements to emerge on the world stage in recent years" (Eschle and Maignashca, 2005 p.2). With the above considered, the aim of this thesis is to critically assess ALBA within a neo-Gramscian framework, to determine if it can be seen as a viable

counter-hegemonic regional movement, that is challenging US hegemony and by extension the neoliberal world order.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the key features of the neo-Gramscian/Coxian critical theory and its approach to International Political Economy (IPE). Through this thorough assessment, the chapter laid a strong theoretical foundation and validated the use of a neo-Gramscian approach to the study of ALBA. The chapter began with an in-depth and critical analysis of world order. The chapter discussed the work of Robert Cox and his approach to world order. In an attempt to situate his approach outside of the realm of interstate relations, Cox places an emphasis on world order, in which states make up only a single element. In essence, the idea of world order as Worth (2011) has articulated "*Order* is one in which embedded norms and laws are transposed onto the international stage...a *World Order* represents a specific era, or if you like a historic bloc, that was determined through social forces, organised through a combination of production, ideology and institutionalism" (Worth, 2011 p.376). It is through this expanded understanding that Cox has been able to bridge the national with the international by linking material capabilities, ideas and institutions. He suggests that a prevailing order is marked by these 'configuration of forces'. The chapter then went on to suggest that Cox's explanation for the causes of different world orders through history allows for an expansive understanding of the international system. Particularly in relation to his emphases placed on demonstrating that the variation of world orders is caused by reciprocal relations between production and forms of states. Relations that are both related to the rise and the development of capitalism. From here, the

chapter discussed the emergence of IPE and the subsequent theoretical approaches that came out of the field. IPE emerged as a reaction to significant changes with the political and economic landscape following the disintegration of the post-World War II economic order, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the oil crisis and the ensuing debt crisis which crippled numerous developing economies. It looked at the development of IPE and the subsequent separation of the discipline into two schools of thought. The American School, a school that favours a positivist and empirical approach whereas the British School favours a post-positivist and critical approach to the study of IPE. From here, critical theory was discussed. It suggested that critical theory emerged as a critique of rationalist or problem-solving neorealism traditions within International Relations with the work of Cox and Strange among others. Cox's specific brand of critical theory, a critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change has been extremely influential with regards to IPE. His work, which was undoubtedly aided by his incorporation and further development of Gramscian theory, provided an alternative method that critically evaluated orthodox approaches to IPE. Cox's engagement with Gramsci's provided a more comprehensive understanding of hegemony than that used by positivist International Relations scholars at the time and has since provided the basis of the 'neo-Gramscian school' that has become highly significant within critical IPE. The chapter then went on to look at how Cox expanded Gramsci's concept of hegemony and transposed it to the international, to illustrate how power and consent are maintained within global politics. It then discussed how Cox used his concept of world order as a framework for understanding how hegemony is framed within international politics. By exploring the hegemonic and non-hegemonic nature of world orders the chapter was able to provide an

understanding of how either can be established. For a hegemonic world order to be established institutions and an economic regime needs to be created at a global level to legitimize and materially advance that particular world order. Essentially the hegemonic state would have to found and protect the world order that was universal in conception meaning it would have to be agreeable for the majority. According to Cox, a 'non-hegemonic' world order occurs when the hegemonic state loses its legitimacy and its ability to generate support amongst the masses. When this occurs, the hegemonic state must resort to non-legitimate and coercive forms of dominance. Hegemonic leadership is transformed into naked domination based on strength and violence, thereby ushering in a new non-hegemonic world order. From here, the chapter examined the rise of the neoliberal world order to illustrate Cox's theory. It looked at the organic crisis of Pax Americana and the ushering in of the hegemonic era of neoliberalism. It suggested the organic crisis of Pax Americana came in the form of both a political crisis, via the failure of Keynesian and an economic crisis, via the global recession of the 1970s. Both of which, under the direction of social forces, eventually led to the establishment of a neoliberal world order and the reinstatement of US hegemony (although not in the traditional sense, rather the US used international institutions such the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as mechanisms to assert its power). The chapter then went on to discuss how neoliberalism slowly became the new dominant common sense, the paradigm shaping all policies, which swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment. From here the chapter discussed how the neoliberal world order created a deepening of social inequality, an increase in the rate and intensity of the exploitation of labour, a rise in social polarization and a sweeping sense of social and economic uncertainty. Through

highlighting the negative connotations closely associated with the neoliberal world order, the chapter was then able to look at how opposing forces have attempted to dismantle the common sense through resistance and counter-hegemonic movements. Cox's concepts of war of position and war of manoeuvre/movement were introduced here. This was purposely done; in order to provide a clear understanding of the different ways contestation against the common sense can occur. In doing so this chapter has provided the parameters in which ALBA can be critically assessed, in order to determine if it can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic regional movement, that is challenging US hegemony and by extension the neoliberal world order. To critically assess ALBA in this light, it is first necessary to situate the validity of the study within a world order approach to regionalism. The following chapter will look specifically at this relationship.

Chapter 3: A World Order approach to regionalism

3.1: Introduction

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, this thesis is using Cox's critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change to assess ALBA as a counter-hegemonic regional movement, its significance, and its likely evolution, within the current world order. In order to investigate the aforementioned, it is necessary to firstly give an overview of the academic literature that can aid in an understanding of the current global trend towards regionalism. This section will mainly focus on academic literature, which utilises Robert Cox's notion of world order to explain the current rise of regionalism. In order to do so, it is necessary to firstly understand what the term region and its derivative concepts, regionalism and regionalization mean. This regional focus is important to the overall thesis as it aids in the establishment of a coherent framework in which an analysis of ALBA can be built on. According to Ghany et al (2014),

A region is considered the projection of a social, political or economic concept over a geographical area or territory. In other words, it is the application of human perception to make sense of the physical environment. Defining a region is a way to making discreet and otherwise, undifferentiated landmass, a strategy to make human sense of it (Ghany et al., 2014 p.4).

Regionalisation, a derivative concept of region, can be understood as a descriptive term that refers to the "actual practice of linking geographical areas under diverse jurisdictions to achieve military, cultural, social, political or economic purposes" (Ghany et al., 2014 p.6). In short, regionalisation can be seen as a process that can

lead to the establishment of a region, whereas, regionalism refers to a movement towards regional integration and forms of regional governance within politics. It can occur when a group of economies merges specific interests or policies. It often arises within regions that share geographical, cultural and political similarities. As Gamble and Payne (1996) have suggested, regionalism can be defined as a state-led project, which attempts to reorganise the political and economic relations in a certain area. In other words, "Regionalism is seen as something that is being constructed, and constantly reconstructed, by collective human action" (Gamble and Payne, 1996 p.17). Within the current literature however, there are divergent interpretations of both regionalism and regionalisation. For instance, Capling and Nossal, in a book edited by Fawn (2009), have suggested that regionalism should be seen as "... state-led efforts to deepen regional integration through the fostering of other formal mechanisms to support institutionalised cooperation and collective action" (Fawn, 2009 p. 148). They suggest, that regionalisation can be described as "... the process of economic integration that is driven from the bottom-up by private actors such as firms in response to the opportunities created by the liberalisation of investment and trade" (Fawn, 2009 p. 148). In other words, regionalism should be understood as formal, de jure cooperation among governments whereas the process of regionalisation should be understood as informal, de facto heightened interactions between a variety of private actors from different countries. In agreement with this interpretation, Kim (2004) adds to this understanding, by broadening the domain of regionalism. He suggests that regionalism should also be understood as being based on shared aspirations, identity, norms and values. Regionalism, according to Kim (2004), should therefore be considered as "state-led projects of cooperation that emerge from

intergovernmental dialogues and agreements” (Kim, 2004 p. 40). Ghany et al. (2014), however, disagrees with the aforementioned interpretations of both regionalism and regionalisation. They are not convinced that either definition is as clear-cut as is suggested. Instead they suggest, regionalism should be conceived by governments as well as private actors, whereas both state and non-state actors can practice regionalisation. Although Ghany et al. (2014), point out that in general governments and state actors may be the dominant players in regionalism and in most instances private actors are predominant in the regionalisation process, it is not always the case. Indeed, private actors such as corporations, non-governmental organisation and criminal organisations, may choose to engage in regionalism whenever it is in their interest to do so. Generally, this occurs whenever these non-state actors strategically plan to expand their economic activities across borders, “when they create master plans to take advantage of the assets that different territories offer to enhance the reach of the goals they pursue” (Ghany et al., 2014 p. 7). Likewise, state actors can and often do practice regionalisation “whenever they reach across their boarders to achieve specific objectives, without necessarily having a larger normative scheme in mind” (Ghany et al., 2014 p. 7). States often find temporary solutions to persistent problems that develop internally as well as outside their territories. These piecemeal solutions often attempt to find short-term fixes for those issues without assessing the long-term impacts. Moreover, states may also engage in practices that divert from regionalism plans, either because they are applying tactical adaptations of broader strategies or because regionalism is not delivering the expected results (Ghany et al., 2014 p. 7). By contrast, Kacowicz (1999) defines regionalism as “... the process of the governments and peoples of the states to establish voluntary associations and to

pool together resources in order to create common functional and institutional arrangements” (Kacowicz, 1999 p.9). Kacowicz (1999) considers regionalisation to represent the expansion of societal integration within a given region, “this includes all undirected processes of economic and social interaction between units” (Kacowicz, 1999 p.9). Rozman in an edited book by Armstrong (2006), has suggested that regionalism consists of five dimensions; social integration, institutional integration, economic integration, the formation of a regional security, and identity (Armstrong, 2006). By contrast, Fawcett and Hurrell (1995), view regionalism as an ideology which informs a regional identity, that can in turn, lead to a deepening of regionalization through the establishment of a regional identity, closer integration and cooperation. Regionalisation according to Fawcett and Hurrell (1995) represents a set of carefully orchestrated moves directed by market forces that act to enable, enhance and shape closer global regional integration. Furthermore, Hurrell and Fawcett (1995) see regionalism as multi-dimensional, consisting of five parts: regionalization, regional identity and awareness, state-promoted regional integration, regional cohesion and regional interstate cooperation (Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995).

To understand the importance of regionalism within a world order setting it is first necessary to discuss the distinct phases of regionalism, the latter of which is closely linked to the structural transformation of the global system. The first regional initiatives began in the 1950s after the Second World War. This distinct form of regional groupings came to be known as old regionalism or first generational regionalism, which was primarily seen as a process geared around security alliances and economic integration and geographical groupings. Or as Worth (2015) notes, “Old regionalism refers to the bodies of (largely military)

organizations that were founded during the Cold War and were to define the period” (Worth, 2015 p. 131). The establishment of NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Association), OAS (Organisation of American States), and the original institutions of the EC (European Community) can be seen as regional organisations that were under the influence of the west. Organisations such as the Warsaw Pact and Comecon (The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) were built on the socialist principles of the Soviet Union. According to Pedersen (2002) old regionalism can be defined as a theory of ‘co-operative hegemony’. In his teleological view, increased economic cooperation leads to increased political cooperation between multiple states and as a result states are less likely to go war if they have high levels of commercial and economic interdependence (Pedersen, 2002).

By contrast, new or open regionalism refers to a new wave of regionalism that has occurred since the 1980s. The rise to prominence of new regionalism should be seen in the context of the complete structural transformation of the global system and therefore should be understood in its historical context. As Hettne and Soderbaum (2000) suggest, the new wave of regionalism must be related

To the structural transformation of the world, inter alia including (i) the move from bipolarity towards a multipolar or perhaps tripolar structure, with a new division of power and new division of labour; (ii) the relative decline of American hegemony in combination with a more permissive attitude on the part of the USA towards regionalism; (iii) the erosion of the Westphalian nation-state system and the growth of interdependence and ‘globalisation ’; and (iv) the changed attitudes towards (neoliberal) economic development and associated

political system in the developing countries, as well as in the post-communist countries (Hettne et al., 2000 p. 457).

Examples of this type of regionalism can be seen with the creation of the EU (the European Union), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), the AU (The African Union) and ASEAN (The Association of South East-Asian Nations). In agreement with Hettne al (2000), Palmer (1991) suggests that the rise of new regionalism was the result of a growing positive consensus towards international cooperation as well as the decentralisation of the global system brought about by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism. Likewise Worth (2015) suggests, that

Coinciding with the birth of the neoliberal doctrine, new regionalism was to gain greater significance by the end of the Cold War as states looked to forge partnerships in an attempt to regulate the wider processes of globalization that were arising through the rapidly changing global economy (Worth, 2015 p. 131).

Indeed, increasingly transactions across global politics are being expressed through co-operation and free trade arrangements by regional bodies. With the rise of new regionalism has come an unusual development. Unlike old regionalism, which was geared around security alliances and geographical groupings, new regionalism has witnessed a new development where states are seeking memberships of various regional organisations to serve self-interest (Bergsten, 1997). From a world order viewpoint, this form of new/open regionalism has acted as a mechanism that has facilitated the practices of neoliberalism in such a way that it has "added to the structural conditions of the prevailing neoliberal world order (Worth, 2015 p. 135). This new wave accepts international competition as the main

engine of economic growth, it takes the global market as a given and urges states to open up to competition following the rules of neoliberal capitalism. As Ghany et al. (2014) notes, "Regions become the pieces that conform to the global order, a new form of transnational governance, spaces of competition, investment and trade flows where national states get involved in order not to be marginalized by globalization" (Ghany et al., 2014 p.8).

Although Cox's minimal analytical interest in regionalism only appeared in his later work (Cox, 1999, 2004), other authors such as Gamble and Payne (1996, 2001), Grugel and Hout (2003) and Lipietz (1992) have applied Cox's theoretical framework of world order to the study of regionalism. As Gerard Strange (2009) notes, "The World Order approach to the study of contemporary regionalism commences from a critical analysis of accumulation, regulation and crisis within the context of change and instability in this complex of historical structures" (Strange, 2009 p. 4). The world order approach is specifically interested in structural and social change and the role of regionalism (viewed as a state-led project) takes in the creation and remaking of world orders. As Gamble and Payne note in an edited book by Söderbaum and Shaw (2004), regionalism should be understood as a strategy used by states, or more specifically it is a strategy used by state/society complexes, to influence the very nature of the world order in pursuit of achieving their economic goals (Söderbaum and Shaw, 2004). Cox's world order approach provides us with a useful foundation for understanding how the current shift in world order is producing a global trend towards regionalism and vice versa. The emergence of regionalism and regionalization can be connected to the ideological and processional shifts that are occurring in the historical structure of the prevailing world order. These changes are creating a dialectical tension

between the prevailing/dominant and alternative social forces. The potential outcome of these global shifts as envisioned by Cox will result in one of two future scenarios. The first of which as Cox suggests, is the relative deterioration of US hegemony, which in turn will give way to “to a more plural world with several centres of world power that would be in continuous negotiation for a constantly adjustable modus vivendi, much akin to the European 19th-century balance of power system” (Cox, 2009 p.1). The second possible future scenario as suggested by Cox is the continuing struggle for global domination, that pits the United States against a “potential consolidation of Eurasian power” (Cox, 2009 p.2). In either future scenario, it is blatant that regional arrangements have an important role. Following on from this Ghany et al (2014) note, that if US hegemony is deteriorating, regional arrangements could possibly be a rational alternative to the concentration of power that has defined US hegemony. They also suggest that if the United States continues its struggle for global dominance, the rise of regional arrangements could be one geopolitical method of opposing that trend (Ghany et al., 2014). Gamble and Payne (1996) taking queue from a neo-Gramscian/Coxian line of thought have adopted a world order approach to regionalism which clearly inserts regionalism into the structures and processes at global level. They have suggested that the prominence of contemporary regionalism is the result of the decline of US hegemony, the global economic crisis and the uneven impact of economic globalisation. In their view, the current trend towards regionalism is the result of a growing awareness that a global hegemony centred around one state is no longer possible or likely. Furthermore, Gamble and Payne (2003) in agreement with Grugel and Hout (1999), envision that the ‘weight’ of regional cores will heighten the unevenness of relations and that a deepening of integration will lead

to enhanced polarization between different part of the world but also between regions. Gamble and Payne (2003) have also argued that, regionalist arrangements should be seen as tools that further advance the interests of distinct state-society complexes, most notably those in Western Europe and the United States. These interests are not perceived as entirely homogeneous, although authors such as Gill (2013), has contended that regionalist arrangements help to discipline other actors such as business groups, social actors and states and compel them to “subscribe to the principles of deregulation and limited state interference in economic activity” (Gill, 2013 p.22). From this perspective it is evident that regionalism can be seen as an instrument for achieving “the regional ‘hegemony’ of neo-liberal economic principles... In order to serve their own economic interests, the political-economic elites in the semi-periphery will try to ‘lock in’ the semi peripheral economy with that of the core” (Grugel and Hout, 2003 p.24). In agreement with Grugel and Hout (2003), Hurrell (2007) has argued that regional arrangements have often been used as a mechanism to “regulate the processes of the global economy and to coordinate strategic global objectives” (Hurrell 2007 cited in Worth, 2015 p.130). However, some regional movements such as ALBA, was established in opposition to this process. Instead ALBA forms a type of resistance that opposes being used as a neoliberal instrument to regulate the processes of the global economy.

In order to understand how regionalism has affected the prevailing world order it is necessary to explore its relationship with neoliberalism.

3.2 Neoliberalism: facilitator or obstacle

The crisis of Pax Americana during the 1970s and early 1980s as discussed in the previous chapter, gave rise “to a more dynamic projection of global capitalism as a

solution to the problems of growth, stability and prosperity” closely associated with the Pax Americana world order (Chodor, 2014 p.121, Grugel and Hout, 2003 p.24). This more ‘dynamic projection of global capitalism’ emerged in the form of the neoliberal world order which saw the reinstatement at its centre of American hegemony. In a neo-Gramscian sense, the crisis of Pax Americana from the mid-1970s onwards, allowed for the emergence of a war of position on the terrain of national and global civil society orchestrated by a variety of neoliberal organic intellectuals in the media, politics, the corporate sector, and universities. The emergence of a war of position by neoliberal organic intellectuals involved taking command of or establishing new institutions in civil society both globally, as exemplified with the founding of the Mont Perlin Society in 1947 which “aimed to establish a transnational network of neoliberal thinkers looking to critique the mixed-economic Keynesian consensus emerging at that time” (Worth, 2015 p.130) or the Trilateral Commission (Gill, 1991), or from within states, via the Chicago school’ economists in the United States and the Institute of Economic Affairs in Great Britain (Chodor, 2014).

Neo-classical economists Milton Friedman and Alan Walters of the Chicago School developed the liberal shift, which emphasized the doctrine of monetarism. As Gamble (2001) points out, neoliberalism rose to stardom as an economic critique of and an alternative model to Keynesian economics, however, the idea of monetarism put forth, “was a part of a wider critique of state involvement in the economy associated with the Austrian School and in particular with Friedrich Hayek” (Gamble, 2001 p.128). Hayek’s free market theory which “assumed it best to leave as many decisions as possible up to the market” (Goddard et al., 2003a p. 23), in combination with Friedman and Walters emphasis on monetarism (a

method to control inflation), allowed for the neoliberal capitalist model to be internationally recognised as the most viable political and economic strategy for restructuring capitalism.

In the 1980s and again in the 1990s neoliberalism or the Washington Consensus, as it became later known as, rose to prominence in the developing world, with the adoption of this economic and political neoliberal strategy by key International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and belatedly the World Trade Organization (WTO). These international organisations influence and surveillance over developing economies domestic policymakers were significantly enhanced, along with their heightened authority to enforce punitive measures, following the debt crisis of the 1980s. As a result, the adoption of the neoliberal economic model by key international financial institutions, as Harvey (2007) points out, “Neoliberalization has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment” (Harvey, 2007 p.145). With the strengthening of these neoliberal institutions a global ideological assault on the Keynesian common sense was launched, neoliberalism slowly became the new dominant ‘common sense, the paradigm shaping all policies’ (Gamble, 2001 p. 129) making Keynesianism obsolete and bringing capitalism into a new global era.

The current world order has undoubtedly been shaped by what Gill (1995b) has referred to as a ‘worldwide market revolution’ that is closely associated with both globalization and neoliberalism. This ‘worldwide market revolution’, as Gill and Cutler (2014), have suggested, can be characterized as “processes of economic integration beyond state borders culminating in a global marketplace of commodities, ideas and identities” (Gill and Cutler, 2014 p.5). In agreement with

this characterization, Cutler (2010) and Kobrin (2004) have suggested, that the global market revolution can also be intrinsically linked to the ever-increasing prominence of transnational corporations and the capital mobility through foreign investment, as well as 'the networks of trade in goods and services that span the global', all of which have facilitated this economic integration beyond state borders (Cutler 2010 and Kobrin 2004 in Gill and Cutler, 2014).

Worth (2015) has suggested, that from a Coxian/neo-Gramscian world order perspective, open regionalism facilitates and complements the practices of neoliberalism very efficiently. As the creation, development and purpose of regional bodies have been centred around enhancing more trade, "increased liberalization and greater harmonization on regulation on investment" (Worth, 2015 p.129). Gamble and Payne (1996) have argued, regional bodies viewed in this light have contributed to the "structural conditions of the prevailing order" (Gamble and Payne, 1996). Gill (1998) elaborates on this perspective with reference to the EU seen as a regional body that seeks to "consolidate the wider structures of the global order" (Gill, 1998). Likewise, Hurrell (2007) has argued that regional arrangements have often been used as a mechanism to "regulate the processes of the global economy and to co-ordinate strategic global objectives" (Hurrell, 2007 p.130). Unquestionably, the most comprehensive effort to apply a world order perspective to the notion of open regionalism, with reference to a specific regional body has been with the pioneering work of Gill and his influential approach which evaluated the European Union through his original concept of new constitutionalism. For Gill (1998) the European Union should be seen as a regional project that seeks to establish a constitution "basing itself around the principles of neoliberalism" (Gill, 1998 p.17). Initially the conceptualisation of world order in

terms of new constitutionalism with reference to open regionalism emerged with a number of articles written by Gill in the 1990s. Since then his pioneering approach has been applied by a number of neo-Gramscian scholars, most notably Pijl (1998) Van Apeldoorn (1998, 2000, 2002), Kelly (2005), Plehwe et al. (2006), Shields (2003), Bieler and Morton (2004) and Graz (2003). For Parker (2008), new constitutionalism understood as a concept and a mode of legal regulation, is analytically distinguishable from disciplinary neo-liberalism, which should be understood as both a concept of political economy and as a set of social practices. According to Gill and Cutler (2014), however, each concept should be seen as intrinsically linked and “equally significant in facilitating neo-liberal forms of global economic integration and the extension of the world market” (Gill and Cutler, 2014 p.6). In essence, new constitutionalism for Gill and Cutler (2014) represents the political judicial counterpart to disciplinary neo-liberalism, whereas the latter refers principally to the “processes of intensifying and deepening the scope of market disciplines associated with the increasing power of capital in organizing social and world orders, and in so doing shaping the limits of the possible in peoples everyday lives” (Gill and Cutler, 2014 p.6). From Gill’s new constitutionalist’s perspective, European regionalism has acted as an important mechanism that has both acted to facilitate the ‘elite’s global project’ and at the same time, has been able to disarticulate “potential sources of opposition to it by establishing a supra-national governance framework beyond the nation state” (Gill cited in Strange, 2009 p.7). Both of which are intended to institutionalize neoliberalism in accordance with the structural necessities of capital and as a result has weakened the “policy autonomy of the nation state and of labour” (Strange, 2009 p.7). Furthermore, Strange (2009) has argued that the key element of the EU’s new

constitutionalism has been the institutional and legal embedding of the single market, beginning in the mid-1980s with the establishment of the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) leading to the creation of the Euro zone (Strange, 2009). For Strange (2009), the depth of European economic integration or 'hard constitutional governance' acts to "lock in through constitutional mechanisms, a macroeconomic policy bias in favour of neoliberalism, thereby foreclosing progressive alternatives" (Strange, 2009 p.7). As argued by Gill (1995b), the most noteworthy feature of monetary union and of constitutionalism in general is considered to be the way in which it "depoliticizes' policy, substituting the rule of money, the market and rule-bounded technical governance for discretionary, democratic politics" (Gill, 1995b p.416). As a result, according to Burnham (2001), new constitutionalism as a legal framework and function of the EU has "removed policymaking, particularly macro-economic management – the bedrock of social democracy - from the realm of contestable politics (Burnham, 2001 p.133). For Strange (2009),

The Single Market, the Maastricht convergence criteria, the Stability and Growth pact and finally monetary union (under the auspices of a European Central Bank granted independence from direct democratic accountability and constitutionally committed to prioritising monetary stability) are the key aspects of the EU's new constitutionalism (Strange, 2009 p.7).

Strange (2009) has argued European new constitutionalism, exists within and forms part of the neoliberal world order. As a result, it should be viewed in terms of the role it plays in supporting and strengthening the institutionalized "deflationary bias of the wider Bretton Woods institutions post embedded liberalism" (Strange,

2009 p.7). Thus, on par to the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the European Union's monetary stabilization policy has been able to operate, without automatic fiscal stabilizers, to enforce supply-side market disciplines, particularly in relation to labour interests. As a result, it is evident that the EU's prioritization of monetary discipline has become the cornerstone of the new constitutionalism's "anti-social democracy" (Strange, 2009 p.8).

In sum, regionalism is understood by Gill (1995b), as a mechanism in which the "the autonomy of even the most powerful states [is] subordinated to the interests of large capital and a rentier view of monetary policy" (Gill cited in Strange, 2009 p.8), as is evident with the case of the EU, or acts as a means to politically lock in neo-liberal reforms as is the case with the creation of NAFTA. In agreement with Gill (1995b) and Gill (1995a), Strange (2009) has suggested that strategic regionalism, as exemplified by NAFTA, provides a regional mechanism for insertion into the global economy. According to Axline (1994), strategic regionalism also acts as a mechanism for "globalizing the neo-liberal ideology that defines the form and direction of sub-regional policies chosen for this insertion" (Axline, 1994 p.33). By contrast, many academics have used Polanyi's framework of double movement and social transformation to understand global developments, neoliberalism and open regionalism. Polanyi's defining work 'The Great Transformation' (1944) has argued that the advancement of market societies over the past few hundred years has been shaped by a 'double movement'. On one side is the movement of laissez faire, which constitutes the concerted efforts made by a variety of elites to increase the scope and influence of self-regulating markets. Whereas on the other side, it can be described as a movement of protection, which takes the form of initiatives driven by a wide variety of social actors, in an attempt to insulate the fabric of social life

from the damaging effect of market pressures. For Block (2008), capitalism or market societies should be considered the product of both these movements; "it is an uneasy and fluid hybrid that reflects the shifting balance of power between these contending forces" (Block, 2008 p.1). Many contemporary academics have found Polanyi's concept of double movement valuable in understanding global developments over the last few decades (Block, 2008), (Berman, 2009), (Bugra and Agartan, 2007), (Evans, 2008) and (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Bjorn Hettne (2000) drawing on the work of Karl Polanyi (1944) and his theoretical framework of double movement and social transformation conceptualizes a contrasting view of open regionalism. According to both regionalization and globalization epitomize related yet different features of the contemporary transformation of world order. For Hettne *et al* (2000), in agreement with Polanyi's classical theory, contemporary globalization can be seen as a 'double movement', a 'second great transformation' where development and intensification of the market is ensued by a political intervention acting as a shield for social cohesion. Here the development of the market constitutes the initial movement and the societal reaction the second. Hettne *et al* (2005) suggests the second movement is comprised of counter-movements, which are created by the displacements associated with market infiltration into new areas. Thus regionalism can be seen as being part of both the first and second movement; "with a neoliberal face in the first, and a more interventionist orientation in the second. There is thus a transnational struggle over the political content of regionalization, as well as over that of globalisation" (Hettne *et al.*, 2005 p.548).

Furthermore, open regionalism in the contemporary world order, for Hettne *et al* (2005) increasingly represents "A political intervention in defence of social

cohesion” (Hettne et al., 2005 p.548), reacting to economic globalisation by moving towards the creation and development of a post-Westphalian system of transnational and regional governance “which is more than the political articulation of the transnational capitalist class” (Hettne et al., 2005 p.548).

Carranza (2010) drawing on the work of Strange (2009) and Hettne (1995, 2001, 2005) among others, has adopted a conceptualization of open regionalism that applies Polanyi’s theoretical framework of the ‘double movement’ dialectic. Carranza (2003, 2006, 2010), work has emphasized how historical moments of market dominance and promotion have seen driven through the medium of new regionalism and this has led to the emergence of counter-movements of political responses in addition to more transformative politically driven change (Carranza, 2010). The emergence of these counter-movements which exist at multiple levels of politics be it local, national, regional and global, have sought to check, control or modify the effect of market forces. From Carranza’s (2010) perspective new regionalism should be viewed as a form of opposition to neoliberalism, as it can in some instances serve as a form of resistance. Additionally, it should be viewed as a mechanism or platform where alternative norms and practices can be established (Carranza, 2010). An example of this kind of form of resistance can be seen with the emergence of ALBA. In agreement with Carranza (2003, 2006, 2010), ALBA at least in its early years, can be seen as a form of resistance that was created in response to a neoliberalism orientated regional movement (FTAA), which sought to check, control and modify the effect of neoliberal market forces.

3.3 Latin American regionalism

From the late 1950s regionalism has been a powerful and essential force in Latin America. Since its beginnings, regionalism within the Americas has been a platform from which to comprehend the complexities of internal and external influences. As Pia Riggiozzi in Hurrelmann and Schneider (2015) has suggested, the general understanding about Latin American regionalism has developed from the view that "Latin America engaged defensively in regional cooperation schemes to either counteract or better cope with the pressures of external forces" (Hurrelmann and Schneider, 2015 p.232). The evolution of regionalism within the Americas can be understood by looking at the distinct waves that have occurred within the region. The first wave of regionalism known as closed regionalism was created and developed under the inspiration of dependency theory in the 1960s. This first wave of closed/defensive/old regionalism, according to Riggiozzi and Grugel (2012), can be seen as direct response to the construction of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 and the "access of former colonies to the EEC by means of preferential agreements" (Riggiozzi and Grugel, 2012 p.6). As Mattli (1999), has highlighted, the following statement proclaimed by the President of Uruguay in the 1960s illustrates the extent of defensive regionalism's popularity, he declared that "the formation of the European Common Market is a state of near-war against Latin American exports. To an integration scheme we must respond with another integration" (Mattli, 1999 p.140). At the time, the general consensus with regards to this defensive orientation was that economic integration would enhance the "bargaining position and facilitate industrialisation through import substitution on a regional scale" (Riggiozzi and Tussie, 2012 p.6). In other words, regional arrangements within the Americas were created with the distinct objective of

establishing barriers against foreign goods, supporting regional industrialisation and seeking local markets for goods manufactured in the region. This defensive orientation emphasised through economic integration can be seen as the central element of old regionalism in Latin America, of which trade can be viewed as the main mechanism propelling this integration. The establishment of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) in 1960 can be seen as the first relevant trade initiative that was created out of a push for economic integration, whose main objective was to eliminate all barriers to intraregional trade between its member states. According to both Lewis (2005) and Panitch and Leys (2004), at the centre of this interregional trade initiative was the idea of 'bounded sovereign states', that had the ability to control the character of regional commitments and at the same time had the ability to protect their own domestic producers, through tariffs and subsidies, from external competition (Panitch and Leys, 2004). Riggiozzi (2012), has suggested, "In this context, economic nationalism framed a new way of thinking and speaking about politics, economics, and culture; while regionalism became a generalised reaction to the liberal rule" (Riggiozzi, 2012 p.6). Similar initiatives began to spring up within the region starting with the Central American Common Market, which emphasized the creation of a free trade area and the implementation of a common external tariff. Followed by the establishment of the Andean Community in 1969, which attempted to create an even more institutionally ambitious common market project through the development of an executive body "with 'supranational' powers and mechanisms to promote an equitable distribution of benefits" (Riggiozzi, 2012 p.6). Followed on by the creation of the Caribbean Free Trade Agreement (CARIFTA) in 1967. Despite these regional developments, economic protectionism and political

nationalism led to an uncompetitive and overvalued exchange rate for exports, leading to a trade deficit. Additionally, as Haggard and Kaufman (1992) have argued, public spending in the region was financed by growing external indebtedness, this took most of the region into a lost decade by the 1980s, which can be defined by economic collapse as well as a massive drop in living standards and employment (Haggard and Kaufman, 1992). The unsustainability of the aforementioned nationalistic development projects coupled with the failure of import substitution industrialization along with the many years of political repression, under military dictatorships that followed, "affected the spirit and the progress of closed regionalism" (Mattli, 1999 p.145). This decline, according to Riggiozzi (2012), represented not only "a failure to tie the region closely in terms of its cohesion but critically, a dilution of its identity" (Riggiozzi, 2012 p.6). As a result highly indebted economies within the region had no choice but to align themselves closely with the United States "a gatekeeper to external finance, and standard-bearer of 'open markets and open regionalism' " (Riggiozzi, 2012 p.6).

The early authoritarian implementation of neoliberal restructuring in Latin America began in the 1970s with the dictatorships of Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina. By the late 1980s the majority of Latin American countries had conformed and adopted neoliberal, market-orientated reforms. The neoliberal turn in the America's, however, was not the result of coercion but rather it was carried out through a complicated interrelationship between pro-neoliberal national governments, transnational corporation and intellectuals (typically economist) who forcefully promoted the neoliberal orthodoxy. Collectively according to Kellogg (2007), they manufactured consent for neoliberalism, which dominated Latin America for more than a generation (Kellogg, 2007). As Biglaiser and De

Rouen (2004) have suggested "Economic hardship caused, in part, by the previous initiation of import-substituting industrialization (ISI) policies, convinced these governments to reduce the role and size of the state in the economy" (Biglaiser and DeRouen, 2004 p.562). In the 1980s open regionalism became the dominant strategy for the economic integration of Latin American countries, attempting to link the economic inter-dependency of the economies of the Americas to deregulation and liberalization. According to Jilberto and Hogenboom (1996),

This neoliberal approach to insertion into the world economy by means of regionalization constitutes a clear shift away from the Keynesian concept of economic integration through import-substitution industrialization (ISI). Instead of focusing on national industrialization, the efforts are now directed at industrialization on a regional scale (Jilberto and Hogenboom, 1996 p.4).

Jilberto and Hogenboom (1996) have also suggested, that open regionalism in the Americas was based on two pillars. The first is centred on the growing economic interdependency occurring at a regional level, "urged by various Latin American integration agreements aiming to increase competitiveness in the world market" (Jilberto and Hogenboom, 1996 p.4). The second pillar is constructed on the regionalization of "national private elements that have been strengthened by the selling of public enterprises" (CEPAL, 1994). Additionally, open regionalism operates as a strategy of regulation and as a mechanism against the protectionist propensities of other regional economic blocs (Jilberto and Hogenboom, 1996).As Ghany et al. (2014), have suggested, Latin American open regionalism from the 1990s, was

Congenial with the neo-liberal free trade policies of what John Williamson aptly called the 'Washington consensus', that is, the combination of economic policies preferred both by the international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, IDB) and the US federal government (Ghany et al., 2014p.9).

Although the Washington Consensus "was mute about regional integration" (Dabene, 2012), the neo-classical economists closely associated with the region saw free markets and free trade as the only tangible route to faster growth. "Even the ECLAC revisited its doctrine, pressing for "open regionalism" (Dabene, 2012). Motivated by U.S. trade initiatives, most notably the North American Free Trade Agreement and by the European Union's move towards a unified market, a new treaty signed which initiated the establishment of Mercosur (The Common Market of the South). As Jilberto and Hogenboom (1996) have stated, the establishment of Mercosur arose as a response to the international strategy of bloc formation. It aimed to improve its negotiation capacity with the EC and US. However,

Only under the regimes of Collor de Mello (Brazil) and Menem (Argentina) did Mercosur acquire a neoliberal character. For Argentina, Mercosur has since been considered a mechanism to consolidate its neoliberal reforms and as a anteroom for later entry into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Jilberto and Hogenboom, 1996 p.8).

The academic literature available on the relationship between Mercosur and neoliberalism is divergent. On one side of the argument, authors such as Dabene (2012) and Oelsner (2013), view Mercosur as a regional project that is attempting

to mitigate the potentially pernicious effects of neoliberalism in the region. Pimenta (2014) has suggested that the

Regional framework of open economies for the member-states and maintenance of (reduced) barriers to other regions could provide time for the adaptation of private and public actors to the new conditions of free market and global competition, besides attracting foreign capital interested in penetrating a region with growth potential (Pimenta, 2014 p.12).

Contrastingly Phillips (2004) has argued that the reasoning under the transformation of the Argentina-Brazil cooperation treaties into the Mercosur was based on a lock-in of neoliberal principles” (Phillips, 2004). Thus, guaranteeing the creation of neoliberal institutions and markets would be the primary objective of the movement, furthermore ensuring the insertion of Mercosur in the “context of a neoliberal globalized economy” (Pimenta, 2014 p.12). In agreement with Phillips (2004) and Pimenta (2014), Kellogg (2007) has argued that Mercosur is a “creature of the Washington Consensus”, which acts as a facilitator for neoliberalism. The launch of Mercosur in 1991 with the signing of the Treaty of Asuncion occurred at the height of the neoliberal restructuring. According to Kellogg (2007) Mercosur should be viewed as a “regional integration scheme that functions within the neoliberal capitalist matrix because the push for Mercosur surged at the height of the Washington Consensus” (Kellogg, 2007 pp.194-195). Kellogg (2007) argued, that even its name (Common Market of the South) denotes that it is a “capitalist economic integration project”, where privatization can be seen as its central pillar since its establishment in 1991. Mercosur should therefore

be viewed as a regional project that is embedded in the neoliberal orthodoxy (Kellogg, 2007).

The above literature on Mercosur, which situates the regional project as a function of neoliberalism, is relevant to this thesis as it operates in contrast to ALBA. Unlike Mercosur, ALBA can be seen as a very visible form of contestation against neoliberalism, at the very least, from an ideological basis. In order to understand how and in what ways ALBA has been created to act as a form of resistance to both US hegemony and by extension neoliberalism, it is necessary to look at the development of post-hegemonic/post-neoliberal regionalism in Latin American and the various factors which led to the creation of ALBA.

3.4: Post-hegemonic regionalism and the creation of ALBA as a form of resistance

Along with Mercosur and CAN, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the hemisphere-wide free trade agreement proposed by the US in 1994, can also be seen as a form of neoliberal/open regionalism. As Chodor and McCarthy-Jones (2013) have suggested, the FTAA “Sought to ‘lock in’ the neoliberal reforms achieved over the previous decade, thus entrenching the American political and economic model in the region, while also opening up new and favourable markets to American capital” (Chodor and McCarthy-Jones, 2013 p.214). By integrating Latin America politically, through enforcing American inspired political structures and liberal democratic values and economically through the liberalization of economic policies, the FTAA provided the US with an opportunity to remake its relationship with the Americas. As Nelson (2008) notes, “In the absence of an immediate threat in the hemisphere, the United States was given a window to ensure its hegemony in the Americas on the basis of common political and

economic values without recourse to coercive methods” (Nelson, 2008 p.1). Furthermore as Prevost and Oliva (2002), have argued the FTAA should be seen as a form of neo pan-Americanism - a neoliberal regional project designed by the US to integrate the hemisphere under its leadership (Prevost and Oliva, 2002). In agreement with Prevost and Oliva (2002) Riggirozzi (2012) has suggested that the FTAA symbolizes the US’s ambition in relation to intra-hemispheric relations which bears resemblance to the old vision of Pan-Americanism, under the new umbrella of neoliberalism. Likewise, Marchand (2005) in an edited book by Eschle and Maignashca (2005), has argued that the FTAA is a reflection of a modern Monrovia geopolitical paradigm, where the US seeks to establish its presence within the Americas, in an attempt to economically compete with other regional agreements in Asia and Europe and/or to keep non-US competition out of the Americas (Eschle and Maignashca, 2005).

For some scholars, most notably Riggirozzi (2012), the creation of FTAA as well as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) as models of American-led regionalism should be seen as a double-edged sword. However, according to Tussie (2009), NAFTA’s establishment “triggered panic reactions in a spate of excluded countries” (Tussie, 2009 p.172). Although, the very idea of neoliberal regionalism was highly contested by social actors internally within one major partner, Mexico, but also, externally by the global financial crisis of 1995 and its subsequent Tequila effect. Indeed, by the end of the 1990s the unfavourable effects of integration in relation to both development and social cohesion contributed to deep seeded disillusionment with neoliberal policies as they failed to make any significant impact on the region a side from controlling inflation. As a result of this failure, many economies within the Americas experienced unsustainable levels of

inequality, rising indebtedness and poverty, which resulted in a change of attitudes within the region towards pro-market reforms (Riggirozzi, 2012). This resulted in growing disenchantment with neoliberalism, leading to the FTAA negotiations encountering major difficulties. Support for the US inspired regional project began to dwindle and lose legitimacy. The lack of enthusiasm for neoliberalism and the open regionalism that was associated with it was heightened as the US hegemonic intentions for the region became more pronounced during the FTAA negotiations, with the US unwilling to compromise on issues of concern for countries in the Americas. Most importantly the US refused to budge on agricultural subsidies (Burges, 2016). As the agenda of integration ushered in by the FTAA negotiations encountered the difficulties of losing support and legitimacy, the US paradoxically, turned to a number of bilateral trade deals that, although more resilient, “profoundly shook the US transformational goal of hemispheric integration” (Phillips, 2004 p.23). Consequently, according to Riggirozzi (2012), the diminishing appeal of neoliberal/open regionalism has been linked with “a dwindling leverage of US hegemonic power in the Americas, a general loss of faith in neoliberal economics, and the gradual re-emergence of nationalistic views of political economy across the region” and the emergence of the ‘new left’ (Riggirozzi, 2012). The rise of the new left in the Americas, reflected a rejection of both marketised versions of democracy and neoliberalism and propose instead a “new politics’, founded on an altered understanding of inclusion and democracy. At a regional level, this transformed understanding led to an increase in regional commitments in an attempt to enhance cooperation amongst Latin American nations and has acted as a form of resistance to US power. As Riggorizzi (2012) has suggested,

Ideational aspects of what Latin America should mean in the face of the crisis of neoliberalism together with the establishment of ad hoc institutions supporting new transnational networks of solidarity were in fact the two elements that redefine the contours of regionalism in Latin America since the early 2000s (Riggirozzi, 2012 p.431).

At the Fourth Summit of the Americas in 2005, it was evident that support for the proposed FTAA was divided, between those favouring the proposed FTAA, notably Canada, Mexico and the US along with a few Latin American countries that were dependent on US preferential trade agreements and another dissenting group, which included participating countries in Mercosur along with Bolivia and Venezuela. The dissenting group declared themselves against any form of US inspired hemispheric trade agreements and rejected the FTAA as a whole (Kellogg 2007). As Riggirozzi (2012) notes, “it soon became clear that the window of opportunity that opened for Washington to remake the hemisphere in its own image had found clear limits” (Riggirozzi, 2012 p.431).

From the early 2000s onwards, changes in the Latin American political economy began to emerge. A rise of left and centre left political forces exponentially grew in popularity, resulting in their ascendance to government across the region; “beginning with the election of Hugo Chavez to Presidency of Venezuela in 1998 and then spreading to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay and Honduras” (Sader, 2008). As a consequence of the rise of the left, the proposed formation of the FTAA never materialized. Instead, the Latin American region began to reinvent itself, forming, what some have called, a post-hegemonic regional order which redefined the boundaries of regional integration (Chodor and McCarthy-Jones, 2013). One of the defining elements of this ‘post-

hegemonic' regional order is "its move away from integration through economic means like free trade and markets, towards a more explicitly 'political' focus on attaining autonomy from external forces, so that the region can set and regulate its own political agenda" (Burges, 2016 p.102). According to Burges (2016) this aspect of 'post-hegemonic' regionalism is reflective of not only an increasingly intense and strained relationship with the US, but it also signifies a recognition of the inadequacies of the first wave of regionalism in the 1960s, where "the American domination of the regional political architecture allowed it to intervene in the region and shape the political agenda to suit its interests" (Burges, 2016 p.102). Furthermore, the 'post-hegemonic/post-liberal' regional projects represent a move away from neoliberal/open regionalism, as this new wave of regionalism in the Americas moved beyond its commitment to Washington, putting forth an explicit developmental agenda, where the state's role became prominent. According to Burges (2016) a fundamental feature of this is the attempt to enhance the autonomy of Latin America in the global economy, especially

From transnational capital and the IFIs- so that the region can pursue an 'endogenous' development strategy reflective of the regional context, rather than submitting to a universalist one defined in Washington. It is also a project that promotes a 'social' dimension to development, including a focus on alleviating poverty and disadvantage and correcting developmental asymmetries between countries in the region (Burges, 2016 p.41).

Overall, this move towards a 'post-hegemonic/post-liberal' regional order signified, at least in the 2000s, a renewed pursuit for regional autonomy, from both the global economy and from American hegemony, and its economic and political

agenda for the Americas. Both Riggiozzi (2012) and Burges (2016) have suggested that this move towards a 'post-hegemonic/post-liberal' regional order in the Americas, represents a return to Bolívar's alternative vision of regional integration, one that invokes his vision directly and openly as it seeks to create and develop a regional order that is built on the notions of cooperation, social justice and solidarity (Burges, 2016). As a result of the emergence of this new 'post-hegemonic' regional order, forms of contestation to both open regionalism and neoliberalism as a whole began to emerge throughout the 2000s in Latin America; most noteworthy was the creation of ALBA in 2004. ALBA, sometimes known as the pillar of Venezuelan foreign policy (Pimenta, 2014) was initially established from the 2000 Cuban-Venezuelan Integral Cooperation Agreement and was later formalized with the 2004 ALBA Integration Agreement. The project was born out of resistance to the FTAA proposed by the US and is centred around the ideas of endogenous development and a 'twenty-first-century socialism' that replaces the competitive advantage with the cooperative advantage. According to Eschle and Maignashca (2005), ALBA originates from the Bolivarian ideal of a united Latin America where Bolívar wanted all the nations of Latin America to unite and ally with the United Kingdom in attempt to counterbalance the Spanish and US hegemonic forces within the region and establish a counter-hegemonic force (Eschle and Maignashca, 2005). ALBA's central focus resides on the inter-relationships between Latin American nations and its main objective of establishing a strong bloc of solidarity against neo-liberal projects. It was originally created as a mechanism for forging a unified front against the US by Venezuela and Cuba. For many including Fritz (2007), Sanahuja (2012) and Bourbon (2012a), ALBA can be considered a counter-hegemonic regional movement that was created and

developed in a post-hegemonic era and as a result it is engaged in a war of position against the neoliberal historic bloc, attempting to destabilize its legitimacy and consent. For Kellogg (2007) ALBA does not just implicitly contest the FTAA and neoliberalism as a whole. Rather, the contestation is explicit in the founding document of the ALBA process. This explicit challenge to neoliberalism is evident with the formal articulation of the ALBA philosophy by the Venezuelan Bank of External Commerce (Bancoex).

The Bolivarian Government of Venezuela is against the processes of liberalization, deregulation and privatization that limit the capacity of the state and the Government to design and to execute policies in defence of the right of our people to have access to essential services of good quality and at good prices ... For the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela, the public services are for satisfying the needs of people, not for commerce and economic profit. Therefore, its benefits cannot be governed by the criteria of profit but by social interest (Bancoex 2004).

For Kellogg (2007) this Bancoex document illustrates ALBA's emphasis on the fight against social exclusion and poverty. The document situates ALBA as an extension of international trade which priorities the philosophy and politics of the Bolivarian state. Furthermore, it argues that

Recognizing and correcting asymmetries between participating countries has to be at the centre of the development and application of ALBA. The idea is to help the weakest countries to overcome the disadvantage that separates them from the most powerful countries of the hemisphere (Kellogg, 2007 p. 14).

As a result of this recognition, Bancoex argued for the establishment of “Compensatory Funds of Structural Convergence or the SUCRE”. For Arreaza (2005) the creation of the SUCRE should be seen as the “corner stone in the design of ALBA” (Arreaza 2005), a mechanism that acts to ensure that “trade relations do not become the institutionalization of a hierarchy of nations, but a mechanism for the levelling of that hierarchy of nations, in the interest of the poorest and smallest economies” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 14). This mechanism can be likened to the Canadian federal system, where equalization payments, embedded in the fiscal structure, have been used to transfer wealth from rich to poor sections of the polity. However, similarities between the Canadian equalization payments, and ALBA are only formal. As Kellogg (2007) argues, “The ALBA proposals are “equalization payments” on a hemispheric basis, transcending national borders, and imbued with a distrust of traditional trade deals-equalization on anti-neoliberal steroids” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 14).

3.5 Conclusion

Overall this chapter provided an avenue by which Robert Cox’s notion of world order can be utilised in order to understand the contemporary rise of regionalism. It looked specifically at the relationship between open regionalism and neoliberalism in order to determine how the rise of neoliberalism has affected and shaped regionalism in the contemporary era. It then gave a detailed account of the evolution of Latin American regionalism. It looked at specific factors and events, which shaped the closed regionalism era and investigated the region’s transition into open regionalism by means of neoliberalism. The chapter then gave a detailed account of factors, which have led to the failure of the FTAA. It was suggested that

from the early 2000s onwards a new Latin American political economy emerged. This change can be directly associated with the rise of the left and centre left political forces and their exponential growth in popularity, which has resulted in the ascension of left and left centred governments across the region. It has looked at how the Latin American region has reinvented itself in an attempt to attain and enhance autonomy and in the process has, according to some academics, created a post-hegemonic regional order, which has redefined the boundaries of regional integration. It has also suggested that the emergence of 'post-hegemonic' regionalism in Latin America is reflective of not only an increasing intense and strained relationship with the US but also signifies a recognition of the inadequacies of neoliberal open regionalism. Furthermore, this section has argued that the 'post-hegemonic' regional project represents a new wave of regionalism in the Americas, one that has moved beyond its commitment to Washington, and has put forth its own explicit developmental agenda, one where the state's role is prominent. From this change in the Latin American political economy, forms of contestation to open regionalism have emerged; most noteworthy was the creation of ALBA in 2004. The argument put forth in the piece has suggested that ALBA should be seen as a form of contestation to US hegemony and to neoliberalism. It has suggested that it represents a modern-day Bolivarian project that's central focus resides on the inter-relations between Latin American nations and its main objective of establishing a strong bloc of solidarity against neo-liberal projects. As a result, this work has argued that ALBA can be considered a form of resistance that is attempting to move beyond neoliberal open regionalism.

The following chapter will focus specifically on the social forces that led to the creation of ALBA. It will give a detailed account of the rise of the left and twenty-

first-century socialism, in an attempt to understand how and why ALBA emerged and developed as a form of contestation to the current world order.

Chapter 4: The rise of the contemporary left in Latin America

4.1: Introduction

In the 1990s the Americas was essentially used as a laboratory for neoliberal experiments. During this decade, Latin America was seen as a privileged territory of neoliberalism, particularly in Bolivia and Chile, where it was initially implemented. However, according to Sader (2008), by the 2000s, the Americas had “rapidly turned into the leading arena not just for resistance but for the construction of alternatives to neoliberalism” (Sader, 2008 p.5). To understand how and why this transformation took place, it is first necessary to look at the historical evolution of neoliberalism in the Americas in the 1980s and 1990s and assess the model’s failure to consolidate the necessary social forces for its stabilization. Through analysing these historical events, this chapter will then focus on the rise of the contemporary left in the region and look at how and in what ways this shift in political ideology became a form of counter-hegemonic resistance against neoliberal hegemony. This chapter will also reflect on the sustainability of the so-called ‘Pink Tide’, a term used frequently throughout the 2000s to describe the rise of the left as a whole. Whilst the sustainability of the ‘Pink Tide’ within Latin America in the 2000s was indeed more optimistically reflected in academic literature (Chodor 2014; Muhr 2016), over the last few years, its very existence has been called into question. This retreat will be reflected throughout the chapter; with reference made to the recent move right in various Latin American countries.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many governments across Latin America implemented Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) as the principal economic model, in an attempt to achieve socio-economic modernization and economic growth. Prior to

the ISI model, severe economic crisis in the region had triggered widespread social unrest, resulting in mass stabilization and development efforts led by both the urban bourgeoisie and technocratic state officials from across the region. These efforts, according to Cardoso and Faletto (1979) led to the creation and development of historic blocs which sought to produce capitalist development through the strategy of import substitution industrialisation (Cardoso, 1979). ISI attempted to move the region away from its dependence on exports of primary commodities towards the development of domestic markets and industrialization. According to Chodor (2014), the ISI historic bloc was successful because “it fitted within the broad framework of the Pax Americana order but also reflected the local context” (Chodor, 2014 p.66). By the 1970s however, cracks were appearing across the Americas, with regards to the model’s ability to solve the region’s development problems. According to Baer (1972), unemployment was on the rise, industrial growth had slowed, income distribution remained unchanged and in some countries it had even become more concentrated and lastly, prices of industrial goods produced in the region increased so dramatically that the exportation of such goods was severely limited (Baer, 1972). The positive attributes of the ISI model, most notably self-sufficiency, autonomous development and increased economic growth rates across the region quickly fell to the waste side as a soaring debt crisis began to suffocate the region’s development aspirations. As a result, the ISI historic bloc fell into an organic crisis from the mid-1970s onwards. This organic crisis was revealed at a regional level with the emergence of multiple political crises, economic upheavals, growing civil unrest and mass mobilization. The combination of which, ultimately led to its unravelling and its failure paved the way for military takeovers eventually leading to the creation of a neoliberal world

order. A neoliberal world order which attempted to reconstruct Latin American societies by curtailing the state's role in the economy and reorienting the region's focus towards integration within the global economy.

Of the factors leading to the organic crisis of the ISI bloc, mass mobilization in some instances had radicalized, as was the case with Chile in the early 1970s. Led by Salvador Allende, the Popular Unity Coalition came to power and aspired to implement socialism through democratic methods. Subsequently, in countries such as Colombia and Uruguay, guerrilla movements inspired by Marxism, started to appear, actively seeking to overthrow the ruling elite, in an attempt to instil socialism through force. According to Munck (2006) however, in many cases the demands were not as far-reaching, instead they were limited to the preservation of existing gains or the implementation of industrialisation where it did not exist (Munck, 2006). In response to the growing civil unrest in Chile in the 1970s, the Chilean military stepped in and took power. This military response was replicated throughout the region and by the mid-1970s almost every country within the Americas (with the exception of Venezuela, Costa Rica and Colombia) was under military or authoritarian control. As Wiarda and Kline (2000) have pointed out, the sheer magnitude of military takeovers across the region exposed the fundamental failure of the ISI bloc's ability to achieve a lasting hegemony (Wiarda and Kline, 2000). Furthermore, Chodor (2014) suggests, that "Ultimately the bourgeoisie failed to become a hegemonic class that could move beyond its own narrow 'economic-corporative' mind-set and offer the kind of leadership that would ensure widespread consent" (Chodor, 2014 p.71).

As a consequence of this failure, from a Gramscian perspective, the military played a 'Caesarist' role, a third force if you will, intervening in a conflict where both the

bourgeoisie and the subordinate classes were not powerful enough to overcome the other. Munck (2007) has argued that military regimes across the region attempted to resolve the problems that had led to the organic crisis of the ISI bloc. For many military regimes, the crisis was the result of an excess of 'populism' that had led to the politicization and radicalization of society, the combination of which had the potential to lead to a 'socialist takeover'. "Accordingly, the military regimes announced that they would cleanse their societies of the 'cancers' of populism and socialism in order to make them 'safe for capitalism'" (Munck, 2007 p.36).

Although military methods for extinguishing socialist aspirations varied within the region, most methods employed repressed these anti-capitalist tendencies through fear and violence. However, in some instances, states went beyond mere repression tactics, as was the case with the regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile 1973. US-backed Pinochet overthrew Salvador Allende in 1973 and began an ambitious project. Backed by a group of Chilean economists, who trained under Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago, right-wing Pinochet attempted to transform the economy, under the guidance of the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), by unleashing its market forces. Chile essentially became the laboratory for neoliberalism, as the regime set out to radically curtail the state's role in the economy and re-orient its focus towards integration with the global economy. By reducing tariffs and liberalizing finance and trade, the country was flooded with cheap imports, which led to the destruction of domestic industries. Additionally, the Chilean economy returned to a reliance on primary exports as its main source of economic growth. The state itself withdrew from the economy by eliminating subsidies and price controls, privatizing state assets, deregulating labour and investment, drastically reducing state spending and "extending market logics to all

aspects of social life, so that even the social security system was privatised” (Chodor, 2014 p.71). The regime’s justification for its policies according to Munck (2007) “was a harbinger of the ideological project the neoliberal forces would propagate against Keynesianism” (Munck, 2007 p. 38). The Junta justified its position by arguing that it was saving the country from statism, which had allowed a Marxists like Allende to cease power, and who had attempted to guide Chile towards totalitarianism (Munck, 2007). Throughout the course of the 1990s, “the combined and closely related processes of military dictatorships and the application of neoliberal models acted together to yield an extreme regression in the balance of power between social classes” (Sader, 2008 p. 7).

Indeed, neoliberalism infiltrated the Americas across the political spectrum. As was the case with Pinochet’s Chile, it found other right-wing willing participants, such as Peru’s Alberto Fujimori but also, according to Sader (2008), neoliberalism incorporated forces that had historically been associated with nationalism, forces such as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) of Mexico, the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement of Bolivia and the Peronism in Argentina under Carlos Menem. From here, neoliberalism turned its attention to social democracy, captivating the hearts and minds of Venezuela’s Acción Democrática, the Brazilian Social-Democratic party, and the Chilean Socialist Party. In short, neoliberalism “became a hegemonic system across almost the entire territory of Latin America” (Sader, 2008 p. 7). Although neoliberal reforms in the Americas were essentially imposed from above, the construction of the neoliberal historic bloc was not established merely through coercive means, as has been indicated by the aforementioned. The construction of the neoliberal world order was accompanied by an ideological struggle; accordingly, in order to achieve consent neoliberal

forces extended a specific worldview among policymaking elites, which was founded on a preference for the market over the state, with regard to economic development. This ideology became known as the Washington Consensus. By the 1990s the Washington Consensus ideology was essentially hegemonic amongst policymaking elites in the Americas, “who came to accept its basic tenets as common sense, as they lost faith in the possibility of resolving the organic crisis through heterodox means” (Chodor, 2014 p. 76). Western-educated Latin American technocrats and economists on returning to their homelands, became “their own country’s free market organic intellectuals, carrying out wars of position aimed at winning consent for neoliberal restructuring” (Chodor, 2014 p. 76). This consent was pursued through the establishment of an ideological project, a project that not only identified the reasons behind Latin America’s economic and political problems but also more importantly proposed an antidote to tackle the organic crisis. This antidote came in the form of free-market economics, which attempted to rid the region of its predecessor’s inefficiencies by restructuring the entire region’s economic and political structure, in the name of progress and prosperity. However, neoliberal hegemony in the region was tenuous at best. As Gramsci and later Cox have highlighted, hegemony is considerably more problematic in the periphery because it is developed through a process of passive revolution, which represents only a limited transformation of the social order. With this considered, neoliberalism despite its promises, failed to achieve its goal to consolidate the necessary social forces for its stabilization in the region. This failure resulted in crises that sweep across the region. The most affected by this failure were Mexico (1994), Brazil (1999) and Argentina (2002), who all experienced a dramatic economic crisis. These separate yet related incidences highlighted the

inadequacies of the neoliberal mandated Structural Adjustment Programme, which failed to deliver on its promises. As Sader (2008) points out, it was neoliberalism's poor and inadequate economic performances in the region, which in many instances, led to the defeat of the governments that initiated it. Overall, the neoliberal passive revolution in Latin America resulted in the creation of a fragile order. This fragility allowed for a far-reaching and increasingly vocal rejection of neoliberalism resulting in counter-hegemonic responses within the region.

The Latin American counter-hegemonic forms of contestation began initially with a wide variety of social movements emerging on the terrain of civil society, demanding social justice and inclusion in social order. Such movements operated outside the formal structures of political society and included landless workers' movements and peasants, indigenous movements and new political parties and unions. Empowered by a discourse of equality and democracy, these various movements according to Chodor (2014),

Engaged neoliberalism on its own terms, demanding their rights and grievances be acknowledged and resolved in the context of democratic society. In doing so, they contested the neoliberal ideological project based on democracy and equality, challenging the meanings associated with these ideas, and seeking to construct new, more democratic, and socially just ones (Chodor, 2014 p. 87).

The emergence of such social movements across the region highlighted neoliberalism's organic crisis and signified that it was no longer accepted as the common sense. Indeed, the crisis of neoliberalism and mass resistance engendered by social movements organized to contest the neoliberal policies of exclusion and inequality can be seen as representative of Polanyi's double movement (the evident

push for social protection against marketization by social movements). Furthermore, as these social movements gained momentum and strength, they began to unite with other radical social forces to contest the inequalities produced by neoliberalism. The unification of both the various social movements and radical social forces resulted in a space within the political sphere for left-leaning, anti-neoliberal ideologically driven parties to gain support from the masses. This push back against neoliberalism eventually resulted in leftist governments taking office across the region. Beginning with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998, followed by the election of left and centre-left governments in Chile in 2000, 2006 and 2013, Brazil in 2002, 2006 and 2010, Argentina in 2003, 2007 and 2011, Bolivia in 2005 and 2009, Uruguay in 2005, 2010, Ecuador in 2006, 2009 and 2013, Nicaragua in 2006 and 2011, Guatemala 2007, Paraguay in 2008 and El Salvador in 2009 and 2014.

The following section will look specifically at the rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, the symbolic figurehead of the so-called 'Pink Tide' movement. It will mainly focus on Chávez's idea of twenty-first-century socialism and investigate how and in what ways this particular ideology gained momentum across the region.

4.2 Hugo Chávez and twenty-first century socialism

Undoubtedly the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998, Morales of Bolivia in 2005 and Correa of Ecuador in 2006 represented a turning point for the politics of Latin America. Specifically, Chávez's ascendance to power, as it is often cited, can be considered as a pinnacle symbol of the beginning of the 'Pink Tide' and the move left across the region. This leftist rise in the 2000s led to the construction of various forms of resistance in the wake of the organic crisis of neoliberalism. However, it is

necessary to point out that, unlike the Bolivian experience, the Venezuelan split from the neoliberal state with the election of Chávez was not a result of the mass mobilization of radical social forces. As Silva (2016) has argued, prior to Chávez's election, the episodes of contestation that occurred within Venezuela throughout the 1990s were unsuccessful in creating a united coordinated anti-neoliberal front against the state, which as Burron (2014) points out, "managed confrontation with labour by maintaining elements of the old national-popular compromise that predated neoliberalism" (Burron, 2014 p. 62). Thus, the radicalization of Venezuela under Chávez that ensued over the preceding fourteen years was equally the result of the intensified class struggle from below as it was from the radical direction initiated from above. Chávez's early years in power can be considered as his most formative, as he introduced important reforms, including a new constitution that was approved through a popular referendum in 1999. All the reforms that Chávez implemented in the early years illustrate both the protagonist and participatory features of democracy in Venezuela. The record number of referenda and recall initiatives that took place under Chávez encouraged the full political participation of Venezuelan citizens, giving the citizenry a voice within politics, in an attempt to encourage the values of democracy and protagonism in the popular common sense. Indeed, as Burron (2014) has highlighted,

The establishment of a constitutional assembly and a New Magna Carta in 1999 (approved by referendum) provided the beginnings of a counter-hegemonic legal-institutional framework to replace the neoliberal polyarchy, one that would become a defining feature of left governments across the region (Burron, 2014 p. 62).

With the support of the masses, Chávez put forth the idea of twenty-first-century socialism. This new type of socialism, according to Wilpert (2007) could not be considered as pre-defined or indeed foreign, but rather a homemade version and “constructed every day” (Wilpert, 2007 p. 239). According to Silva (2016), twenty-first-century socialism can be defined as “a comprehensive post-neoliberal program for socioeconomic development” (Silva, 2016 p. 4). Key to its construction, the Chávez government went about creating new social, economic and political structures from which 50 laws including Venezuela’s new constitution were implemented. It was these changes to the dynamics of the country’s political landscape that would, allow space for the formation of the revolutionary collective will. The popularity of Chávez began to change in 2001 when he introduced a series of laws, which challenged the privileges and rights of the capitalist class. According to Chodor (2014),

This sparked a four-year period of open and, at times, violent struggle, as the dominant classes rejected Chávez’s legitimacy and attempted to remove him from power, including a failed coup in April 2002, an oil industry lockout in December 2002 to February 2003 that crippled the economy, and a recall referendum in August 2004 (Chodor, 2014 p. 103).

It wasn’t however, until after the failure of the US-supported coup of 2002 that the Bolivarian Revolution embarked on a radical path. In the wake of the coup, thousands of marginalized and working-class Venezuelans rallied together and protested on behalf of its government. As a result of this confrontational stance, Chavismo was “subsequently push in a more popular direction by mass participation and the full socialization of the economy” (Burron, 2014 p. 63). By

2005, Chávez and his government had strengthened its hold over the political sphere and most importantly over the *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A (PDVSA)*. Although on the terrain of civil society, the struggle with the dominant class continued to intensify. Regardless, Chávez was able to use both the state and his hold over the PDVSA to begin to create the necessary social, political and economic structures that would foster the Bolivarian collective will which was vital for the implementation of twenty-first century socialism. As defined by Muhr (2012) twenty-first-century socialism can be understood as “the collective transformation of the system of private property, towards the ‘collective structuration of production and distribution ... as a material base of a just order in accordance with the needs of the working class” (Muhr, 2012 p. 228). Comparable to the democratic socialism under Sandinista, Chávez’s version combines several elements of social experiences and practices along with philosophies in the construction of a ‘communal economy’ (Muhr, 2012). As Chávez grew in popularity so too did his idea of twenty-first century socialism, eventually leading to its construction. The political structures as envisioned and carried out by Chávez, sought to embed institutionally popular participation in the development of the Bolivarian Revolution, this concept later became known as protagonist revolutionary democracy and can be considered the “definitional foundation of twenty-first century socialism” (Muhr, 2012 p. 228). The overall aim was to insert collective values in the consciousness of the masses in order to drive the revolutionary process. In relation to economic structures, the government sought to promote and develop the collective will by enhancing the ‘human development’ of the Venezuelan people. As the Government proclaimed in 1999 in Article 299 of the constitution,

The economic regime of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is based on the principles of social justice, democratization, efficiency, free competition, protection of the environment, productivity, and solidarity, with a view of ensuring the overall human development and dignified and useful existence of the community (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 1999).

With every attempt to implement new economic structures, the dominant class in Venezuela met it with opposition. By 2005, the Bolivarian Revolution began to move towards socialism, with Chávez proclaiming, “every day I become more convinced, there is no doubt in my mind...that it is necessary to transcend capitalism. But capitalism can’t be transcended from within capitalism itself, but through socialism, true socialism, with equality and justice” (Sojo, 2005). A fundamental feature of this type of socialism was the concept of the ‘social economy’, in which “the profit motive is replaced by a focus on the satisfaction of collective needs”. According to Chávez, as cited in Chodor (2014) the purpose of this new focus is “the construction of the new man, of the new woman, of the new society” (Chodor 2014, p.107). The construction of the social economy was carried out both through top-down measures, by nationalizing strategic sectors of the economy such as oil and electricity and bottom-up activities, with the development of cooperatives with incentives such as training, tax rebates, preferential contracts, and low-interest loans. These bottom-up measures, seek to democratise the workplace and encourage production and solidarity for the collective good rather than self-interest.

Overall, the progression of the social economy was slow and considerably careful as the construction of a radical society entails years of a persistent war of position

in order to “embed a class consciousness consistent with the Bolivarian vision of a genuinely democratic society” (Chodor, 2014 p. 108). With this considered, Venezuela’s primary priority was to safeguard the slowly democratizing political economy from the external powerful forces of the neoliberal world order. Subsequently, the Venezuelan government applied anti-neoliberal measures in an attempt to make the country more autonomous within the global economy. The promotion of economic growth and sovereignty was carried out through short-term measures such as the reintroduction of tariffs, the prevention of capital flight, and the introduction of currency controls to stabilize the Bolívar, along with substantial state spending on services and infrastructure, coupled with the reassertion of control over the PDVSA, led to a dramatic increase in the government’s revenues in the 2000s (Robertson, 2012). Venezuela’s long-term measures for ensuring greater autonomy in the global economy has been carried out through the diversification of its export markets. This has been done through expanding trade with non-western countries, particularly China.

Overall, Venezuela’s anti-neoliberal economic strategy can be seen, as a crucial element to the construction of the Bolivarian collective will for a number of reasons. Firstly, the macroeconomic strategy, at least initially, aided the state with the promotion of its autonomy within the global economy and secondly it challenged “the neoliberal common sense that promotes market logic as the *modus operandi* of economic governance and social life” (Chodor, 2014 p. 111). However, it must be stated that regardless of its radical and counter-hegemonic nature, the economic strategy employed continues to support a largely capitalist economy. Nevertheless, the government’s alternative strategy for autonomy and development through twenty-first-century socialism in the 2000s inspired and influenced many left and

centre-left governments from across the region to move beyond neoliberalism and has led to a variety of individual and collective attempts to construct counter-hegemonic alternatives to neoliberalism and US-imperialism. Furthermore, this attempt to construct counter-hegemonic alternatives is driven by the collective desire to achieve regional independence and self-determination. In a neo-Gramscian sense, this desire has translated into a Bolivarian regional historic bloc building initiative, which can be seen as a Latin American effort that represents a regional drive aimed at creating endogenous development and autonomy based on Simon Bolivar's vision of a united Latin America. An example of which, can be seen with the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance of the People of our America (ALBA). Indeed, the role of the left has played a vital part in reshaping regionalism in Latin America. The following section will specifically look at how and in what ways like-minded left states has led to the construction of a new era of regional dynamics in Latin America, in an attempt to develop an alternative model of regional integration within Latin America.

4.3 The role of the Left in reshaping Latin American regionalism

As outlined in the previous sections, neoliberalism failed to effectively address and combat the inequalities it has produced within the Latin American region. As the fragilities of the Washington Consensus became more apparent, the region bared witness to an uprising of mass movements and the growth of left or centre of left governments, which came together championing ideas to improve redistribution of social services and income, autonomy and advancing an alternative regional development agenda. As a result, open regionalist projects associated with neoliberalism such as Mercosur (Southern Common Market), began to take on a

leftist position, expressed in its commitment to addressing the inequitable distribution of wealth through social development initiatives. Indeed Mercosur, which Kellogg (2007) had referred to as “a creature of the Washington Consensus” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 194) became an instrument for progressionists to resist neoliberalism and foster a socio-political agenda instead of promoting market goals (Tussie, 2009). Although many academics would cite the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 as the beginning of the ‘Pink Tide’ in Latin America, there are other significant benchmarks that should be considered as events that aided in its popularity and use of the term. In particular, the creation of the World Social Forum in 2001 and the election of Lula da Silva and the Workers Party in 2002, followed by the election of left or left-centred governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay. With this left turn, regional integration projects began to be framed around solidarity and the consolidation of shared approaches. As Riggiozzi and Tussie (2012) note, “South America became a ready platform for the reignition of regionalism incorporating the normative dimensions of a new era moving beyond American-led patterns of trade integration” (Riggiozzi and Tussie, 2012 p.1). This leftist shift in regional integration brought to the forefront of its agenda the issue of social inequalities as well as offering alternative paths of greater autonomy from the US. Under the direction of this leftist turn, new forms of regional integration projects began to emerge. The expansion of Mercosur in 2003, along with the creation of ALBA in 2004, as well as the development of UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations) in 2008 can all be seen as examples of this shift. For Riggiozzi and Tussie (2012), both ALBA and UNASUR should be considered, leftist inspired regional integration projects that are redefining new ideological and geographical boundaries while “fostering new consensuses that are

defined regionally, not globally, and supported by the mainly state-led practices, institutions and funding mechanisms in new social fields such as education, health, employment, energy, infrastructure and security” (Riggirozzi and Tussie, 2012 p.6). Indeed, these regional integration movements began to reshape regional boundaries, moving beyond “the historical hub of what defined US and market-led regionalism” (Riggirozzi and Tussie, 2012 p.6). For Ruiz (2001) the emergence of this type of leftist inspired regional integration movements can be considered as the forth wave of regionalism, which is strategic by nature (Ruiz, 2001). Others have labelled it post-liberal (Veiga, 2007) while others see it as post-hegemonic (Riggirozzi and Tussie, 2012).

Despite the various understandings of how to define these regional initiatives, there seems to be a common consensus that both UNASUR and ALBA represent a move away from a predominant focus on economic objectives and free trade to cooperation in a wide range of areas, such as from macroeconomic to industrial cooperation, to monetary, social and development cooperation. With regards to the Union of South American Nations, a regional integration project that offers a single umbrella for various sub-regional schemes represents “the assertion of newly confident governments in the region, for the first time in a generation able to envisage economic and social development outside of US hegemony, and looking for an alternative path that will allow them greater room for manoeuvre” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 209). Indeed, driven by governments who have been highly critical of neoliberalism, its influence is visibly articulated in its objectives outlined in the Constitutive treaty of UNASUR, which clearly expresses the necessity of integration and unity amongst Latin American states, in order to support social inclusion and poverty eradication in ways that are based on the realization of rights (Riggirozzi

and Tussie, 2012). As Riggiozzi and Grugel (2015) have pointed out “Supporting rights-based social policy, delivered through member states, came to be framed as ‘regional’ responsibility” (Riggiozzi and Grugel, 2015). Thus, UNASUR became a space for political action. Additionally, according to Vivares (2016), UNASUR’s focus on social and developmental issues can be directly linked to the emergence of leftist governments in the region, and their push towards either developmental or redistributive development models (Vivares, 2016). Efforts made by the US to assure itself a captive market in Latin America, which endeavoured to reinforce the mould of US-dominated hemispheric integration, did indeed lead to the “crystallization of UNASUR by way of negative reactions among South American states to North American regionalist initiatives” (Vivares, 2016 p.30). UNASUR’s anti-neoliberal sentiment along with its opposition to US hegemony allowed it to carve its own regional development path, dethatching itself from the general open regional integration model which had been the dominant force within the region during the 1990s and 2000s (Vivares, 2016). However, as Kellogg (2007) has argued, the UNASUR project, although opposed to US hegemony, Brazil has become a sub-imperialist power within the regional project. Brazil has become a regional hegemon with the help of the Brazilian ruling class and continues to find ways in which it can “assert its influence, on a capitalist basis, throughout the southern half of the Americas” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 198). Furthermore, Kellogg (2007) has suggested that this projection of Brazilian influence evidently seen in the UNASUR project has led many scholars to argue that the project “is rooted in a politics from above - deep-rooted institutional and structural processes working themselves out in opposition to US hegemony, but rooted in the class power structure of Latin America” (Kellogg, 2007 pp. 199-200). If UNASUR can be seen, as Kellogg (2007)

has suggested, as a regional integration project rooted in the “politics of above” then ALBA can be seen as an expression of regional integration “from below”. The ALBA regional integration project, “has become synonymous with the radical reforms underway in Venezuela and a symbol of the hopes for radical transformation that have emerged with the move Left in Latin America as a whole” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 200).

The following section will look specifically at the specific social forces that led to the creation of ALBA. However, to carry out this research, it is first necessary to look at the particular social forces that led to the establishment of the Bolivarian historic bloc in Venezuela and then look at how its establishment has influenced other leftist states within the region.

4.4 The creation of the Bolivarian historic bloc, post-neoliberalism and ALBA

Within the Venezuelan context, the Bolivarian revolution, overall, attempted to construct a historic bloc that was representative of an alternative to neoliberalism. The Bolivarian historic bloc’s foundations were rooted in an economic project that attempted

To combine a state-led reassertion of economic sovereignty in the global economy with the pro-motion of socialist enclaves that represent a departure from the neoliberal subjugation to unfettered capital flows and market logics. At the same time, Bolivarian protagonist democracy aims to challenge and replace the polyarchic structures of the state (Chodor, 2014 p.114).

The Bolivarian historic bloc’s foundational structure (at least in the 2000s) was held together by an ideological project, based on revolutionary change, solidarity,

democracy, nationalism and social justice. These ideological principles highlight the stark contrast to that of the neoliberal social vision, which is based on the insistence of the TINA (there is no alternative) principle. The leadership of the Bolivarian historic bloc consisted, at the time, of a diverse alliance of subaltern social forces that include the working class, the state, the military, the informal masses and the rural masses. This heterogeneous alliance of the subaltern social forces, do not require an obligation of a single worldview on all its members. Furthermore, the Bolivarian collective will was not “simply reducible to a working class consciousness, but rather incorporates all other marginalized and excluded subjectivities, including women, indigenous and Afro-Venezuelans, peasants and the informal masses” (Chodor, 2014 p.114). Thus, parallels can be drawn between the Bolivarian collective will’s internal harmonization between its various social forces and Gramsci’s definition of a radical collective will. For Ciccariello-Maher and Andrews (2013), Gramsci’s radical collective will can be defined as “an active and reciprocal educative relationship, meaning that the various social forces learn from each other and translate their struggles into mutually legible terms, illuminating the intersecting dimensions of class, race, and gender exploitation” (Ciccariello-Maher and Andrews, 2013 p.236). In other words, the reciprocal and conscience relationship that exists between the social forces that form the Bolivarian historic bloc unite “the multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims...[into] a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world” (Gramsci et al., 1971 p. 349).

Even beyond this leadership structure, the historic bloc remained, a least at that time, much more inclusionary than the neoliberal alternative. Both the Venezuelan middle class and the “ni-ni” (neither-nor) voters have enormously benefitted from

the prosperity achieved under Chávez. Although neither group of social forces can be considered revolutionary, both have generally supported the government because of the continually improving socio-economic conditions. Thus, their consent remained conditional in as much as their consent was given so long as their economic needs are met. Amongst other social forces in the Bolivarian historic bloc was domestic capital, which largely benefitted from the state's macroeconomic strategy, in terms of rising demand and greater protection from global competition. As Weisbrot (2007) has noted, following the oil strikes in the country, the private sector boomed, particularly in the relation to transport, finance, communications, trade, insurance, and construction "with its share of GDP increasing to 63 per cent in 2006" (Weisbrot, 2007 p. 8). However, since the country's move towards socialism, private capital has faced numerous challenges as well as transnational capital, which have encountered restrictions on its profit margins and movements. Overall, the Bolivarian historic bloc during the 2000s represented a momentous departure from neoliberalism as it proposes increasingly coherent and well-defined alternatives to the project. Although it must be said, that while the Bolivarian historic bloc made Venezuela an important player in the pursuit of counter-hegemonic alternatives with regards to the neoliberal project; the historic bloc is far from complete, especially when one considers the current economic and political situation that has gripped Venezuela over the last few years and the subsequent spill-over effect in relation to Venezuelan toxicity. Nevertheless, during the 2000s Venezuela's alternative vision was met with enthusiasm and support from left and left-centre governments from across the region that were, at least at the time, open to constructing alternatives to the neoliberal project. Indeed, in Latin America, it was evident that with the rise of the

left, a new political economy begun to emerge, one that can be considered as a form of resistance, guided by a collective distaste for the out-dated Washington Consensus and a rejection of US-imperialism. Central to this transformation has been the return of the state, which is closely associated with twenty-first-century socialism and 'post-neoliberal' forms of governance. As Ruggirozzi (2012) has noted, "Post-neoliberal projects of governance seek to retain elements of the previous export-led growth model whilst introducing new mechanisms for social inclusion and welfare" (Ruggirozzi, 2012 p. 3). This heterodox approach, which articulates a new political economy of development in Latin America, began at the turn of the millennium with the economic and political breakdowns of Venezuela in the 1990s, in Argentina in 2001 and with the widespread social protests in Bolivia and Ecuador at the start of the twentieth century, all of which led to the rise of the left and centre-left. Indeed, the rise of what is often referred to as the 'Pink Tide' "culminated in the election of governments committed to the introduction of counter-cyclical policies, programmes of national (and sometimes regional) economic investment and the extension of social policy coverage" (Ruggirozzi, 2012 p. 3). Coinciding with these events, a multitude of social movements and leaders emerged, calling for not only the nationalization of economic resources but also new modes of political expression beyond liberal politics (Kaltwasser, 2011).

The political project associated with 'post-neoliberalism' can be understood, therefore, "as a call for a new form of social contract between the state and people" (Wylde, 2011 p. 436), in combination with what Ruggirozzi and Grugel (2012) views, as the "construction of a social consensus that is respectful of the demands of growth and business interests and sensitive to the challenges of poverty and citizenship" (Ruggirozzi and Grugel, 2012 p. 4). Overall, post-neoliberalism can be

considered an ever-evolving effort to develop political economies that are accustomed to the social responsibilities of the state through twenty-first-century socialism, while at the same time endeavours to remaining receptive to the “demands of ‘positioning’ national economies in a rapidly changing global political economy” (Riggirozzi and Grugel, 2012 p. 4). Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela can all be seen as key actors that have led to the establishment of the new political economy. Although it must be said that each has developed different post-neoliberal governance structures and policies that reflect the different political, economic and social needs of each state, they are united in their collective rejection of the neoliberal model of development (Silva, 2016). While it is true that each of the aforementioned states did indeed develop varying governance structures with a post-neoliberal framework, some have indeed purposely reverted back to neoliberalism mechanisms with the turn right, in recent years. However, in the 2000s each of post-neoliberal state’s as mentioned previously managed to secure consent through the implementation of social programs, particularly with regards to welfare spending. In Venezuela consent was secured through its poverty alleviation programs. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the inflow of resources from export taxes has allowed for a substantial increase in welfare spending and the establishment of a variety of social programs. In Argentina, tax received from export earnings became a source of funding for the emergency programs introduced after 2002 such as the cash transfer programs, which were all instrumental in dealing with the rapid increase in poverty after the financial collapse in 2001. As Riggirozzi and Grugel (2012) have suggested, with the Argentina case, the introduction of the Universal Child Benefit Programme (Asignación Universal por Hijo) was highly significant with regards to securing

consent as for the first time the government of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner extended its welfare programs directly to workers and children who were non-unionized (Riggirozzi and Grugel, 2012). Overall, social spending reforms signify both a commitment to welfare on the part of the aforementioned governments but also broadly speaking, it represents a shift in loyalty. Post-neoliberal states pledged their allegiance to the working class and the poor rather than the elites and it is this allegiance along with an enhanced form of participatory democracy, which secured consent for the development and expansion of alternative counter-hegemonic regional approaches to neoliberalism and US-led global capitalism in Latin America. As anti-neoliberal sentiments grew across the post-neoliberal states in Latin America, so too did a quest for an alternative regional development strategy. Under the direction of Chávez and Castro, an autonomous regional project was created in an attempt to act as a counter-hegemonic force, which would engage in a war of position against neoliberalism and US-imperialism. This counter-hegemonic regional project became known as ALBA. ALBA was born out of resistance to the US government's Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and is based on the principles of integration intended to reinforce sovereignty and just social relations. The many years of neoliberal policies led to a dramatic increase in inequalities amongst the working class, the poor and the indigenous people across the region. As a result, the privatization policies and bilateral trade agreements proposed under the FTAA was met with great opposition. In 2005, an alternative summit was organized by Latin American states that contested the FTAA. According to Tahsin (2009), the Mar de Plata summit can be seen as a clear sign that many Latin American states, particularly those on the left or centre-left, refused to accept and become a part of the FTAA. The combination of opposition to the FTAA as well as

opposition towards neoliberal policies provided the necessary conditions for the emergence of ALBA as an alternative integration model. In this light, the emergence of ALBA can be considered as “simply a reaction to neoliberal policies, in search of alternatives” (Tahsin, 2009 p. 2). With its establishment, Venezuela was able to align itself with other Latin American states (initially with Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua) that shared a similar disposition with regards to US imperialism and neoliberalism. Support for the project, however, went beyond state commitment; social forces from across Latin America had a leading role in ALBA’s establishment. ALBA’s creation represents according to Tahsin (2009), the rising demand for regional autonomy by Latin America’s social movements and capital. Since its creation, a wide range of social movements and civil society have supported and actively participated in the ALBA project. One of the main distinguishing features of ALBA, which acts in complete contrast to the prosed FTAA is that the Bolivarian alternative has actively called for popular participation from social movements and civil society as a whole, in both its creation and development (Harris, 2006). According to Cox (1999), civil society should be considered both a terrain that sustains the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but also it represents a terrain on which resistance to hegemony, allowing for an emancipatory counter-hegemony to be formulated (Cox, 1999). It was because of ALBA’s alternative structure, civil society particularly social movements that operated from within, were able to articulate themselves in ALBA through the ALBA continental assembly of social movements and were able to participate openly through the Council of Social Movements (Muhr, 2013). It was this active participatory bottom-up integration approach, that allowed ALBA at least in the beginning, to both draw support and gain consent from civil society and a diverse

range of social movements, most notably indigenous people's movements, trade unions, landless peasants' movements, environmental groups and women's organisations. Furthermore, as Harris (2006) has suggested, whilst many social movements were actively participating directly in ALBA either through the assembly or Council, other social movements declared their support for a war of position within the counter-hegemonic regional movement from independent platforms, such as the Americas Peoples Summit and the Via Campesina congress (Harris, 2006).

As we have already learned from chapter two, a war of position within a counter-hegemonic movement

Seeks to restructure ideological self-understandings so that they can inform a revolutionary praxis. A counter-hegemonic war of position, therefore, also begins with a critique of common sense, but seeks to transcend rather than re-embed it. This is a task of critical education that seeks to move beyond common sense ideological understandings to reconstruct a collective will: an ideological world view conscious of humanities self-constructive powers (Chodor, 2014 p.114).

The resulting reconstruction of the collective will can enable it to create a common ground on which a counter-hegemonic historic bloc can be established. The support of social forces leading to the creation of ALBA should therefore, be understood as a crucial element that has further legitimised ALBA as a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position against the neoliberal historic bloc that is attempting to destabilize its legitimacy and consent.

However, many have suggested that the future of ALBA is dependent on the ability of the 'pink tide' governments to remain in power. The following section will look specifically at the left's future in the region and how its possible decline may affect leftist inspired regional integration projects such as ALBA.

4.5 The 'pink tide' post-Chávez

Over twenty years on from the election of Hugo Chávez and the proceeding rise of the 'pink tide' that swept across Latin America, it is evident that economic decline coupled with political instability has led to a surge in right-leaning governments taking office. Macri in Argentina, Duque in Colombia and recently Bolsonaro in Brazil represent this changing of the tide, however the election of Macri in 2015 should not be seen as the beginning of the right turn, rather it should be seen as a result of mass discontent with the left as a whole, which resulted in his election along with Duque and Bolsonaro. Understanding the factors, which have led to this discontent, is essential for understanding ALBA, and its future prospects. Since Chávez's death in 2013, Venezuela's PSUV 's (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela) approval ratings amongst the Venezuelan masses, has decreased. This decline in popularity became apparent with the widely boycotted election in 2018. While Maduro may have begun his second term in office, his legitimacy has been called into question, both by the Venezuelan people and by many foreign governments. Additionally, the political uncertainty of the Maduro Government has also been heightened by an economic crisis. The country has been crippled by falling oil prices which has led to a massive decline in the value of the Bolívar and debilitating shortages of basic goods. According Lopez (2014), this scarcity of basic goods has fueled an outbreak of violent protests in 2014, which have led many to

believe that the popularity of the left in the country is plummeting (Lopez, 2014). With Juan Guaido, leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, declaring himself interim president, it is evident that the severity of the political instability has reached dizzying new heights. All these events, beginning shortly after the death of Chávez, have led many to cast doubt on the Venezuelan left's future. Likewise, in Bolivia, Evo Morales' MAS (the Movement for Socialism) has experienced a political blow, when MAS lost a recent referendum, which if passed would have lengthened the term time of president Evo Morales.

In Ecuador, while Lenin Moreno's was fully supported by Correa as his successor in 2017, his degree of left can be seen to a large extent, as moderate. Moreno's active disassociation with the far or radical left more broadly can be understood partly by the shifting tide of politics in Latin America and the changing sentiment amongst the masses. This has in turn, informed the direction of the Moreno Government's projected ideology and political, regional and economic affiliations. The election of right-wing Mauricio Macri in Argentina in November 2015 ended a twelve-year reign of leftist politics in the country. Macri's government's rise to power was the result of mass discontent against the previous government's fiscal tightening in relation to social spending. Likewise in Brazil, corruption, impeachment and scandal has severely damaged the left, particularly the Workers Party (ALBA-PTA, 2014). Bolsonaro's ascendance to power was a result of severe discontent amongst the masses. The defeat of the left in Argentina and Brazil in addition to falling approval ratings for many other leftist governments in Latin America have led many commentators, most notably, right-leaning magazines such as *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal*, to assert the claim that the 'Pink Tide' is dead. Although it is evident that the so-called 'Pink Tide' is currently in retreat, "to ring the death

knell of the 'Pink Tide' and leftism more broadly based on these electoral losses is premature, especially given the overall perseverance of left-wing governments and the complexity of the 'Pink Tide'" (Gulliver 2016). While it can be said that several leftist governments in the region are experiencing low approval ratings, it remains to be seen whether these depressed approval ratings are an indication of further electoral losses for the left, however this does not take away from the fact that the Latin American left has to a very large extent, lost support from a very large majority. This is particularly true both in the case of Venezuela and Brazil. With that said however, according to an article in the Paraguayan newspaper *Extra Press* (2015) throughout Latin America, approval ratings for heads of states have fallen by 7% across the board, including right-wing governments. According to TELESUR (2015), two-thirds of Columbians disapprove of centre-right President Duque. Furthermore, while many would agree that the electoral future of the Leftist governments is unclear, it is evident that their political legacy will remain. It is apparent that state-administered social services, redistributive policies and leftist-inspired regional integration strategies continue to be popular amongst voters across the region and as Gulliver (2016) points out, "To be electable, right-wing parties will have to retain these policies, as has happened in Argentina with President Macri promising to continue some Kirchner initiatives" (Gulliver 2016). Furthermore, the common assumption, which supports the thesis that the 'Pink Tide' is dead, depicts a uniform and simplistic understanding of the leftist phenomenon itself. Academics such as Castañeda (2006) have argued that within the 'Pink Tide' exist two lefts - the good and the bad. This two-lefts thesis has been contested by the likes of Chodor (2014) who has argued that this orthodox thinking on the 'Pink Tide' is rooted in a simplistic binary between 'good' and 'bad' lefts.

According to the Castañeda's (2006) thesis, the 'Pink Tide' can be divided into 'good' countries such as Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay, all of which can be seen to embrace neoliberalism and as a result have reaped its benefits and the 'bad' countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela, which can be seen to have contested neoliberalism in pursuit of a fruitless alternative. While Castaneda (2016) provides an interesting and to an extent useful overview, his differentiation results in distortion in so much as the insertion of post-neoliberal projects into highly normative categories leads to a negative view of leftist regimes and of circumstances that gave rise to them. According to Chodor (2015), the 'Pink Tide' is far more complex than some scholars have suggested. For Chodor, the 'Pink Tide' is itself a disputed phenomenon, the Pink Tide is

An object of social struggles in a process Gramsci would recognize as a 'war of position.' Within this war of position, different social forces put forward alternative political, economic and social projects – 'historical blocs' – that seek to respond to the organic crisis of neoliberalism, with ... Venezuela the clearest articulations of this process (Chodor, 2015 p. 93).

With the case of Uruguay for example, from a Gramscian perspective, the project can be seen as an example of a 'passive revolution', in as much as it made an effort to reform the most damaging features of neoliberalism within its economy in an attempt to preserve consent for it. According to Chodor, at least at the time of writing, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution could be viewed as a potentially counter-hegemonic project that was attempting to construct a Bolivarian 'collective will'. For Chodor (2015), the Bolivarian collective will (prior to 2017) could be

viewed as “an alternative emancipatory culture based on solidarity, social justice, democracy and protagonism that enables revolutionary *praxis*” (Chodor, 2015 p. 93). However, given the severity of the Venezuelan situation currently, its attempt to construct a Bolivarian ‘collective will’ is failing. Furthermore, Chodor (2014) has argued, in contrast to orthodox analyses, which the difference between the ‘lefts’ should not be thought of in dichotomous terms, divided between good and bad leftism and reformist or revolutionary leftism. Instead, the difference “needs to be understood dialectically, in terms of the potentials for radical transformations that arise out of their interaction” (Chodor 2014, p.278). These differences are most apparent at the regional level, where ‘Pink Tide’ governments, are constructing a common sense. This common sense can be characterized by its emphasis on regional unity, autonomy, and aspirations to both strengthen democracy and search for alternative development strategies. While at the time of writing, Chodor’s optimistic thesis was widely supported, it is evident given the recent events that have unfolded particularly in Brazil and even Ecuador that Chodor’s thesis is, to a very large extent, out-dated. Recent political events, which have and continue to reshape the Latin American region, cannot be understood by such a rigid and narrow concept such as the ‘Pink Tide’. The idea that even two lefts exist is an untenable statement given the complexity, and uniquely different historical, social, and cultural developments of each Latin American state. Of course, historical events, cultural synergies and similar political pathways have allowed states to form close ties to one another which have resulted in allegiances, trade agreements, and regional bloc formations, however the relations that exist, particularly between left-leaning states should be viewed for what they are, a loose alignment amongst politically similar states based on shared principles and commonalities. These

shared principles have often resulted in the implementation of similar policies - often favouring development models that are redistributive and people-focused - yet the level and the degree to which each state has implemented such policies vary to such a large extent, the use of a blanket term such the 'Pink Tide' to describe the Latin American left as a whole does not reflect the reality within and amongst left-leaning states. With that said, political motivated regional alignments do exist. The construction of which, as ALBA illustrates, is based on an ideologically similar disposition, the degree of which each ALBA member state shares this anti-neoliberal disposition varies between ALBA members. Nevertheless, ALBA's creation and development were born out of resistance to the FTAA; its creation was made possible by the existence of a shared belief amongst left-leaning states that a regional bloc based on regional autonomy would be more beneficial than the alternative. Regardless of the uncertain future of the Latin American left, at a regional level the construction of a 'common sense' which can be characterized by its emphasis on regional unity, autonomy and aspirations to both strengthen democracy and search for alternative development strategies is likely to remain, as the region's quest for autonomy is unlikely to fade.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has specifically looked at the rise of the contemporary left. It has suggested that the failure of neoliberalism to consolidate the necessary social forces for its stabilization has led to the rise of the left. It has suggested that this shift in political ideology has become a form of counter-hegemonic resistance in parts of the region. This chapter has also investigated the rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and looked at his idea of twenty-first-century socialism. It has paid

specific attention to the ways in which the ideology has gain momentum across the region. It has suggested that Chávez's alternative strategy for autonomy and development through twenty-first-century socialism has inspired and influenced many other leftist governments to move beyond neoliberalism, which has resulted in a variety of individual and collective attempts to construct counter-hegemonic alternatives to neoliberalism and US imperialism.

Following on from this, the chapter has also looked at how and in what ways the left has led to the construction of a new era of regional dynamics, which has and continues to develop alternative models of regional integration within Latin America. This chapter has also suggested that leftist policies and principles such as the redistribution of wealth, social development initiatives, autonomy and advancing alternative development strategies have all been expressed through regional integration projects. It has suggested that with the left turn, regional integration projects have begun to be framed around solidarity and the consolidation of shared approaches, while at the same time it has brought to the forefront of its agenda the issues of social inequality as well as offering alternative paths to great autonomy from the US. It has also pointed out that with this leftist turn, open regional projects such as Mercosur began to align itself with leftist principles. This chapter has also cited the creation of ALBA and the development of UNASUR as examples of this leftist shift. Additionally, it was suggested that the emergence of both ALBA and UNASUR, as leftist inspired regional integration projects, could be considered as part of the fourth wave of regionalism, in as much as they both represent a move away from a predominant focus on economic objectives and free trade. However, it has also suggested that with regards to

USASUR, although opposed to US hegemony, Brazil has become a sub-imperialist power within the regional project. It has suggested that because of this, the project can be seen as being rooted in the politics of above. By contrast, ALBA can be seen as an expression of regional integration from below and has become a symbol of hope for radical transformation that has emerged with the move left in Latin America as a whole.

This chapter has also suggested that the success of the Bolivarian collective will as a form of resistance and contestation to neoliberalism has influenced many other leftist governments throughout the region. As a result, anti-neoliberal forms of governance have emerged with Latin America, producing a new political economy for development in the region, leading to the creation of alternative, regional approaches to neoliberalism in Latin America. The most notable of which is ALBA, which can be seen as a counter-hegemonic form of regionalism born out of resistance to the US-inspired FTAA. It has also suggested that the creation of ALBA represents a rising demand for regional autonomy by Latin American social movement, capital and governments. It has suggested that the support from social forces leading to its establishment should be understood as a crucial element that has further legitimized ALBA as a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position against the neoliberal historic bloc that it attempting to destabilize its legitimacy and consent.

The chapter then turned its attention to the idea of the 'Pink Tide'. It suggested that the retreat of the left is unquestionable given the recent events that have transpired over the last few years. Rather than investigating what this retreat means for the future of the left in the region, the chapter focused on contesting the

ideas put forth by the likes of Chodor (2014) and Castañeda (2006) both of which, albeit in different ways, use the concept 'Pink Tide' as a blanket term to describe the left as whole in Latin America. This chapter has suggested that to use such a term is futile. This chapter has suggested instead that left, in general, cannot be understood by such a rigid and harshly narrow concept such as the 'Pink Tide'. It has argued that even the idea that even two lefts exist is too simplistic given the complexity and uniquely different historical, social, and cultural developments of each Latin American state. However, the chapter has suggested that historical events, cultural synergies and similar political pathways have allowed states to form close ties to one another which have resulted in allegiances, trade agreements, and regional bloc formations, but the relations that exist, particularly between left-leaning states should be viewed for what they are, a loose alignment amongst politically similar states based on shared principles and commonalities. These shared principles have often resulted in the implementation of similar policies - often favouring development models that are redistributive and people-focused - yet the level and the degree to which each state has implemented such policies vary to such a large extent, the use of a blanket term such the 'Pink Tide' to describe the Latin American left as a whole does not reflect the reality within and amongst left-leaning states. The chapter then suggested that political motivated regional alignments do exist. The construction of which, as ALBA illustrates, is based on an ideologically similar disposition, although the degree of which each ALBA member state shares this anti-neoliberal disposition varies between ALBA members. Nevertheless, ALBA's creation and development was born out of resistance to the FTAA, its creation was made possible by the existence of a shared belief amongst

left-leaning states that a regional bloc based on regional autonomy would be more beneficial than the alternative.

The following chapter will specifically look at the organisational structure of ALBA and will historically track its evolution from its creation to its present form.

Chapter 5: The origins of ALBA

5. 1 Introduction

The factors and events, which led to the creation of ALBA, are numerous. In the previous chapter, an emphasis was placed on how the rise of the left in Latin America, starting with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, led to the development of a leftist inspired, more radical form of regionalism. Indeed as Emerson (2013) has pointed out, ALBA since its inception in 2004, is representative of this move towards a more leftist inspired form of regionalism which was partly cultivated by Chávez's ambition for a united Latin America (Emerson, 2013). At the third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Association of Caribbean States in 2001, President Hugo Chávez exclaimed, "[E]ither we unite, or we drown. We shall thus choose the alternatives" (ALBA, 2004b p. 15). ALBA was the alternative he was explicitly referring to. In an interview with the Bolivarian News Agency in 2008, President Chávez stated that "the ALBA is the alternative path to the neoliberal hegemony which is destroying the world" (ABN, 2008). Additionally, Bossi (2009) has suggested that ALBA's primary objective is to "break away from capitalist logic" (Bossi, 2009). According to Metsäranta (2010), ALBA since its inception, "has not only been put forward as an alternative to the Washington Consensus but more profoundly to all other possible forms of capitalism" (Metsäranta, 2010 p. 14).

There is a large body of academic research that is of the opinion that while Chávez and Venezuela played an integral part in the creation and development of ALBA, neither Caracas nor Chávez can be seen as totalizing in its power to mould the regional bloc (Steve, J. Stern in Joseph et al., 1998). Emerson (2013) has suggested, "ALBA-TCP is not the product of Caracas redefining the interests of the region, with

its members thereby persuaded to lend their support to a new social order that subsumes them within a Venezuelan-authored worldview” (Emerson, 2013 p. 199). For Emerson (2013) it is essential to recognize “a shared, inter-subjective dimension to the constructed nature of ALBA-TCP unity” (Emerson, 2013 p. 199) Rather than viewing unity as a forced product of Chávez, it should instead, according to Laclau (1992) be understood as the merging of a sequence of particular opinions around common themes, be it emancipation or more specific concerns over the perceived failure of neoliberal reforms (Laclau, 1992). In accordance with this perspective, Emerson (2013) has also suggested that “rather than placing Chávez as a universal actor expressing the revolutionary essence of ALBA-TCP and the consequent concerns of its members, the diverse demands of Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador et al. are potentially held together by a common interest in emancipation” (Emerson, 2013 p. 199). Similar to Emerson (2013), Benjamin Arditi (2008) has suggested that the leftist governments of Latin America share an underlying aspiration to challenge the status quo (Arditi, 2008). Thus, aspirations of unity for the region, should not be seen as being dependent on Chávez, rather it should be seen as “a shared series of inter-subjective beliefs and a context – such as a desire to challenge the status quo – which places particular demands within a broader, common desire for change” (Emerson, 2013 p. 199). With that said, this chapter will begin by specifically, looking at the evolution of the ALBA from its creation to its present form. The first part of this chapter will focus on the specific events and factors, which led to its creation such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and the Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration of 2004. It will then look at ALBA’s evolution with the addition of the Peoples Trade Treaty (TCP) in 2006 and its expansion with the addition of member states. The

latter part of the chapter will look at ALBA's organisational structure, specifically it will look at the Presidential, the Political Council, the Economic Council, the Social Council and lastly the Social Movements Council and give a detailed account of each Council's objectives and functions. From here, this chapter will look at ALBA projects in the areas of telecommunications, banking and finance, oil and lastly, social programmes.

5.2 The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)

As we have learned from chapter four, since the 1970s Latin America has been at the epicentre of a neoliberal assault, that begun with Chile 1973. The neoliberal revolution started with the oppression of the left along with the suppression of popular organisations as well as the workers' movements, the combination of which created an ideal situation for the late Milton Friedman and economists associated with the University of Chicago as well as intellectuals, transnational corporations and national governments to reconstruct Latin American economies along free-market lines—"through manufactured consent" (Kellogg, 2007 p. 188). According to Drake (2006), this manufacturing of consent in Latin America had two characteristics, the first being the oppression of national development strategies by a new regionalism, carried out under the second characteristic, that of the hegemony of US imperialism (Paul W. Drake in Hershberg et al., 2006). The primary institution for this form of new regionalism was to be the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) launched in 1994, which was "widely viewed as a form of colonization by the US of South America" (Buckman, 2005 p. 76). After several failed attempts over a fourteen-year timeframe, the US announced its intentions to once again revive the FTAA at the Mar del Plata summit in 2005. For Emerson

(2013), the FTAA promotion in Argentina was a final attempt by the US “institutionalise U.S. economic pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere” (Emerson, 2013 p. 194). According to Gamble and Payne (1996), the US-inspired FTAA intended to shape the region in a specific way that was aligned with US interests, “the FTAA would entrench faith in export-led growth and the private sector, while also institutionalising market access for U.S. capital” (Gamble and Payne, 1996 p. 93). Furthermore, the attempted revival of the FTAA for many, revealed the broader U.S. fears about the creation of competing trading blocs internationally and an increasing sense of apprehension in the US “over an increasingly independent region seeking economic links beyond the Western Hemisphere” (Emerson, 2013 p. 194). However, the Mar de Plata summit in Argentina was met with opposition and resistance particularly by left and centre of left Latin American governments and social movements. The most vocal of which was President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, who voiced his opinions on the FTAA at a parallel Summit of the Peoples, leading the participants of the Summit in a chant “FTAA go to hell” (Bolivar, 2008 p. 15). Four years earlier at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, President Chávez had proposed and gained support for the creation of an alternative regional bloc initially known as ALBA. Which by the end of 2004, ALBA- originally created as a form of resistance to the FTAA, was formalized. According to José Briceño (2012), ALBA’s creation was representative of the Left’s resistance to US imperialism and acted as a form of contestation to the US-sponsored FTAA (José Briceño in Bourbon, 2012b). Furthermore, ALBA not only represented a move by the Latin America left to develop a substitute for the FTAA but also it was seen as a mechanism to combat western-style economic integration with a new economic and political model known as twenty-first-

century socialism (Rafael, 2005). Indeed, while the initial creation of ALBA reflected the discourse of Venezuela's Bolivarian Project, it also highlighted Chávez and the aspirations of the left to develop an alternative model for integration "that would lead to the transformation of societies and the establishment of political, economic, and social alliances. The main objective would be the creation of the "Patria Grande" in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on independence, sovereignty and identity" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 46). For Emerson (2013) increasing resistance to US imperialism, highlighted by the failure of the FTAA was instrumental in the early development of ALBA as a unified integration project. This contestation enabled Chávez to "juxtapose the U.S. against the Bolivarian project" (Emerson, 2013 p. 196) and gain support. Indeed as Bagley and Defort (2015) have suggested, ALBA's creation was "Consistent with the changing nature of Latin American politics, the 'alternative' [has] rapidly morphed to reflect the realities of the region and its member countries into a flexible ideological alliance" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 4).

As highlighted in the introductory section of this chapter, while Chávez played an integral part in the creation and development of ALBA, he was not the sole instigator of the regional alliance. The next section will look at the Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration, which can be seen as the founding treaty of ALBA.

5.3 The Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration

The Cuban-Venezuelan relationship can be divided into two phases. The first phase, which was essentially bilateral, began with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1999 and lasted until 2004. According to Romero (2010), during the first phase, Cuban-Venezuelan relations were based on the unification and defence of both countries'

similar political and ideological commitments as well as a commercial and economic agreement to establish a common regional identity (Romero, 2010 p. 107). The predominant objective of their relationship during this time were as follows; to obstruct the US embargo on Cuba, enhance the supply of Venezuelan oil to Cuba, aid the Cuban regime to overcome the economic crisis it was experiencing and finally to jointly bolster the global leftist movement. From a commercial and economic perspective, the countries' relationship took an important turn with the implementation of the Integral Cooperation Agreement (ICA) in October 2000. The main objective of the ICA was to support the exchange of goods and services between the two countries under cooperative conditions. Under the agreement, both Cuba and Venezuela created a workable barter system, where Venezuela would sell oil to Cuba at a fixed, preferential price, in exchange Cuba would help the Venezuelan government to roll out its social programmes, predominantly in relation to healthcare programmes. According to Romero (2010) Cuba was only required to pay for half of the oil it had received within the first 90 days after purchase, the second part of the payment could be paid back over a 25-year timeframe (Romero, 2010). In exchange, Cuba sent more than 13,000 healthcare workers to Venezuela. The success of the ICA led to an increase in cooperation in the energy sector, a growth of Cuban participation in the Venezuelan state's social missions and subsequently led to the promotion of bilateral agreements across Latin America.

The second phase of the relationship began on the 14th of December 2004 and presently continues. This phase began with the Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration signed in Havana, which was essentially an expanded regional version of the ICA. This expanded version of the ICA became known as the founding treaty of the

Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America, which in 2009 became known as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – People’s Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP). The joint declaration or the preamble of the inaugural ALBA treaty expressed Cuba and Venezuela’s view on the FTAA. The joint declaration proclaimed,

We emphasize that the Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA) is the most complete expression of the appetites for domination over the region and that, if it enters into force, would constitute a deepening of neoliberalism and create unprecedented levels of dependency and subordination (ALBA, 2004a).

The declaration goes on to assert that the FTAA’s main objective is to act as an instrument to “deepen dependence and external domination” and suggests that the over the last 50 years Latin America has experienced severe economic hardship due to the external debt crisis, the implementation of neoliberal policies across the region, along with the “proliferation of negotiations for the conclusion of free trade agreements of the same nature as the FTAA, create the bases that distinguish the panorama of subordination and backwardness that our region suffers today” (ALBA, 2004a). It is because of this belief that the joint declaration rejected wholeheartedly the proposed FTAA and suggested that any move towards its implementation “would lead only to the still greater disunity of the Latin American countries, greater poverty and despair of the majority sectors of our countries, the denationalization of the economies of the region and an absolute subordination to the dictates from the outside” (ALBA, 2004a).

The joint declaration suggested that while Latin American integration is essential for the region’s development, as it is apparent that regional bloc formation is

evidently taking up dominant positions with the global economy, only integration based on a model of solidarity, cooperation, and the common will, will be able to meet the individual and regional needs and aspirations of Latin America. Furthermore, this form of an integration model will be complementary to national economies and to the region itself as it endeavours to preserve "autonomy, sovereignty, and identity" (Estay, 2007 p. 43). As affirmed in the joint declaration, ALBA, initially proposed by Chávez in 2001, is recognised as providing the "guiding principles of a true Latin American and Caribbean integration, based on justice, and we commit ourselves to fighting together to make it a reality" (ALBA, 2004a). Based on the ideologies of Bolívar and Martí, the joint declaration affirmed that the fundamental principle that guides ALBA is the aspiration to broaden solidarity amongst the people of Latin America and the Caribbean. Accordingly, Latin American solidarity will be sought "without selfish nationalism or restrictive national policies that deny the goal of building a Great Homeland in Latin America, as dreamed by the heroes of our emancipatory struggles" (ALBA, 2004a).

The joint declaration goes on to outline the ambition of ALBA- to transform Latin American society, "making them more just, educated, participatory and supportive, and that, therefore, it is conceived as an integral process that ensures the elimination of social inequalities and fosters the quality of life and effective participation of peoples in the formation of their own destiny" (ALBA, 2004a). At the second summit of 2004, which saw the birth of the application of ALBA, both governments affirmed their decision to take steps towards the integration process based on the principles outlined in the joint declaration. The ALBA treaty also outlined important areas that the ALBA integration model would incorporate, i.e. health, communication, transportation and energy (Bagley and Defort, 2015 pp. 46-

47). Table one below contrasts and compares the differences in key areas between the proposed FTAA and ALBA.

	FTAA	ALBA
OBJECTIVE	Improved quality of life through free trade and economic integration. Reduce barriers to foreign direct investment.	Fight social exclusion and preserve the autonomy of Latin America. Conditional lifting of trade and investment barriers on technology transfers and development of human rights.
AGRICULTURAL POLICY	Elimination of agricultural subsidies and tariffs to improve markets.	Priority on food security and agricultural production.
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	Protect intellectual property rights (IPR).	Protect intellectual property rights (IPR).
ACCESS TO MARKETS	Eliminate tariffs to increase trade.	Defends tariffs and other mechanisms to promote and protect domestic agriculture and industry.
GOVERNMENT PURCHASES	Open markets for bidding on public projects.	Domestic companies retain priority in the delivery of services procured by the state.
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	International mediation and conflict through international arbitration.	Use national judiciaries to resolve individual issues; no recognition of foreign companies' international rights.

Table 1- as put forth in Joel D. Hirst's (2016) Guide to ALBA

The above comparison highlights the sheer contrast between two proposed regional integration projects, particularly in relation to trade. At the time of the signing of the joint declaration in 2004, which paved the way for the ALBA treaty, very few saw its potential, many saw it as a bilateral declaration between the two countries, as a means of reaffirming their joint beliefs and aspirations. According to Bossi (2007) however, if one looks at the successful developments of the Bolivarian social missions implemented in Venezuela and the "internationalist experience" of Cuba, one could deduce that the joint declaration and the ALBA treaty had created a workable regional integration model, which offered a "real alternative of solidarity

integration, beyond existing regional agreements or as a counterpart to the imperialist offer of FTAA or FTAs” (Bossi, 2007).

Overall the creation of ALBA, although beginning life as a joint declaration between Cuba and Venezuela needs to be viewed, according to Girvan (2011), in the context of developments within the political economy of Latin America at that time. Specifically, mass disenchantment with the Washington Consensus, along with the rise of social movements opposed to neoliberalism, as well as the election of left and centre of left governments in several Latin American countries, can all be seen as contributing factor, breathing life into the ALBA integration model (Girvan, 2011).

The following section will look specifically at the evolution of ALBA, beginning with the added element of the Peoples’ Trade Treaty (TCP) in 2006. It will then look at its expansion of ALBA with the membership of firstly Bolivia in 2006, followed by 8 other Latin American countries.

5.4 The expansion of ALBA

As outlined in the previous section, ALBA was initially established as a means to confront the FTAA, as represented at the time of its creation by a joint declaration between Cuba and Venezuela. The joint declaration not only voiced their opposition to the FTAA but also outlined plans for the establishment of an alternative regional integration model, known as ALBA. Coinciding with the early years of ALBA, Latin America witnessed a rise in left-leaning governments, which “shared the ALBA’s ideological approach” (Absell, 2012 p.1). It was the prominence of a shared ideological understanding of the importance of ALBA for the region that led to the expansion of ALBA through membership. In 2006, at the third ALBA

Summit, under the new leadership of Evo Morales and the Moves to Socialism (MAS) party, Bolivia became ALBA's third member. Upon Bolivia's adhesion, the organisation's title expanded to include the Peoples Trade Agreement (TCP) in Spanish *Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos*. At the third Summit of ALBA, president Morales stated,

Convinced of the need to promote true complementary and humane integration between our countries and our peoples, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Bolivia, we wish to contribute to this process with the initiative of the trade treaties between the Peoples, Principles and conceptual bases of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA, 2006a).

The addition of the TCP which is "based on the idea of developing trade that benefits the people", expanded the scope of ALBA and additionally helped to further define the regional integration project as an alternative to the proposed trade agreements of the North "the free trade agreements which seek to increase the power and control of transnationals' " (ALBA, 2006b). As Tahsin (2009) has pointed out, the principles of the Peoples Trade Agreement are based on "Complementarity, cooperation, and mutual collaboration that respect the welfare of nations" (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). As stated in the Agreement for the application of ALBA-TCP, the TCP's main objective has been to provide trade integration, that is complementary to national interests, "for the benefit of society rather than markets or firms" (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). This type of trade integration is carried out through a number of mechanisms most notably, through trade agreements "negotiated on a case-by-case basis, allowing for flexibility of commitment according to country circumstances" (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). Along with reciprocal credit arrangements as

stated under Article 8 of the ALBA-TCP agreement which facilitates “the payments and collections corresponding to commercial and financial transactions between the countries [through] the banking institutions designated for this purpose by the Governments” (ALBA, 2006b). But also compensated trade (through direct product exchanges) as stated under Article 9 of the agreement, which states that, “Governments may practice mechanisms for trade compensation of goods and services to the extent that this is mutually convenient to expand and deepen trade” (ALBA, 2006b).

The TCP agreement also states that all foreign investment needs to be restructured as part of an effort to protect domestic industries. Every element of the TCP is opposed to neoliberal policies and western-style market mechanisms. Furthermore, as Tahsin (2009) has pointed out, under the TCP agreement, “The main sectors of the economy should be determined by the state instead of market mechanisms” (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). Overall, the addition of the TCP aided to further legitimised ALBA’s anti-neoliberal and US orientation.

With the addition of Bolivia and the TCP to ALBA, membership to the regional project began to grow. Beginning with Nicaragua in 2007, under the direction of President Daniel Ortega, whose first official act as president was to sign up to the ALBA-TCP. In 2008, ALBA-TCP welcomed two new members, Honduras and Dominica. Although president Rafael Correa of Ecuador had shown an interest in joining ALBA-TCP in as early as 2007, the country remained an observer until 2009. In the same year, ALBA-TCP membership expanded again when both St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda joined the project. Haiti, Grenada, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay were all given observer status during 2009. According to Muhr (2011), the addition of these observer countries, shows that

ALBA-TCP has attracted a number of developing economies that “that seek to transform their productive structure from the primary sector into a secondary sector” (Muhr, 2011 p. 104). Additionally, 2009 marked a turning point for the project, not only had membership grown to 9 members but also it began to evolve, taking on a new persona, in a sense. The movement which had initially been called the Bolivarian Alternative became the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA, 2006b) which reflects to some extent a reorientation of focus, with regards to the development of cooperation amongst member states. However, while the ‘alternative’ may have been dropped from the ALBA-TCP title it remained adamantly opposed to neoliberalism, its opposition of which, its foundation is built on. Although, external reactions to the merging alliance of the ALBA-TCP were initially non-existent, the US Senate of Armed Services Committee (USSASC) issued a statement in 2008, which implicitly referred to ALBA-TCP in its threat assessment. As Backer and Molina (2010) have highlighted, the 2008 USSASC statement suggested that,

Leaders in Bolivia, Nicaragua and –more tentatively– Ecuador, are pursuing agendas that emphasize ... economic nationalism at the expense of market-based approaches... Each of these governments, to varying degrees, has engaged in sharply anti-US rhetoric aligned with Venezuela and Cuba... and advocated for measures that directly clash with US initiatives (Backer and Molina, 2010 p. 106).

In Honduras in January 2010, after a coup d’état that ousted President Manuel Zelaya, right-wing president Porfirio Loba, reflecting on the USSASC’s concerns officially withdrew from the ALBA-TCP. Loba’s decision to withdraw from ALBA-TCP was not only driven by external pressure, most notably the US, but also it was driven by domestic opposition to the ALBA-TCP, particularly by members of the

business community and right-wing political parties (Absell, 2012). Despite Honduras' withdrawal from the regional bloc, ALBA-TCP's central objective to expand and diversify its partnerships yielded valuable relationships with countries such as China, India, Russia, Syria and Iran. However, as Bagley and Defort (2015) have noted, "Despite the growth, ALBA represents only a small fraction of the Latin America and Caribbean region's economic share, population and land mass" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 2). Regardless, the development and evolution of ALBA-TCP represented an important development in relation to regional politics. Therefore, it is necessary to gain an understanding of how and in what ways ALBA's alternative institutional framework and organisational structure were built and developed.

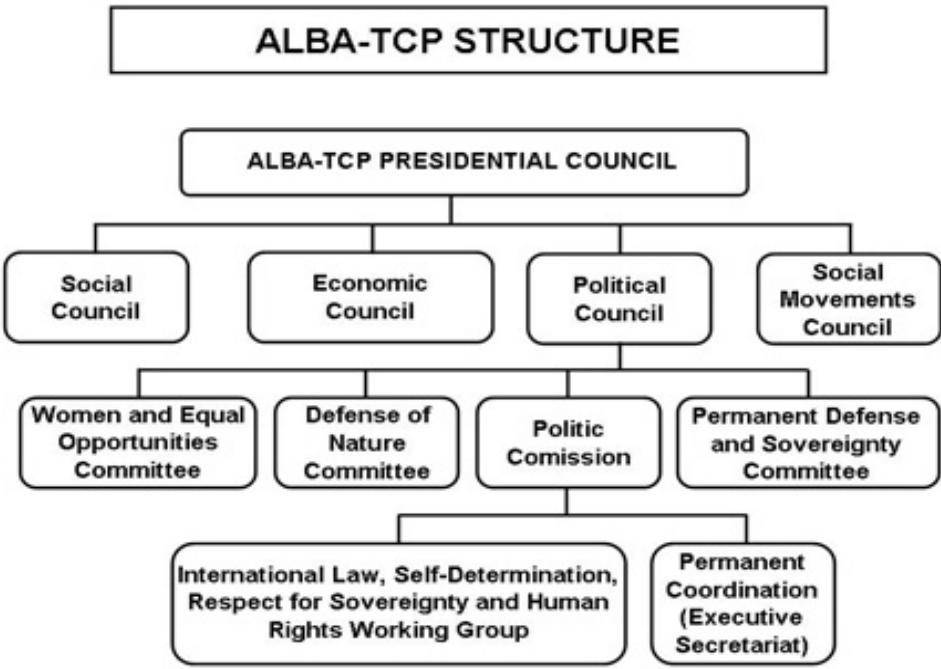
5.5 ALBA's organisational structure

Before discussing the organisational structure of the ALBA-TCP, it is necessary to point out that academic literature on the subject in question is severely limited. Of the literature available on the ALBA-TCP, the institutional and organisational structure has only been discussed in very general terms; as a result, this section relies heavily on official ALBA-TCP documents, in order to give a thorough and in-depth account of its institutional makeup and organisational structure.

The ALBA-TCP's creation of an institutional structure developed alongside its expansion of membership, but it officially began in 2009, with the VIII Summit of the ALBA-TCP, held in Havana Cuba. In the introduction of the VIII ALBA-TCP Summit document, ALBA-TCP defines itself as a regional integration platform for Latin America, one that

Emphasizes solidarity, complementarity, justice and Cooperation, which has as its objective the transformation of Latin American societies, making them more just, educated, participatory and supportive, and which, therefore, is conceived as an integral process that ensures the elimination of social inequalities and fosters quality of life and effective participation of peoples in shaping their own destiny. It is also a political, economic, and social alliance in defence of independence, self-determination and the identity of the peoples that comprise it (ALBA, 2009).

Based on the aforementioned political, economic and social alliance the ALBA-TCP is structured around five Councils: the Presidential Council, the Political Council, the Economic Council, the Social Council and the Council of Social Movements. In a hierarchic order, both the functioning and structure of the ALBA-TCP are explained below, with the aid of a diagram.



Source: www.alba.tcp.org.

At the top tier is the Presidential Council, which comprises of heads of state and member-country governments. The Presidential Council can be seen as the most powerful Council within the ALBA-TCP and is responsible for the highest level of decision-making and directs the political orientation within the alliance. Directly underneath the Presidential Council are the ministerial Councils, all of which operate on an equal platform. The Political Council is comprised of the ministers of foreign affairs from its member-states. The Council's primary function is to act as an adviser to the Presidential Council with regards to various strategic political issues as well as presenting proposals to the Presidential Council on current international policy issues. As outlined in the VIII ALBA-TCP summit, the Political Council's functions comprise of the following; "the issuance of declarations and decisions, definitions and discussions of agendas and strategies for political, economic and social consensus among ALBA-TCP members in different forums"(ALBA, 2009). It is also responsible for directing and approving the work of the political commission and it is responsible for the permanent coordination of ALBA-TCP. Although each of the Ministerial Councils were developed to be equal in power, the other three Ministerial Councils are required to inform the Political Council on all aspects of their respective tasks and activities. Based on the information given, the Political Council can make suggestions with regards to the other Ministerial Council's activities or respective tasks. The Council is responsible for evaluating and approving every draft document and agenda, proposed by both the permanent coordinator and the political commission, to be submitted to the Presidential Council. The Political Council's function is also to "Review and approval of proposals for the structure and functions of the ALBA-TCP bodies at all

levels and the evaluation of proposals and decisions with a strategic political impact, emanating from the Economic Council, the Social Council and other bodies of ALBA –TCP” (ALBA, 2009). The final function of the Political Council is to promote and roll out grand-national projects as directed by the Presidential Council as well as continuously evaluating the various grand-national projects’ effectiveness and viability.

The Economic Council is comprised of the ministers selected by each member state. The Economic Council’s main duty is to work as a coordinator in relation to ALBA-TCP projects and policies, specifically in relation to policies and projects that are centred on agro-food, industries, energy commercial, finance and technology. According to SELA (2013), the Economic Council’s primary duty is to structure an Economic Area of Shared Development of ALBA, which will be governed by the Peoples’ Trade Treaty (TCP)” (SELA, 2013 p. 8). The Economic Council operates on two levels; the first being the ministerial level, its purpose is to coordinate and strategically design the economic and financial policies of each member country of the ALBA-TCP. The second level is the technical level. According to the VIII ALBA-TCP summit document, the purpose of the technical level is to prepare, proposals, studies and/or formulate projects “prior to the implementation of economic policies common to the member countries of ALBA – TCP” at the request of the Ministerial level (ALBA, 2009). The main functions of the Economic Council according to the VIII ALBA-TCP declaration are as follows; to design specific strategies to enhance, expand and direct intraregional trade, to act as an evaluation and monitoring body in relation to ALBA-TCP’s grand national production projects, to develop an integrated financial system in relation to the economic zone of shared development. Lastly, the Economic Council is also responsible for

standardizing the various rules governing the “organization of economic activity within the area” as well as ensuring the functioning of the Regional Monetary Council, the Bank of ALBA and all other economic institutions of ALBA-TCP (ALBA, 2009).

The Social Council is composed of ministers that work directly in relation to social areas in their home countries. In general, these ministers seek to provide oversight for any programmes related to culture, employment, education and health. According to the VIII ALBA-TCP summit document, the Social Council’s main function is to implement, develop and follow-up on the implementation of the ALBA-TCP social programmes. Working groups in such areas as sport, culture, housing, education, health and employment as well as the committee on women and equal opportunity work fall under the umbrella of the Social Council. Among the other functions of the Social Council are “Define strategies and plan the social policy of ALBA-TCP. Establish priorities for the execution of the programmes, according to the urgencies of the member countries” (ALBA, 2009).

Along with promoting the implementation of Grand-National Projects as well as evaluating the efficiency of the Grand-National Social Projects in areas under its jurisdiction. In relation to the Committee of Women and Equal Opportunities, the Social Council’s function here is to create a “viable and proactive space for the women of our peoples” (ALBA, 2009). This is done in an attempt to promote the gender mainstreaming within all ALBA-TCP initiatives.

Lastly, the Social Movements Council, can be considered as an instrument that facilitates both integration and direct social participation within ALBA-TCP. This particular Council developed out of the various meetings between Chávez and local and regional social and popular movements. According to Absell (2012), the Social

Movement Council is comprised of delegates from various social movements that operate out of each member country, as well as non-member country social movements that identify with the ALBA-TCP objectives (Absell, 2012 p. 3). The Social Movement Council is also composed of a number of committees, whose purpose is to examine specific issues such as grand-national projects in relation to social movement input. These groups fall under the direction of the Permanent Coordination of the ALBA-TCP (*Secretaría Ejecutiva*) which coordinates the organization's "cooperation and integration activities" (Absell, 2012 p. 3). The Council's main functions, according to the VIII ALBA-TCP Summit declaration, are as follows,

The Council presents to the Council of Presidents, all proposals, projects, and declarations as well as all other initiatives of the social movements. Another function is to "Receive, evaluate and channel, at the same time that it proposes, programs of collaboration of the social movements of countries whose governments are not members of ALBA-TCP" (ALBA, 2009). It is also responsible for strengthening the mobilization and participation of social movement working out of each member country in relation to ALBA projects.

According to Muhr (2012), the Council of Social Movements can be viewed as a mechanism that "organizes constituent power in a direct democratic structure" (Muhr, 2012 pp. 223). Muhr (2012) also suggests that as the Council of Social Movements works directly with the Council of Presidents, the Council is often seen as a type of mediator between the "organised society and the formal state-led bloc" (Muhr, 2012 p. 234). It represents, in a sense, a mechanism for cohesion between specific social forces and the various member-state governments.

The following section will look specifically at the grand-national projects, which have been implemented through the ALBA-TCP. It will specifically focus on grand-national projects in relation to telecommunications, banking and finance, oil and lastly, social programmes.

5.6 Understanding ALBA's Grand-National concept, Grand-National Companies and Projects

As we have seen in the aforementioned sections, within the ALBA-TCP's ideological, organisational and institutional structure, primary emphasis has been placed on the construction of an alternative to neoliberalism. For ALBA member states, particularly Venezuela and Cuba, at the beginning of ALBA's establishment, the FTAA was seen as an expression as a harmful consequence of neoliberalism, and as a result ALBA-TCP aspired to construct an alternative option "capable of orienting the economic and political relations of the Latin American and Caribbean republics" (ALBA, 2008). The regional integration model views itself a strategic political alliance, which is based on a drive to refocus the economic relations of its member-states but also for the region as a whole. In this sense, it sees itself as a regional movement that has broken away from classical economists' view of integration and international cooperation. As stated in the VI ALBA Summit declaration (2008),

The ALBA, as a strategic political alliance, has the fundamental historical purpose of uniting the capacities and strengths of the countries that integrate it, in the perspective of producing the structural transformations and the system of relations necessary to achieve the integral development required for continuity of our existence as sovereign and just nations (ALBA, 2008).

The Grand-National concept, which is an underlying feature of the ALBA project, can be considered, essentially, a political concept but incorporates many other aspects. The concept is based on several fundamental elements. Firstly, it is based on the Bolivarian vision of creating a union out of Latin America and Caribbean republics. Essentially it is driven by the desire to establish or form “a great nation” (ALBA, 2008). Similarities can be drawn between the Grand-National concept and the idea of the ‘mega-state’, in as much as both define “joint lines of common political action between States that share the same vision of the exercise of National and Regional Sovereignty, developing and deploying each one's own social identity and political, without this implying at the moment the construction of supranational structures” (ALBA, 2008). The concept of Grand National also has its roots in a socio-economic foundation. The development strategies employed by each ALBA member state seeks to meet and satisfy the social needs of the majority, while not limiting themselves to the local level. As the VI ALBA Summit declaration (2008) notes, the concept of Grand-National essentially “seeks to overcome national barriers to strengthen local capacities by merging them into a whole to be able to face the challenges of the world reality” (ALBA, 2008). Lastly, the Grand-National concept is grounded within an ideological context, which can be considered as a set of shared beliefs by ALBA member-states, in relation to a critical stance on neoliberalism, an emphasis placed on sustainable development and social justice, sovereignty, and self-determination, as well as developing a regional bloc that has the capacity to produce sovereign regional policies.

The Grand-National concept which emphasises the unification of Latin America has quite literally been transferred into strategy since the V ALBA summit in 2007. At the core of ALBA-TCP's institutional framework lies the concept of Grand-National

Projects (GNPs), GNPs are made up of a group of pan-national organisations and Grand-National Companies (GNCs), which according to Absell (2012), role is to “address technical aspects of regional integration such as building infrastructure, training and communication” (Absell, 2012 p. 3). The Grand-National concept was integrated into the ALBA-TCP project through bi and multi-state grand-national projects and through grand-national companies, both of which, according to Muhr (2010), constitute “counter-hegemonic responses to MNCs/TNCs” (Muhr in Schuerkens, 2010 p. 121). As articulated with the VI ALBA Summit (2008) neoliberal hegemony has given rise to transnational companies (TNCs) and multinational corporations (MNCs), which have become the articulating agent of the world economy, and as a result has led to a crisis of the nation state. Relatedly, the VI ALBA Summit (2008) has highlighted that because of this pattern of transnational accumulation, the role of the state as a “development-inducing agent” has been devalued and as a result the market has replaced the state’s role. ALBA’s concept of GNCs emerged in opposition to TNCs, according to the VI ALBA Summit declaration, the economic dynamics of GNCs are purposely designed to favour “the production of goods and services for the satisfaction of human needs, guaranteeing their continuity and breaking with the logic of reproduction and accumulation of capital” (ALBA, 2008).

GNCs, in an attempt to assure their sustainability and the shared objectives, are designed in such a way that the goods and services produced are in general, the result of a mixed or combined exchange schemes between member states. As a result, the development and objectives of GNCs are developed in such a way that they are in harmony with ALBA’s overall ambition for a united Latin American. Each GNC acts fundamentally, as an economic instrument that attempts to create

and develop a wide area or network of fair and free trade between ALBA member states and Latin America as a whole. In contrast to TNCs and MNCs, productive integration is at the core of GNCs design, as a result, every GNC is required to take into account the need for complementary economic initiatives between nations in all areas that are considered fundamental for economic and social development. First and foremost, the production output of each GNC is to primarily satisfy its demand in the intra-ALBA market, in an attempt to create a sustainable fair-trade area. Production surpluses can only then be positioned in the international markets. In line with ALBA's core objectives, GNCs are guided and operate under the ALBA principles of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, promoting decent working conditions and equitable redistribution of wealth as well as reciprocity and harmonious coexistence between nature and man by "rationally exploiting natural resources and implementing environmentally sustainable projects" (ALBA, 2008). Furthermore, in contrast to MNCs and TNCs, GNCs although they are able to associate and form relationships with companies within the private sector, for the development of certain activities, they are "the absolute property of the States" (ALBA, 2008).

Grand-National Projects can be considered essentially, social projects that are implemented between two or more ALBA member-states. These state-run projects are carried out by GNCs. According to Bagley and Defort (2015), there are currently 12 GNPs "various stages of development (most with corresponding companies)" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 pp. 4-6).

The production dynamics of GNPs, according to Schuerkens (2010), are orientated towards goods and services that "satisfy human needs within the emergent ALBA markets, which are defined as a 'fair trade zone' " (Schuerkens, 2010, p.121).

Additionally, Troudi and Monedero (2007), see GNPs as being complementary to the regional projecting chains, which are comprised of mixed enterprises as well as social production enterprises. Social production enterprises, according to Troudi and Monedero, can be seen as the “economic vanguard of 21st century socialism as they prioritize non-capitalist forms of socio-economic organization” (Troudi, 2007 p. 121). As outlined at the VI ALBA Summit (2008), GNPs operate within a variety of areas, from political, economic, social, scientific, industrial and cultural to any other area that can be integrated into the “grand-national dialectic” (ALBA, 2008). However not every GNP can become a GNC, but every GNC must be the product of a GNP, “by which it must guide its development” (ALBA, 2008). In relation to GNPs that operate within social and cultural areas, according to the VI ALBA summit, they are easily implemented as they are based on already existing structures and capacities that are evident within ALBA member states, as a result, social and cultural GNP are relatively inexpensive and resource friendly. All GNPs can be distinguished as they are built and developed around the principles and aims of ALBA, that are, according to the VI ALBA Summit (2008), “validated by the member countries and whose execution involves two or more countries, for the benefit of the great social majorities” (ALBA, 2008). While the success of GNPs has been mixed at best, ALBA through these projects have been able to make some advancements, especially in relation to social development programmes. There are twelve operational GNPs, which are at various stages of development and operate to various degrees of success. Instead of looking specifically at projects, this research will focus more broadly on the general areas in which GNPs and GNCs operate within, thus aiming to give an account of how they are articulated at a

regional level. Illustrated below is a compiled table, which articulates either the areas in which ALBA seeks to or has implemented its various GNPs.

Table 2 V Summit of the ALBA-TCP. Tintorero, Venezuela, 28th-29th April 2007

GRANNACION PROJECTS

ALBA - EDUCATION

We need to make education the main strength of the transformations that we are producing in our nations, in order to strengthen the historical awareness about the union of the Latin American peoples.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of education:

PROJECTS

Grand-National Plan for the development of the literacy mission of the member countries of ALBA and in others in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the integration of the experiences obtained in Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.

Plan of university formation that prioritize the careers of social medicine, social work, among others.

Common program of social formation for productive work.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Social Commission

ALBA - CULTURE

Cultural identity provides us with a solid ground for integration and the union of peoples. It is the starting point of everything we want and can do. In our case it is one of the greatest advantages that we have in front of a world so diverse and heterogeneous.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the cultural area:

PROJECTS

Alba Cultural Fund for: joint production and distribution of films, co-production Grand-National of radio and television spaces, Latin American edition and distribution of books and publications, creation of networks of shared libraries.

Opening of six Casas del Alba: in Havana, La Paz, Quito, Caracas, Managua and Port-au-Prince.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Social Commission

ALBA - FAIR TRADE - TCP

To achieve this goal, it is essential to articulate all initiatives in the productive field in a comprehensive economic complementation plan.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of fair trade:

PROJECTS

Creation of a Grand-National company of industrial supplies of ALBA whose object will be the commercialization of inputs, equipment and machinery for the industry.

Creation of a Grand-National company of Imports and Exports of the ALBA.

Creation of the ALBA Stores that will constitute a network for the storage and marketing of finished goods of ALBA member countries.

Creation of the ALBA International Fair.

Creation of the Grand-National Training Centre for the design and execution of research projects, technological innovation, technical assistance and training to improve the capacity and productive quality of our countries.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - FINANCIERO

Certainly, all the advances in the field of economic independence, with their derivations in food production, expansion of production, economic growth and fair trade, are connected to the financial strengths.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the financial area:

PROJECTS

Creation of the Economic Fund for Cooperative and Productive Investment of ALBA.

Venezuela commits an initial contribution of 250 million dollars

Issue of ALBA Bond, up to one billion USD. It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Investment and Finance Committee

ALBA - FOOD

The ALBA is obliged to guarantee the food of our Peoples in sufficient quality and quantity. The achievement of this objective constitutes the litmus test of the set of structuring projects. Achieving shared self-sufficiency in food production and distribution, ensuring food security must be at the heart of long-term strategic plans.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of food:

PROJECTS

Creation of the "Food Bank", to guarantee the supply.

Creation of a company Grand-National of production Agroalimentaria.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Investment and Finance Committee

ALBA - HEALTH

The ALBA project in health is one of the most powerful weapons of social justice to demonstrate in practice the human superiority of the new policies and relations generated from ALBA.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of health:

PROJECTS

Grand-National Plan for the development of the Health Mission of the ALBA countries that will lead the plans at their different levels and optimize the investment and resources for the recovery and implementation of public health systems of universal access in all our countries. As well as the supply and instruments for research, development for the use of the biodiversity resource of our region.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Social Commission

ALBA - TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Our project should aim at a wide and extensive use of this tool, especially for the battle of ideas, which in the field of education and ideo-political formation we are fighting.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of telecommunications:

PROJECTS

Create a Grand-National telecommunications company.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - TRANSPORT

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of transport:

PROJECTS

Air transport:

Encourage the creation of a " Grand-National " corporation of state airlines that associate routes and equipment without losing their autonomy. It could assume the denomination of ALSUR (Alas del Sur or ALBA South) that establishes the routes Caracas - Managua - La Paz - Quito - Havana - Port - au - Prince.

To foster the creation of a " Grand-National " company for the maintenance and construction of aircraft.

Marine transport:

In order to facilitate exchanges between the ALBA countries and their allies, it is necessary to transform TransALBA or create a new " Grand-National " shipping company in the South, for the transport of cargo and passengers, to design routes and to have appropriate equipment for maritime communication Between them.

Incorporate the rest of the ALBA countries to the initiative of the joint ventures already constituted.

Design and enable the routes for fluvial communication between the countries of the South.

Ground transportation:

Develop a terrestrial communication plan for the ALBA vision Region, alternative to that promoted by multilateral organizations.

To promote the creation of a Grand-National company for the development of infrastructure in the Region.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - TOURISM

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the area of tourism:

PROJECTS

Elaboration of the Macro Plan of Social Tourism.

Declaration of the Tourist University of ALBA

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - MINING

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the mining area:

PROJECTS

Creation of a Grand-National company of cooperation, research and development in the mining geological area.

Creation of a Grand-National company for the development of the aluminium industry.

Creation of a Grand-National company for the development of the cement industries for the ALBA countries.

Creation of a Grand-National company for the management of forests, production and commercialization of products of the wood industry.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - INDUSTRIAL

It is necessary to make a great alliance between the heavy and light industries, creating Grand-National Companies to strengthen industrial sovereignty in our continent.

The Presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the industrial area:

PROJECTS

Creation of the Grand-National Company of Articles and Goods of Stainless Steel.

Development of White Label products for ALBA and Latin American countries with the cooperation of allied countries (Beliorusia, Iran, China)

It was agreed to forward this approval to the ALBA Economic Commission

ALBA - ENERGY

It is necessary to make a great alliance between the national energy companies in order to achieve the objectives of the Energy Treaty of ALBA, for this

A large National Energy company will be created, which will cover the areas of oil, gas, refining, petrochemicals, development of transport infrastructure, storage, distribution, electricity, alternative energy and maritime transport.

Based on what was expressed in terms of unity, the presidents discussed and approved by consensus the following ALBA Grand-National projects in the energy area:

PROJECTS

BOLIVIA

Distribution of fuel through the flag of fifteen (15) service stations in the amount of USD 4.7 MM

Construction of two (2) natural gas liquid extraction plants:

A.- Plant located in the north of the country in Santa Cruz with a capacity of 200 MMPCD and an investment of USD 70 MM.

B.- Located in the south of the country with a capacity of 300 MMPCD and an estimated investment of USD 100 MM.

Project for the thermal generation (diesel) of electric power with a capacity of 40 MW, with an estimated cost of USD 30 MM.

Project for the improvement of efficiency in the use of electric energy by replacing inefficient equipment with energy saving equipment with an estimated investment of USD 5 MM.

Asphalt production plant with a capacity of 10 MBD and an estimated investment of USD 150 MM.

Project for the exploration and exploitation in four gas fields in Bolivia with an estimated investment for the initial phase of USD 620 MM.

CUBA

Remodelling and commissioning of the Cienfuegos refinery with a refining capacity of 65 MBD and with an estimated investment for the initial phase of USD 83 MM.

Construction of an LNG regasification plant with a capacity of 100 MPCD and an estimated investment of USD 8 MM.

NICARAGUA

Refining plant of 150 MBD and with an estimated investment of USD 3550 MM.

Project for thermal generation (diesel) of electric power with a capacity of 120 MW (60 MW diesel 60 MW fuel oil), with an estimated cost of USD 89 MM.

HAITI

Construction of an LNG regasification plant with a capacity of 50 MPCD and an estimated investment of USD 4 MM.

Project for the generation of fuel oil of electrical power with a capacity of 60 MW, with an estimated cost of USD 56 MM.

Project for the visualization, conceptualization and construction of a 10 MBD refinery with an estimated investment of USD 80 MM.

It was agreed to forward this approval to the Energy Commission of ALBA

In order to give a detailed account of the operational capacity of GNPs and GNCs, if it firstly necessary to look at the New Regional Financial Architecture (NRFA) that ALBA has developed in order to not only facilitate its various grand-national projects and companies but also limit its member states dependence on both international financial institutions (IFIs) as well as the US. January 2008 marks the birth of the Bank of ALBA, with the signing of the Constitutive Act. Its creation, according to VI ALBA Summit declaration (2008) signifies a definitive step towards the construction of a new financial architecture, which it deems necessary in order to establish “a solid foundation for the productive projects to make them viable and sustainable over time” (ALBA, 2008). The Bank of ALBA, in contrast to the international financial institutions, such as the IMF and WB, operates on the consensus of its member states and does not impose loan conditions. As Hart-

Landsberg (2009a) has outlined, "The Banks stated aim is to boost industrial and agricultural production among its members, support social projects as well as multilateral cooperation agreements among its members, particularly in the field of energy" (Hart-Landsberg, 2009, p. 6). Both GNPs and GNCs are major recipients of the ALBA Bank. As Califano (2014) has noted, the Bank of ALBA is driven by a commitment towards "The promotion, strengthening, and development of micro, small, and medium production, and of associative economies, with the purpose of empowering its capacities so as to ensuring, among other objectives, food sovereignty and security" (Califano, 2014, p. 138).

The overall aim of the Bank of ALBA, as Tahsin (2009) has noted, it to make loans available to ALBA member-states, in an attempt to enable ALBA countries to undertake development programmes, in the areas of infrastructure, education, health, as well as social and cultural programmes, without any conditions attached to the loans (Tahsin 2009). Up until 2012, the Bank's reserves were predominately supplied by Venezuela, however at the XI ALBA Summit in 2012, ALBA member countries agreed to contribute 1% of their international reserves into the bank, in order to fund the various development projects. Along with the Bank of ALBA, member states but specifically driven by Venezuela, created a regional trade currency, known as SUCRE (Sistema Unico de Compensacion Regional) in 2009. The electronic currency's specific purpose is to facilitate trade and exchanges between member states. The aim of the SUCRE is also to circumvent the US dollar, in an attempt to strengthen the regional bloc in relation to trade through the eventual float of the SUCRE which will be based on a basket of member states' currency reserves (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 6).

It is important to note however, that Venezuela's contribution to the various ALBA development projects (GNPs and GNCs) goes beyond the financial backing of the Bank of ALBA and its central role in the establishment and development of the SUCRE. Financial support for the various GNPs has also been allocated through Petro-Caribe and the Petro-Caribe fund, which is in short, an energy agreement, established in 2005, between Venezuela and Central American and Caribbean nations. Although, as Bagley and Defort (2015) note, Petro-Caribe is not an ALBA initiated development project, "it serves as a gateway organisation to ALBA" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 6). They are, in short, separate entities that have some overlap with member-states. Drawing from the success of Petro-Caribe, the Venezuelan government has expressed its desire to establish an economic zone between ALBA-TCP and Petro-Caribe, the objectives of which would be to advance investment, trade (using the SUCRE), and tourism between member-states through the creation of various GNPs (Masud, 2013). Furthermore, ALBA, since the V ALBA summit (2007) has initiated the ALBA energy treaty. The V declaration outlines ALBA member states commitment to form a regional alliance between ALBA member states in order to achieve the objectives of the Energy treaty of ALBA. Out of this shared commitment a GNC known as PetroALBA was established - a regional oil company comparable to Petro-Caribe. The aim of the GNC is to provide a cheap and guaranteed energy supply to member states. Since the V ALBA Summit declaration specific PetroALBA GNPs were initiated in Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Haiti.

In the field of telecommunications, TeleSur (ALBA's international new channel) can be considered one of ALBA's most successful GNP. It was established in 2005 as a "counterweight to CNN" (Masud, 2013). The Spanish language regional news outlet,

in recent years, has gained an international audience, with its broadcasts reaching beyond Latin America and the Caribbean to parts of Europe and Africa (Masud, 2013). More broadly, ALBA, in an attempt to bolster its telecommunication project as a whole it has, according to Bagley and Defort (2015) run a fibre-optic cable between Cuba and Venezuela, it has run wire services for the facilitation of news, interviews and documentaries throughout member states. It has also purchased a Chinese satellite, which has aided its various TV stations, including TeleSur, in its ability to broadcast across the region and internationally (Bagley and Defort, 2015 pp. 4-6).

In relation to social GNPs, Masud (2013) has noted, that the Bank of ALBA has invested an estimated \$170 million into its social programmes. These grand-national projects range from cultural research and art exhibitions to elementary school education programmes and scholarships in Nicaragua, Dominica and Bolivia, along with healthcare access initiatives (Masud, 2013). In relation to its educational programme, which can be considered one of ALBA's most successful GNPs, ALBA built on Cuba's literacy initiative, *Sí, Se Puede* (Yes we can), and has reduced illiteracy across the region (Bagley and Defort, 2015). Nicaragua, the financial support of the Bank of ALBA, has successfully implemented the "Programa Hambre Cero" (Zero Hunger Programme) which aims to reduce national acute malnutrition by up to 4% (Bagley and Defort, 2015).

In relation to health, according to Masud (2013), ALBA's free access to healthcare GNPs has facilitated millions of consultations, operations and visits by Cuban trained community health workers across its member states. The most successful project, Mission Miracle, which began in 2004, as a project between Cuba and Venezuela, offers healthcare to low-income patients with eye problems. According

to the ALBA-PTA management report from 2004 to 2014, Mission Miracle has had a total of 3,482,361 patients, which have undergone surgery to improve or recover their sight (ALBA-PTA, 2014).

It is important to note, however, according to Bagley and Defort (2015), some of ALBAs GNPs have been severely limited due to mismanagement, such as ALBA agriculture and others exist only in name (Bagley and Defort, 2015). While this issue is important to highlight, it does not however, fall under the remit of this chapter's overall objective. Rather the success and failures, as well as the inner workings of ALBA will be addressed in the following chapter.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused specifically on the factors and events that led to the creation of ALBA through a historical narrative. It has suggested that its creation is representative of a move towards a more leftist inspired form of regionalism brought about by the rise of left. It has suggested that since its inception, ALBA has been put forward as an alternative to not only the Washington Consensus but to all other forms of capitalism. It has argued, however, that while a large body of research is of the opinion that Chávez and Venezuela as a whole has played an integral part in the creation and development of ALBA, this chapter has suggested that neither Caracas nor Chávez can or should be seen as a totalizing in its power to mould the regional bloc. It has argued that rather than seeing ALBA as a forced product of Chávez, ALBA should be understood as the merging of a sequence of particular opinions around common themes- emancipation from neoliberalism and aspirations to challenge the status quo. The chapter then moved on to specifically look at the evolution of ALBA, tracing its development from its creation to present

form. It began by looking at how the neoliberal assault on Latin America which began with Chile in 1973 instigated a series of events, such as the oppression of the left, the suppression of popular organisations as well as the workers' movements, leading to the reconstruction of Latin American economies along free-market lines, through manufacturing consent. It has also suggested that this manufacturing of consent within the region had two main characteristics, the first one being the oppression of the national development strategy by a new form of regionalism which was carried out by the second characteristic, that of US hegemony. This chapter has suggested that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which was initially launched in 1994, can be seen as a form of neoliberalism. It has proposed that the US-inspired FTAA intended to reshape the region in a specific way that was aligned with US interests. This chapter has argued that it was out of resistance to this form of new regionalism that ALBA was created. It has also suggested that ALBA's creation is representative of the left's resistance to US imperialism as well as a form of contestation against the US-sponsored FTAA but also represents not only a move by the left to develop a substitute for the FTAA but also ALBA can be seen as a mechanism to combat western-style economic integration, replacing it with a new political and economic model known as twenty-first-century socialism, that aims to transform Latin American societies through establishing new political, economic and social alliances. The main objective of which would be the creation of the 'patria grande' in the Latin American and the Caribbean region based on independence, sovereignty and identity.

The chapter then went on to look at the Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration, which is seen as the preamble of the inaugural ALBA treaty. It has suggested that the joint declaration as well as the apparent impending establishment of the FTAA that not

only led to the creation of ALBA but also inspired the foundational principles that the ALBA treaty is built on. Principles centred around aspirations to broaden solidarity among Latin American, aspirations centred on transforming Latin American society through education, participation and through the elimination of social inequalities. This chapter has also suggested that both the experiences of Venezuela with its success in its Bolivarian social missions and Cuba's 'internationalist' experience led to a shared belief that a workable regional integration model that offered a "real alternative of solidarity and integration beyond the existing regional agreements and as a counterpart to the imperialist offer of the FTAA" (Bossi 2007). However, it has also suggested that while the creation of ALBA began with the joint declaration between the two countries, its emergence should be viewed in the context of the developments within the political economy Latin America at that time. It cites mass disenchantment, the rise of social movements opposed to neoliberalism as well as the election of left and centre left governments in several Latin American countries as contributing factors, which led to the creation and development of ALBA.

The chapter then went on to discuss the expansion and development of ALBA since its creation. It has suggested that the rise in prominence of a shared ideological understanding of the importance of ALBA for the region led to its expansion through membership. It has suggested that the newly elected left-leaning government who shared in this belief began to join the regional movement beginning with Bolivia under Morales in 2006. From there the chapter points out that with the Bolivian adhesion to the alliance, the regional project began to further develop its integration model through the adoption of the "People Trade Agreement" or TCP. This addition served to refine the integration project and for

the first time it had begun to develop beyond mere commitment, it offered an alternative trading mechanism to the proposed trade agreement of the North. The chapter then went on to outline the TCP's main objective, which was to provide a distinct form of trade integration that is complementary to the national interests of participating members as well as the region, as opposed to market-driven forms of trade. Membership to ALBA began to increase with the addition to the TCP and by 2009 the regional project had grown to 9 members. The chapter highlighted that 2009 marked a turning point for the movement as ALBA began to evolve again, reorienting its focus in relation to the development of cooperation amongst its member states but also through the establishment of International Relations with countries such as China, India, Russia, Syria and Iran, the combination of which further legitimized ALBA as a Latin American regional movement.

The chapter then went on to look at the organisational and institutional structure of ALBA. It has highlighted that the institutional structure of ALBA developed alongside its membership expansion. It then went on to look at ALBA's organisational structure given a detailed account of its makeup. It looks specifically at the role and functions of the Presidential Council, the Political Council, the Economic Council, the Social Council and lastly the Council of Social Movements.

From there, the chapter gave an in-depth account of ALBA's Grand-National concepts, which led to the creation of its Grand-National Companies (GNCs) and Grand-National Projects (GNPs). It has suggested that the ALBA's Grand-National concept is essentially a political concept but incorporated many other elements. Primarily, it is based on the Bolivarian vision of a Latin American union. Within an ideological context, the concept is grounded in what can be seen as a set of shared beliefs by ALBA member states, with regards to a critical stance in relation to

neoliberalism, as well as an emphasis placed on sustainable development, social justice, sovereignty, self-determination as well as developing a regional bloc that has the capacity to produce sovereign regional policies. Then chapter then went on to look at ALBA's development of GNCs, which were created in opposition to MNCs and TNCs. It has suggested that the establishment of GNCs can be considered a counter-hegemonic response to neoliberalism. It has also suggested that GNCs are purposefully designed to favour the production of goods and services for the satisfaction of human needs as opposed to being profit-driven. It has also highlighted that each GNC acts fundamentally as an economic instrument that attempts to create and develop a wide area or network of fair trade between ALBA member states. The chapter then goes on to discuss GNPs, which it considers to be essentially social projects. It outlines the general dynamics of the projects and its orientation towards goods and services that satisfy human needs within the emergent ALBA markets. Before giving a detailed account of the operational capacity of both GNCs and GNPs, the chapter focuses on the NRFA that ALBA has created with the establishment of the Bank of ALBA. Its creation has two purposes, to firstly fund GNPs and GNCs but also it was created as a way to reduce its member-states reliance on International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) and the US. It then went on to compare and contrast the Bank of ALBA with the IFIs, suggesting that one of the main differences to be that the Bank of ALBA does not impose loan conditions on its member-state and it also operated on the consensus of its members. The chapter then turned its attention to ALBA's expansion of its NRFA with the creation of SUCRE, its regional trading currency which was created to help to facilitate trade and exchange between member-states but was also created in an

attempt to circumvent the US Dollar. The chapter then goes on to focus on Venezuela's role with regards to financial support of the various GNPs and GNCs. It suggests that often its role and financial support of GNPs is often vital as is the case with Petro ALBA, whose success is completely dependent on Venezuelan oil. The chapter then looked at various GNPs in other fields such as TeleSur within the telecommunication sector, which has gained international recognition in recent years, as well as ALBA's educational projects, which can be considered one of its most successful GNPs. It has also highlighted, that there are severe limitations and inactiveness with regards to some GNPs and cited severe mismanagement as the cause of its failure as is the case with ALBA Agriculture. Overall the chapter gave a historical overview of ALBA from its creation to its present form in an attempt to understand its evolution and the specific ways in which it has developed as a form of resistance.

The following chapter will look to examine the success and failures of ALBA in an attempt to determine if the regional movement can be seen as a successful counter-hegemonic form of regionalism. It will specifically look at Venezuela's role within the organisation and determine if the success or failure of the regional project is dependent on Venezuela's prominent participation.

Chapter 6: Inside ALBA

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, focus was primarily placed on the evolution of the ALBA, tracing its early developments to its current form. It cited specific historic factors such as the proposed implementation of the US-inspired FTAA as the primary catalyst, which led to the Latin American Lefts' resistance to this form of open regionalism. This in turn, eventually led to the creation of ALBA. Furthermore, the last chapter has suggested that the creation of ALBA should be seen as a mechanism, which was developed to combat western-style economic integration. It also discussed the expansion and development of ALBA since its creation. It suggested that the rise in prominence of a shared ideological understanding of the importance of ALBA for the region led to its expansion through membership. It has looked at the expansion and development of ALBA since its initial creation in 2004 and the evolution of the integration model through the adoption of the "People Trade Agreement" or TCP. It was implied that this addition served to refine the integration project and for the first time it had begun to develop beyond mere commitment, it offered an alternative trading mechanism to the proposed trade agreement of the North. The purpose of this chapter is to specifically look at whether ALBA can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic project, which seeks to challenge US-inspired neo-liberalism. Additionally, this chapter seeks to determine the extent that the Alliance has acted as a mechanism of support for small states. In order to fulfil this objective, the chapter will specifically look at where and in what ways a gap exists between ABLA's aspirations and the reality of the project on the ground.

6.2 ALBA: aspirations versus reality?

According to the late Hugo Chávez, “the ALBA is the alternative path to the neoliberal hegemony which is destroying the world” (ABN, 2008). For Bossi (2009), ALBA’s principal objective is to “break away from capitalist logic” (Bossi, 2009). From Metsäranta’s (2010) perspective, ALBA since its establishment, “has not only been put forward as an alternative to the Washington Consensus but more profoundly to all other possible forms of capitalism”(Metsäranta, 2010 p. 14).

For Dr. Philbert Aaron, the Dominican ambassador to Venezuela and national coordinator of ALBA, ALBA represents a yearning of the Latin American people, to make the region their own. It represents, according to Dr. Aaron’s interview (2017), an attempt by the region to “peel away the colonial ties” and reclaim the regional space. As indicated above, ALBA, since its establishment in 2004, has been put forth as an ideological regional alliance, an emancipatory project, an alternative regional grouping, a form of resistance, and finally a counter-hegemonic regional movement. The purpose of this section is to investigate whether ALBA has been able to move beyond an ideological alliance to produce a reality of change, in any tangible sense. It will also determine whether the emancipatory project, has been successful in its endeavour to greatly reduce US involvement within the region.

With any attempt to analyse the success and failures of the Alliance, it is necessary to look at ALBA’s development in two distinct phases, from 2004-2005, which looks specifically at ALBA as an alternative, and from 2005 to its present form, which looks at its evolution, expansion and institutional and structural development. It will also look at how the Alliance has been impacted more recently by the death of Hugo Chávez and how the increasingly volatile situation in Venezuela has affected it. By breaking down ALBA’s development and evolution

into two distinct phases it becomes possible to evaluate its effectiveness in relation to its stated objectives and goals, within a particular timeframe, as well as analysing problems that have arisen which have hindered the Alliance's ability to implement specific objectives.

In previous chapters, specific factors and events that led to the emergence of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (in 2006 ALBA changed its name to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America) have been discussed in detail. Beginning in the 1990s, a wave of neoliberal oppositional forces emerged across Latin America starting with protests in the Chilean referendum on Pinochet's presidency. Later that year, the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Venezuela brought a wave of protests and social unrest due to the repressive nature of the reforms rolled out. In the early part of the 1990s, the Sao Paulo forum meetings, which acted as a platform for leftist parties and movements, marked the beginning of oppositional forces working together, at a regional level, demanding an alternative to neoliberalism. During the same period, as Cusack (2018) notes, the Zapatista movement in Mexico "chose the date of the North American Free Trade Agreement's entry into force (NAFTA, 1 January 1994) for its violent eruption into the regional consciousness" (Cusack, 2018b p. 2). Four years later, the opposition found an electable candidate in Hugo Chávez, who in 1998 became Venezuela's president. Subsequent leftist victories in Bolivia in 2005 and Ecuador in 2006 marked a turning point for politics in Latin America. The idea of a 'pink tide' or 'left turn' was born and further sensationalized with the leftward shifts in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay along with many states within Central America.

With the rise of left-leaning governments across Latin American, the construction of leftist inspired forms of regionalism began to develop against the backdrop of the US proposed, neoliberal inspired FTAA.

Although it must be noted, that the FTAA was supported by many Latin American states, particularly by states with strong ties to the US. Regardless, with the support of left and centre of left governments, regional projects began to be framed around ideas of solidarity and the consolidation of shared approaches, bringing to the forefront issues of social inequality along with offering alternative paths of greater autonomy from the US. An example of this can be seen with the emergence of ALBA. Under the direction of Chávez and Castro, the autonomous regional project was created in an attempt to act as a form of resistance to the US-inspired FTAA. According to Emerson (2013), the FTAA promotion at the Mar de Plata summit in 2005 was a final attempt by the US to “institutionalise U.S. economic pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere” (Emerson, 2013 p. 194). Furthermore, Gamble and Payne (1996) have suggested, that the FTAA intended to reshape Latin America in such a way that the region would be aligned with US interests, “the FTAA would entrench faith in export-led growth and the private sector, while also institutionalising market access for U.S. capital” (Gamble and Payne, 1996 p. 93). Additionally, the attempted revival of the FTAA, revealed the broader U.S. fears about the creation of competing trading blocs internationally and an increasing sense of apprehension in the US “over an increasingly independent region seeking economic links beyond the Western Hemisphere” (Emerson, 2013 p. 194). However, the Mar de Plata summit was met with opposition and resistance particularly by left-leaning Latin American governments and social movements. The most vocal of which was President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. Four years

previously, at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, President Chávez had proposed and gained support for the creation of an alternative regional bloc; ALBA, which by the end of 2004, was formalized.

According to José Briceño in Bourbon's edited book (2012), ALBA's creation, essentially represented the Latin American left's resistance to US imperialism, as well as acting as a form of contestation to the US-sponsored FTAA (Briceño in Bourbon, 2012b). ALBA, in this light, not only represented a move by the Latin American left to develop a substitute for the FTAA but can also be seen as a mechanism, which attempted to combat western-style economic integration with the development of an alternative model for integration "that would lead to the transformation of societies and the establishment of political, economic, and social alliances. The main objective would be the creation of the "Patria Grande" in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on independence, sovereignty and identity" (Bagley and Defort, 2015 p. 46). With the above considered, to what extent has ALBA been successful in relation to its stated aims and objectives during the 2004-2005 timeframe? If one views ALBA as a counter-hegemonic form of regionalism, whose main objective was to derail the proposed FTAA, then the Alternative was indeed successful. However, with its principal goal achieved, ALBA began to expand in relation to membership, initiatives and ambition. Over the next seven years, ALBA attempted to move beyond its ideological foundation, morphing into an Alliance (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America) and establishing itself as a viable regional scheme -at least for the left -, which could offer its members an alternative path towards development. From 2005 onwards, the Alliance gained momentum with the accession of Bolivia and Ecuador, along with Nicaragua and Eastern Caribbean states. In relation to initiatives, ALBA began to

roll out some of its early Venezuelan-Cuban social programmes to new members, such as Misión Milagro- providing free eye operations -, Yo sí puedo - which offered literacy training - and Misión José Gregorio Hernández - which conducted surveys on the disability needs of any particular member state. The combination of which, played well with the general populations of recipient states, thus further legitimized recipient member states accession to ALBA. However, many of its social programmes in recent years have ceased to exist or at the very least have become less of a priority. Since 2012, after the death of Chávez and the subsequent economic instability which Venezuela has experienced since it has become apparent that there has been no roll-out of any new social programmes. Furthermore, it is evident that there has been no new official declarations or official ALBA progress reports on existing social programmes that were created prior to 2012. This suggests that either the various programmes have been dramatically curtailed or more than likely they are no longer operational. Due to a severe lack of public progress reports on ALBA's various social initiatives currently, it is impossible to know whether or not the initiatives are still in operation. With the above considered, it has become increasingly apparent that ALBA's social programmes are entirely dependent on Venezuela's ability to finance them. With the current economic instability and political insecurity that Venezuela has experienced since 2012, it seems that ALBA and its social programmes have taken a back seat. With that said, ALBA's ambitious expansion since 2005, should be considered the most impressive aspect of the regional project. It set about developing a new financial architecture in the region. Through the creation of an economic zone of shared development, the Alliance established a number of key initiatives in the hope that the specific combination would lead to the permanent

establishment of a new financial architecture for the region, which could operate independently from the US. The establishment of the Peoples Trade Treaty (TCP) (2006), the creation of the Bank of ALBA (2008), the development of the SUCRE (2008), and the development of Grand National Enterprises (2009), can all be considered as key ALBA initiatives that sought to bring about an ambitious economic zone of shared development. The following section will analyse the success and failures of the aforementioned initiatives in an attempt to establish the extent that ALBA has been successful in creating a feasible regional project.

With the accession of Bolivia in 2006, came the creation and incorporation of the Peoples Trade Agreement (TCP). Its primary objective has been to standardize and regulate investment and trade amongst ALBA member states, in an attempt to dramatically reduce inequality between and within member states. The TCP essentially provides an avenue for trade integration, that is complementary to member states' national interests, "for the benefit of society rather than markets or firms" (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). It operates through a number of mechanisms, but primarily via trade agreements "negotiated on a case-by-case basis, allowing for flexibility of commitment according to country circumstances" (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). It also establishes reciprocal credit arrangements, that facilitates "the payments and collections corresponding to commercial and financial transactions between the countries [through] the banking institutions designated for this purpose by the Governments" (ALBA, 2006b). In addition to facilitating compensated trade (through direct product exchanges) between member-states, the TCP also obliges all foreign investment to be restructured in an effort to protect the domestic industries of the member states. According to Tahsin (2009), under the TCP declaration "The main sectors of the economy should be determined by the state

instead of market mechanisms” (Tahsin, 2009 p. 6). Overall the structure and guidelines set out in the TCP declaration (2006) are framed around opposition to western-style market mechanisms and neoliberal policies. Its addition has essentially served to further legitimize ALBA’s anti-neoliberal and anti-US orientation (ALBA, 2006b). Although the TCP is a defining element of ALBA’s identity and serves as an institutional framework for facilitating ALBA’s transition from an ideological alliance to an alliance capable of producing real change for its member states, it has not produced any radical transformation in relation to how member states trade amongst each other. As Cusack (2015) has previously argued, despite official declarations and opportunities to implement the TCP, it is evident that the institutional framework continues to be based on pre-existing bilateral and regional agreements (Cusack, 2015). As a result, there has been no radical shift towards a new or revolutionary institutional trading framework. Furthermore, as Absell (2018) has noted, due to similarities in specialization, geographic distance, and demand structure, ALBA member states are not natural trading partners and without an institutional framework that is well thought out, and without a viable mechanism that can actually be implemented, no significant gains which are associated with integration, are likely to become a reality (Absell, 2018). What is more, it has become apparent that the TCP, twelve years on, has failed to move beyond declaration and agreement form, as a result it has not produced any measurable or conclusive results, which has led this work to conclude that the TCP overall, exists only as an aspirational rather than an operational institutional framework for ALBA.

The ALBA Bank was founded in 2008. Its creation, according to VI ALBA Summit declaration (2008) signifies a definitive step towards the construction of a new

financial architecture, which it deems necessary in order to establish “a solid foundation for the productive projects to make them viable and sustainable over time” (ALBA, 2008). The ALBA Bank, in contrast to international financial institutions (IFIs), operates on the consensus of its member states and does not impose loan conditions. The main objective of the ALBA Bank is to enhance agricultural and industrial production, support social projects along with facilitating multilateral cooperation agreements, particularly in relation to the energy sector, amongst ALBA member states (Hart-Landsberg, 2009b). Furthermore, as noted by Califano (2014), the ALBA Bank is driven by a commitment towards “The promotion, strengthening, and development of micro, small, and medium production, and of associative economies, with the purpose of empowering its capacities so as to ensuring, among other objectives, food sovereignty and security” (Califano, 2014 p. 138). In essence, the ALBA Bank was created to act as an anti-western regional development bank that provides loans with no conditionalities to member states. However, there is little genuinely regional about the bank. The ALBA bank is solely run and financed through the Venezuelan state’s Banco del Tesoro. Although at the XI ALBA summit (2012), ALBA members agreed to begin to make a 1% contribution of their international reserves to the bank, in an attempt to sustain and expand it, this agreement has yet to be implemented. Furthermore, although the Bank over the past decade has had major success in relation to funding development initiatives in various member states, insufficient funding overall has hindered its development (Benzi, 2016). Since 2012, it has become increasingly apparent that the Bank’s future is uncertain, given the current state of Venezuela’s economic affairs, it seems likely that Venezuela’s ability to continue to bankroll loans for member states will soon come

to an end. Moreover, with alternative proposals for more inclusive development banks gaining traction within the region –Bank of the South – the ALBA Bank’s unique allure seems to be fading, especially if one considers its competitors openness to incorporate other trading partners (both right and left) from the region.

During the third summit of ALBA (2008) the Sistema Unitario de Compensación Regional de Pagos or the SUCRE was created. The SUCRE was adopted by some ALBA member states and acted as a regional payment clearing system and virtual currency that aimed to incentivise trade activity between member states, save foreign exchange and decrease member states dependence on the US dollar. ALBA’s motivation for the SUCRE’s creation and implementation was primarily driven by its ideological counter-hegemonic ambition to create an alternative to the US dollar in regional trade. The SUCRE’s appeal amongst member states coincided with the height of the global economic crisis and in 2009 the SUCRE agreement was officially implemented by Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Ecuador. Although the SUCRE constitutes only one of the numerous trade agreements and mechanisms between ALBA member states, it represents one of ALBA’s most concrete institutional achievements. Beyond ALBA’s ideological trade objectives, the SUCRE’s specific ambitions are

To strengthen the monetary and financial sovereignty and independence of our people, to implement a new regional financial architecture that lessons external vulnerability and structural asymmetries of our economies, to boost the region’s productive capacity and to promote trade between countries in the Alliance (CMR, 2011 p. 8).

The language used in the aforementioned reflects, in a sense, the impact and effect that the financial crisis had on the ALBA member states and in Latin America in general. Both ALBA's and subsequently the SUCRE's emphasis on the promotion of intra-regional trade, largely sought to address its regional socioeconomic issues that were heightened by the global crisis. According to Cusack (2015), the epochal 2008 shift prompted ALBA states to pursue a partial delinking from the increasingly unpredictable international economy, moving beyond its Peoples Trade Agreement (Cusack, 2015). Within the SUCRE's first two years, the value of intra-regional trade grew at an exponential rate. According to Pearce (2018), it went from \$ 8 million in 2010 to more than 20 times that in 2011 (\$172,905, 344). The following year, the trade conducted via SUCRE once again grew substantially to just over \$1 billion (Pearce, 2018). For Pearce (2018) the significance of the aforementioned SUCRE trading figures are far from inconsequential and represent a promising challenge to "the dollar's privileged position in regional exchange" (Pearce, 2018 p. 76). Although the dollar has not been entirely circumvented with the use of the SUCRE, as it does use the currency to balance accounts biannually, the SUCRE's intention is for "participating nations to become less dependent on the dollar in the medium to long term, thus weakening US economic hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Pearce, 2018 p. 76). With that being said, it is important to note, that there have been as little as twenty transactions that have taken place via the SUCRE without Venezuelan direct involvement. The majority of transactions that have occurred via the SUCRE have been highly concentrated on trade between Venezuela and Ecuador. The trade figures particularly have been overwhelmingly dominated by Venezuela's propensity to import Ecuadorian foodstuffs. According to the Central Bank of Ecuador's 2014 and 2015 reports, in

the first year of trading - 2010 - 60.7 per cent of all SUCRE transactions were between Venezuela and Ecuador, in 2013, SUCRE transactions between the two countries had reached a peak of 96 per cent. The following year, trade interactions involving the two countries reduced to 84.62 per cent, the value of which had dropped dramatically - halving to \$497 million. In 2015, the value of SUCRE transaction fell again by a third to \$345 million (Banco Central de Ecuador, 2014; 2015). The above figures, raises two important questions, firstly why has the SUCRE mechanism not been used more widely amongst member states, and secondly why did the number and value of SUCRE transactions fall dramatically from 2013 onwards? With regards to the first issue, to put it simply the SUCRE mechanism was designed under the assumption that ALBA states involved possess goods that are needed by potential partners. This is simply not the case, therefore in reality the capacity of trade between members is limited by the competitive nature of individual economies, which in the case of ALBA member states generally produce commodities rather than consumer goods desired by other member states. Pearce (2018) has also noted, that the goods produced in ALBA states that are available for export, may also be restricted by other commitments to pre-existing regional and international trade agreements (Pearce, 2018). Furthermore, Cusack (2015) has also pointed out, that ALBA's effort to encourage an increase in trade between member states has primarily focused on the People's Trade Agreement (TCP), which although implemented, has not resulted in any significant increase or diversified trade between ALBA states effectively (Cusack, 2015). With regards to the second issue, the dramatic fall of SUCRE transactions and value since 2013, is not a result of a failure of the SUCRE system, rather it represents a reduction of total trade between Venezuela and Ecuador. Overall trade between the two

countries (Ecuadorian exports to Venezuela) represents ninety per cent of all SUCRE transactions, both the political insecurity Venezuela, resulting from the death of Hugo Chávez and its economic instability, which is a result of both a fall in global oil prices and its implementation of a poor and incoherent economic policy, all of which can be seen as factors, according to Pearce (2018), that are “responsible not only for stalling the system’s institutionalization, but also for this reduction in imports” (Pearce, 2018 p. 76). It is important to note, that the SUCRE purposely operates in opposition to neoliberal trading patterns, therefore, to assume that its use must experience growth year by year in order to be considered a successful mechanism, “is to repeat the neoliberal myth of ever-increasing growth, yet if the pattern of recent years continues then trade via the system will quickly dwindle to nothing” (Pearce, 2018 p. 86). Although the SUCRE system represents an inclusive mechanism, which offers an avenue to support both small and medium-size enterprises that wish to enter into the regional market, larger private firms have dominant in the usage of the SUCRE. In a sense this was inevitable, as participating ALBA states domestic economies have remained largely capitalist despite their ideological disposition towards socialism. Overall the faith of the SUCRE is undeniably tied to the political economy of Venezuela, which since 2012/2013, has become extremely polarized, volatile and highly dependent on activities in the global commodity markets.

GNEs can be seen as the final initiative that was established as part of ALBA’s push towards creating the economic zone of shared development. Created as part of ALBA’s ideological vision, according to Lubbock (2018), GNEs were “conceived as the material manifestation of 21st-century socialism’s primary vehicle from combating capitalist relations of production” (Lubbock, 2018 p. 181). GNEs or

transnational state joint ventures were established in 2009 (although the GNE concept didn't become a workable initiative until 2012) and are essentially mixed state enterprises, which emerged in opposition to development models that focus predominately on transnational corporations (TNCs) and open regionalism. Fundamentally, GNEs are state enterprises comprised of two or more ALBA member states that share ownership and focus on intra-ALBA trade. ALBA's aim was to establish GNE's in key sectors of member state societies in the hope that the enterprises would enhance productive capacity but also act as a mechanism for organizing production at a regional level (Aponte-Garca, 2011). Although from an ideological perspective, GNE's represent a revolutionary ALBA initiative, that have the capacity to enhance trade and economic development within the ALBA space, in reality however, "only some grand-national enterprises got off the ground while others floundered" (Cusack, 2018b p. 3). As Aponte-Garcia (2011) notes, the success rate of a GNE is completely dependent on its association with the Venezuela economy but more specifically with the Venezuelan oil industry (Aponte-Garca, 2011). Considering the current economic and political fragility of Venezuela, it becomes troublingly apparent that the future of ALBA's GNE's is likely to be non-existent if the downward spiral of Venezuela continues.

Overall the aforementioned has suggested that ALBA's ambitions and ideological underpinnings, which have shaped and guided the regional alliance since its creation in 2004, have not entirely translated into tangible results. Although it must be noted, that ALBA as an Alternative (2004- 2005) ambition did in fact become a reality with the failure of the FTAA. However, ALBA as an Alliance (2005 - to present) while achieving some success with various social programmes in the early years has failed in its ideological drive towards creating a Patria Grande within

Latin America. Essentially this failure is the result of ALBA's inability to remain internally coherent and united with regards to governance and institutional structure. ALBA's ambition with regards to creating a new regional financial architecture, although innovative and initially revolutionary, has only highlighted its inability to implement and follow through on its agreements. Although there are many reasons why ALBA's various initiatives have failed to bring about the changes that the Alliance envisaged, fundamentally the Venezuelan economy lies at the centre. Every aspect of ALBA's ambitious development of a new financial architecture for the region has been facilitated, funded and utilised primarily by Venezuela. Although participating member states have benefited from the various initiatives implemented under ALBA's economic zone for shared development, it has become apparent that the various projects future as a whole is completely dependent on Venezuela's ability to continue to finance them. Given the economic instability that Venezuela has experienced since 2012, the future of ALBA's economic zone for shared development is uncertain.

The following section will specifically look at ALBA's relationship to Venezuela and determine whether the Alliance should be seen primarily as a form of Venezuela's foreign policy.

6.3 ALBA as a form of Venezuela's foreign policy

This section seeks to determine the extent that Venezuelan foreign policy has influenced ALBA. Given the current economic and political upheavals that the Maduro government is experiencing, this section's primary objective is to determine how the deterioration of ALBA's primary financial backer has affected the project's ability to function and progress. In order to answer this question, this

work first discusses how Venezuela's foreign policy has changed over time. It specifically examines the transition from the Chávez era to the Maduro era and determines the extent that its influence is in decline. It also explores how the influence of Venezuela within the alliance has affected its ability to attract more member-states as well as assesses the role that Petro-diplomacy has played within the Alliance.

The predominant argument within academic literature on ALBA asserts that the regional integration bloc is used as a political tool for Venezuelan foreign policy (Cusack, 2018b ; De la Fuente 2011; Dominguez 2014; Jácome 2011). Since becoming a petro-state in the 1920s and a democracy in 1957 Venezuela, has had a very active and successful foreign policy. One of the reasons for Venezuela's ability to pursue foreign policy objectives successfully has been its investment and innovations in diplomacy. To understand Venezuela's influential and pioneering model in foreign policy, it is necessary to look at the various roles it has sought to pursue over the years as an international actor. Indeed, by the 1960s, Venezuela assumed a variety of identities, namely a western identity (as it self-identified with the exclusive club of western democracies), a Caribbean identity (which allowed it to closely align itself with Greater and Lesser Antilles), an Andean identity (committing itself to the advancement of its neighbours to the west), a third world identity (devoted to developing links with post-colonial regimes) and finally an integrationalist identity (committed to creating a union of Latin American nations, through ALBA and other endeavours). According to Dominguez (2014) Venezuela's active pursuit of a multifaceted identity can be seen as an attempt to create and develop strong ties with various groups and regions (Dominguez, 2014). According to De la Fuente (2011), ALBA acts as the cornerstone of Bolivarian Venezuela's

foreign policy. He suggests that ALBA is the means by which Venezuela is attempting to situate itself as the “leader of the anti-U.S. ideological agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean” (De la Fuente, 2011 p. 3). This desire to create an anti-US ideological alliance has existed since the time of Simon Bolivar; however, it was not until the rise of Hugo Chávez that it started to gain momentum. The rise of the Left in Latin America in the 2000s and the evident aversion to the proposed FTAA culminated into the creation of an anti-US alternative regional project originally known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). Although co-founded by Chávez and Castro, Venezuela has primarily been the driving force behind the regional integration bloc. Its economic weight and to a large extent the popularity of Chávez amongst the Latin American left, created the necessary links to make ALBA membership attractive. From a critical perspective, its very creation exemplifies Chávez’s compulsion to establish a collective to counter the US. Building on the various identities Venezuela has developed since the 1960s, Chávez was able to gain support for ALBA membership from a variety of left-leaning states within the region and well as social movements operating across the region. Revenue generated by Venezuela’s considerable oil reserves allowed it to provide substantial economic assistance to both member and observer states and, through this, ALBA gained momentum. Working through ALBA, Venezuela has both pledged and given billions of dollars to ALBA member and observer member states in the form of economic assistance, ranging from preferential oil prices to a variety of Latin American economies via Petro-ALBA, to financing an array of social development projects across member states, via the ALBA fund. According to De la Fuente (2011), these various forms of economic assistance, carried out through ALBA, have enabled Venezuela to construct “an alliance of support towards its

foreign policy positions, or at a minimum censor opposing viewpoints” (De la Fuente, 2011 p. 3).

Even prior to Chavez, Venezuela has had a tradition of acquiring political capital in exchange for economic aid. It is well documented that Venezuela used its oil wealth during the 1970s to pursue a foreign policy agenda designed to propel the state into a leadership role within the region. This was evident under President Carlos Andrés Pérez (1974-1979) with Venezuela’s role in helping to create OPEC, which in turn, allowed Venezuela to increase its influence both regionally and internationally after the 1973 and 1979 oil crises. In addition, the San José Oil Agreement (1980) has also been cited as an agreement that was created in order to enhance Venezuelan influence in the region. Under the agreement, both Venezuela and Mexico supplied cheap oil to eleven Caribbean countries, along with financing and technical expertise for infrastructure projects. Similarities can be drawn from the San José Oil agreement, Petrocaribe as well as Petro-ALBA, as each “defines itself as an element of Venezuela’s foreign policy which seeks to displace multinationals from the region and create a focal point for development within the framework of a geopolitical position” (Jácome, 2011 p. 5). According to Jácome (2011), with the aforementioned taken into account, each oil based development initiative has sought to transform Central and South America as well as the Caribbean into an integrated negotiating bloc along with Venezuela, whose purpose within the bloc has been to act as a bridge for developing “strategic alliances between this bloc’s members and China, Russia, and other friendly countries” (Jácome, 2011 p. 5). Venezuela does not dispute that it has an anti-imperialist foreign policy agenda; this is evident in the Venezuelan constitution of 1999 along with featuring in two successive national development plans (2001, 2007). As

Muhr (2010) notes, the 1999 constitution as well as the successive national development plans obliged the Venezuelan government to pursue

Latin American and Caribbean integration guided by the normative imperatives of solidarity, peaceful cooperation between equal states, complementarity and social justice, in the form of a community of nations with a common foreign and defence policy, for regional sovereignty, the democratization of the international society, and the construction of a multi-polar world order to achieve an international equilibrium (Muhr, 2010 p. 613).

Strategies for achieving this goal, according to Muhr (2010), include over-turning the conventional concentration of power that exists within international organisations through “concerted action by the developing countries” (Muhr, 2010), redefining the objectives and ambitions of Mercosur, promoting “protagonist participatory democracy” at the global level (Muhr, 2010 p. 613). According to De la Fuente (2011), Venezuela’s development agenda has been activated at a regional level via ALBA. He suggests that Venezuela uses ALBA primarily as a political instrument that “forms part of a concerted strategic effort to counter U.S. influence in the region” (De la Fuente, 2011 pp. 4-5). Unquestionably a strong ideological alliance has been constructed through ALBA, one that promotes solidarity, autonomous development, equality and sovereignty. With this considered, how has Venezuela’s strong presence within ALBA affected the regional bloc? In order to answer this question Venezuela’s impact on ALBA needs to be looked at in two phases. The first phase will look at the influence of Chávez within ALBA and the wider Latin American region (2004- 2013). The second will specifically look at ALBA in the post-Chávez era (2013- presently). As already stated above, one of the

main draws for membership of ALBA has been ideological. The stated objectives and aims of ALBA have been evidently appealing to left-leaning states across the region. Likewise, Venezuela's vast oil wealth and generosity to member states, has slowly but surely allowed the integration bloc to grow from two members in 2004 to eleven in 2014. However, considering the positive gains from membership, why has ALBA been unable to attract more countries to join? Although there may be several reasons for ALBA's inability to expand, one of the most compelling arguments suggests that, contrary to the belief that Chávez and his ideological position acted as a lure for membership, his dominant role within ALBA and his vocal rejection of the Latin American right may have had the opposite effect. The 2006 Peruvian presidential campaign illustrates this argument, when Chávez backed left-leaning candidate Ollanta Humala was defeated by right-leaning candidate Alan Garcia. In part, Garcia's campaign gained popularity amongst the masses when he framed Chávez's support of the opposition as a form of intervention. Chávez's support of Humala directly had a negative effect on the outcome of the election but his involvement in the Peruvian elections also led to increasing tensions between himself and President Garcia. This was evident in Garcia's lack of attendance at the 2007 energy summit held in Venezuela. Instead of attending, Garcia began to form an alternative coalition of Latin American states who all share a common dislike for Chávez-backed projects and instead favour initiatives that promote trade liberalization. Dabéne (2018) has suggested that "As a consequence, the sub-continent grew increasingly polarized between a group of countries keen to sign free trade agreements with the United States (Chile, Peru, Colombia) and those belonging to ALBA (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador)" (Dabéne, 2018 p. 43). Likewise, in the 2006 Mexican presidential election, Chávez played an

active role. During the election, right-leaning candidate, Felipe Calderón, branded his leftist opponent, Lopez Obrador, “as an imitator and friend of Chávez, as intolerant and unstable as his supposed tutor” (Dabène, 2018 pp. 44-45). In the years that followed, ideological proximity to both ALBA and Chávez was used to vilify many leftist candidates and, in some cases, it was used to destabilize elected presidents, as was the case with Honduran president Manuel Zelaya. According to Dabène (2018), in 2009 President Zelaya was ousted because Honduras became a member of ALBA. Although the official motive for his ousting was his attempted re-write of the constitution, which allowed for multiple re-elections, according to Dabène (2018), his political affiliation with the left and particularly in relation to both Chávez and ALBA “threatened many powerful interests in his country” (Dabène, 2018 p. 45). However, close affiliation with both Chávez and ALBA was not always unwelcomed. In Bolivia, ALBA’s cooperation schemes and redistributive policies were embraced, particularly in underdeveloped areas and “local politicians were keen to appear in press reports with Cuban doctors” (Dabène, 2018 p. 45).

Although the aforementioned has suggested Chávez’s active political support for left-leaning politicians very often acted as a detrimental factor, causing many to lose elections, his activism also had a positive effect in both Ecuador and Bolivia. Here, what I draw from this, is that support from Chávez, had more of a positive outcome if the degree of left (radical left) within a particular country was more aligned with Venezuela.

Politics aside, how else can one explain ALBA’s inability to attract bigger countries within the region? For many countries, the risks outweighed the benefits. ALBA is anti-imperialist by nature, regardless of its merits and offer of cheap subsidized oil; therefore, to become a member equates to choosing a side. Thus, for larger,

wealthier countries, joining ALBA meant closing yourself off to the possibility of new trade deals with the US. Although it must be said that this draw back did not affect many Caribbean countries from joining the regional bloc, Dabène (2018) has suggested that their involvement in ALBA was largely due to their interest in the Petrocaribe agreement, which offered cheap oil imports from Venezuela (Dabène, 2018). However, of the eighteen members of Petrocaribe only six are members of ALBA. In an interview conducted by Dabène (2018) with President Leonal Fernández of the Dominican Republic, he states, contrary to expectation of his-petro diplomacy, Chávez did not pressurize non-ALBA members to join ALBA with the use of cheap oil in exchange for political support. According to President Fernández, Chávez knew that some Caribbean states could not and would not put at risk their relations with the US by joining such an anti-imperialist Bloc. The non-political nature of Petrocaribe made joining ALBA irrelevant for many Caribbean states as Chávez offered cheap oil imports through this program at no political cost to the recipient. To an extent, the very existence of Petrocaribe has weakened ALBA's capacity to attract new-member states. The Honduras' case exemplifies this. After the coup, Honduras left both Petrocaribe and ALBA "as a display of political rejection of Bolivarianism"(Dabène, 2018 p. 45). However, in 2012, the country re-joined Petrocaribe but not ALBA. This demonstrates that, firstly, the two alliances are separate entities and, secondly, Petrocaribe's non-political nature makes it more enticing for oil-deprived countries. With that said, the ideological foundations that ALBA is built on, has made joining the alternative regional integration bloc attractive to some Latin American countries. As Kellogg (2007) has suggested, ALBA "has become synonymous with the radical reforms underway in Venezuela and a symbol of the hopes for radical transformation that have emerged

with the move Left in Latin America as a whole” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 200). Although, it is important to note, that the political ideology between member-states varies to a degree, depending on whether they reside left, centre of left or far left, reflects how active a particular member state is within ALBA. ALBA allows for this; being a member does not necessarily mean you need vocally reject or sever ties with the US or any other open regionalist project you may be a part of. Regardless of Chávez’s history of political activism within the region, upholding sovereignty and non-intervention is a defining element of ALBA’s overall objectives. These non-invasive goals coupled with ALBA’s unique approach to integration and development undoubtedly made joining attractive at least for some. Furthermore, Venezuela’s centrality to ALBA is in no way unique or surprising. Within Latin America, other competing regional blocs, most notably Mercosur and UNASUR, have very similar power structures. In the UNASUR case, Brazil plays a dominant role and with the Mercosur case, both Brazil and Argentina generally oversee the bloc’s activities. The point is here, that, in general, wealthier member-states within a regional bloc formation tend to direct or at the very least, financially back the activities of said regional bloc. Although ALBA’s aspirations and the way it has attempted to integrate has made it a unique regional bloc, Venezuela’s position within the project is not. However, March 2013 marked a turning point for Venezuela and its role within ALBA. The deterioration of Chávez’s health and eventual death had an enormous impact on the political dynamics of Venezuela and on ALBA, both politically and economically. Domestically, since Chávez’s death, cracks began to appear across the economic sphere in Venezuela, cash-flow problems stemming from a volatile and over-valued currency and high inflation had a knock-on effect on imports, investment commitments both domestically and

abroad and public services domestically. Politically speaking, the loss of Venezuela's charismatic leader, even with Chávez handpicking Nicolas Maduro as his successor, has made maintaining political power increasingly difficult considering the rise of an increasingly violent opposition. This coupled with the collapse of oil prices in late 2014 and a poor economic performance all round, has even further exacerbated the Maduro government's stability and political future. Consequently, ALBA is no longer a priority for the Venezuela government, whose domestic issues have become increasingly more volatile over the last few years. Puente (2018) has gone so far as to suggest that, "The Venezuelan oil basket has since bottomed out its lowest price since 2003 –averaging \$35.15 per barrel in 2016 – deepening the country's economic and political crisis and jeopardizing the resources that have underwritten much of ALBA's progress to date" (Puente, 2018 p. 195). Interestingly, there is no evidence to suggest that Venezuela's economic downturn is the result of falling oil prices, rather the Bolivarian state's poor performance in terms of shortages, economic activity and inflation began in early 2014 when the price for oil was still high - \$88.4. Puente (2018) has suggested that Venezuela's economic deterioration was brought about by a very poor and incoherent economic policy, which in turn, caused a hard reduction in production factors, despite the relatively high oil prices. Venezuela's disjointed economic policy "was characterized by an inflexible foreign exchange strategy, the subsequent appreciation of the exchange rate, the resulting boom in imports at the cost of local trade capacity, a climate of hyper regulation, price controls, systematic expropriations and more" (Puente, 2018 p. 201). This domestic situation, coupled with Venezuela's external debt, has exacerbated the country's ability to stay afloat. Domestically it has resulted in a double crisis, both economic and political. What is

more, the continuation of this downward spiral of economic instability and political uncertainty has and will continue to have a negative impact on ALBA and all its initiatives. As already discussed, Venezuela has bankrolled all of ALBA's projects. Although it is impossible to determine the exact amount of money Venezuela has provided for various ALBA projects, Hirst (2011) has suggested that government statistics on preferential oil sales alone put Venezuelan contributions at over \$20 billion (Hirst, 2011). Given the current situation in Venezuela and its unlikely turnaround under the current government, it seems very unlikely that Venezuela will be able to continue to provide the lion's share of aid for ALBA. In an interview conducted with Mr. Alfonso D'Santiago, the head of the economic division at the Venezuelan embassy in London, he states that, while ALBA's successes are still evident "the financial weight of projects is not distributed equally. Venezuela contributes the most. Some have said too much" (D'Santiago 2017). He goes on to suggest that, if the regional integration project is to progress, "other countries will have to step up and help more to finance ALBA projects" (D'Santiago 2017). This interview was conducted in 2017 prior to the current crisis. With this considered Cusack (2018) has suggested that no other ALBA member state "has the weight nor the will to prevent its stagnation" (Cusack, 2018b p. 5). Cusack (2018) goes on to explain that, of the larger ALBA member states – Cuba, Ecuador and Bolivia – none seem too concerned with ALBA's future. He suggests that Cuba is more concerned with strengthening ties with the US, while both Ecuador and Bolivia, who have both suffered from an oil price shock as well as a mounting opposition in their respective countries, have turned their attention to Mercosur. Interestingly, in a preliminary telephone interview conducted with the Ecuadorian embassy in London in late 2017 (prior to the current crisis), when I asked a communications

advisor what Ecuador's position on ALBA was, he stated that, "ALBA was not a priority for Ecuador, we are more concerned with the bigger regional projects, like Mercosur" (Anonymous 2017). Ecuador's disinterest in ALBA became even more apparent with the election of Lenin Moreno, who subsequently withdrew from the regional bloc in 2018.

Surprisingly, there have been some positive gains in relation to membership in recent years. The Eastern Caribbean countries Grenada, St Lucia and St Kitts and Nevis have all become full ALBA members. The following section will specifically look at the Caribbean's role in ALBA. It will mainly focus on why some states within that region have joined ALBA irrespective of their membership to Petrocaribe. It will also look at their respective roles within ALBA and determine the level of agreement and compliance with ALBA's overall objectives.

6.4 Understanding the Caribbean's place within ALBA

Considering that one-third of ALBA member states are made up of Caribbean microstates - Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada - analyses of these states participation in ALBA has been largely neglected. All too often, ALBA's dominant and more 'influential' states, such as Venezuela and Cuba, have taken centre stage with regards to an in-depth analysis of the bloc. As Cusack (2018) has pointed out, of the academic research carried out on ALBA, "Eastern Caribbean participation is presumed variously to be unimportant, analogous, coerced, or instrumental, yet few in-depth studies focusing on the states involved provide significant correctives to all of these assumptions" (Cusack, 2018c p. 115). He suggests that the underlying problem with existing research on the Caribbean, particularly the Anglophone Caribbean

role within ALBA, is that the roots and results of its membership structure have been assumed more often than analysed. The natural focus of the majority of literature conducted on the Alliance has tended to focus on big themes - anti-neoliberal, counter-hegemonic, post-liberal regionalism - centred on the larger of the ALBA member states or the Alliance as a whole, and as a result the Caribbean member-states' place within ALBA has been all too often overlooked and under-researched or assumed as passive subjects of Venezuelan foreign policy objectives. However, considering, as Norman Girvan (2011) has suggested, that the development of relations between several Caribbean states and Venezuelan-centred ALBA and Petrocaribe "is one of the most significant recent developments in regional affairs" (Girvan, 2011 p. 157), an analysis of the Caribbean's role within ALBA is important. With this in mind, the focus of this section will be to assess the Caribbean microstates' place within ALBA. This section will also determine the extent that their inclusion in ALBA is ideologically based, as some of the Caribbean member states are prominent tax havens, which in essence completely contradicts ALBA as a socialist project. It begins by explaining why some Caribbean states decided to join ALBA. It then examines the extent that Caribbean accession to ALBA is financially and to some extent politically strategic. Finally, it will conclude with an investigation into the level of ideological compatibility between Caribbean member states and ALBA's overall objectives.

The emergence of ALBA and Petrocaribe in Latin America has coincided with several other important regional developments, namely, the rise of Brazil as a regional hegemon via UNASUR, and the creation and development of new Southern agreements and institutions. Both Kellogg (2007) and Girvan (2011) have suggested that these trends, along with the creation of the Bank of the South,

UNASUR, as well as other Latin American based initiatives reflect a rise in Southern influence and economic weight. Furthermore, according to Fridell (2015) “The traditional hegemony of the United States, the World Bank, and the IMF, has been diminished in recent years by these trends” (Fridell, 2015 p. 219). With these recent developments in Latin America considered, Fridell (2015) has suggested that while traditional North-South non-reciprocal trade and commitment to “special and differential treatment” have diminished, Caribbean states have increasingly become engaged in a number of new South-South projects (Fridell, 2015). One of the most significant has been the Caribbean’s involvement in both ALBA, which was launched in 2004, and Petrocaribe, which was launched in 2005, by Venezuela, which gives eighteen Caribbean states preferential oil sales. For Norman Girvan (2011), the creation and development of both projects should be seen as part of a much larger “process marked by a relative decline in U.S. power and the emergence of new geo-economic poles of influence” (Girvan, 2011 p. 218). With the aforementioned considered, what factors specifically have led some Caribbean states to join ALBA? As already mentioned, Venezuelan centred Petrocaribe has provided an energy lifeline for the Caribbean. Of considerable importance, becoming members of Petrocaribe means that Caribbean states have not needed to join ALBA in order to gain preferential access to Venezuelan oil. So why is one third of ALBA member states made up of Caribbean microstates? It is in the opinion of this work that the driving force behind Caribbean accession to ALBA is purposely instrumental, given the structural and financial constraints that that are closely associated with small island economies, ALBA, via concessional financial assistance, in the form of loans and grants, offers participating Caribbean governments’ both fiscal and policy leeway, allowing them to direct funding into

areas where they themselves deem necessary. In a 2017 interview conducted with Venezuelan ambassador for Antigua and Barbuda, Carlos Amador Perez Silva, he points out, "Right now, it is interesting because there are more Caribbean states in ALBA than Latin American members. It seems the ALBA has had an important repercussion in the Caribbean" (Silva 2017). Although in agreement with Silva, that ALBA has had an important impact on the Caribbean, this work finds that the importance of ALBA in the Caribbean is primarily driven by its non-interference objective, which has in turn, allowed its Caribbean member states to explore alternative avenues to develop without the traditional external supervision. However, the ALBA/Caribbean relationship works both ways. In an interview conducted in 2017 with Dr Philbert Aaron, the Dominican ambassador to Venezuelan and the national coordinator of ALBA, he suggested that ALBA first and foremost is an "organisation of solidarity for the region" which aligns two areas under one organisation. He stated that, historically the region was broken up by colonialism and ALBA has sought to improve ties between Latin America and the Caribbean by breaking down barriers (Aaron 2017). While this work does not dispute ALBA's inclusionary intentions, it does however view the Alliance's expansion into the Caribbean as strategic. By expanding into the Caribbean, the Alliance has been able to enhance its foothold in the region. Strengthening an alliance that has the capacity to challenge the status quo while simultaneously building a non-invasive relationship with the Caribbean, allowing ALBA to softly undermine the US's position within the region.

To some extent, the Caribbean member states that have joined ALBA share Venezuela's counter-hegemonic objective of reducing the United States' degree of influence over their internal affairs. Fridell (2015) has suggested, that rather than

continuing to be used as 'pawns of hemispheric geopolitics or aid beneficiaries', the Caribbean member states of ALBA should be considered "As willing partners in a consciously asymmetric south-south arrangement that provides them with fiscal and policy leeway to explore development alternatives of their own choosing" (Fridell, 2015 p. 221). Petrocaribe was initiated a year after ALBA emerged. Rather than serving as an alternative to ALBA, Petrocaribe can be seen as a means to support some of ALBA's ideological objectives by reducing the participating states' dependence on the American economy. It can also be seen as a monumental South-South initiative, which allows eighteen Caribbean states to purchase oil from Venezuela under the terms of preferential credit and low interest rate loans. In an interview conducted with Marcos Garcia (2017) the first secretary at the Venezuelan embassy in London, he stated, that Petrocaribe was born out of necessity. The Caribbean microstates "were without any kind of resources to deal with international cooperation in the energy sector so ALBA developed a project at that level (Petrocaribe)" (Garcia, 2017), in an attempt to propagate these small island economies via development initiatives brought about through Petrocaribe. Furthermore, he stated, that Petrocaribe is unique as it is an initiative that does not negatively affect the interests of any state within the region, rather it helps "Caribbean countries to solve a huge problem they were facing" (Garcia 2017). According to Garcia, Petrocaribe provided an avenue by which the Caribbean were able to use the agreement as a mechanism to buffer external oil price shocks and direct funds towards development projects.

The initiative can also be seen as a dominant source of concessional loans and grants, which are often used to finance a wide variety of development initiatives and projects directed at providing technical assistance as well as economic and

social infrastructure. Combined with funds from ALBA, according to Fridell (2015) “the two have become among the largest source of concessional financing in the Caribbean” (Fridell, 2015 p. 221). Furthermore, as Girvan (2011) has suggested, the combination of the two initiatives for the Caribbean should be seen as highly significant, especially if one considers the Petrocaribe/ALBA funds largely lack the demands and requirements closely associated with official development assistance from traditional donors such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the US as well as the EU, all of whom, generally require stringent neoliberal adjustments (Girvan, 2011).

In contrast to traditional development assistance, Petrocaribe/ALBA financial assistance actively seeks to avoid direct intervention in all member states’ domestic policy and political priorities. In direct contrast to the often-rigid conditions generally associated with free trade agreements (FTAs), both ALBA and Petrocaribe agreements are intentionally designed to foster loose bilateral and or multilateral commitments, which is unsurprisingly an attractive element for membership. As Fridell (2015) has suggested, both initiatives are flexible in nature, which has allowed member states to decide on the terms of arrangements on a case-by-case basis, “and frequently pay attention to “special and differential treatment” considering both members political and economic capacities” (Fridell, 2015 p. 221).

In the same light, Girvan (2011) has suggested, that ALBA and Petrocaribe’s flexibility has meant that neither agreement legally binds member states under international treaty law nor do they formally conflict with any other regional or international commitments, such as those associated with CARICOM (the Caribbean Community) membership (Girvan, 2011). While it is evident that Petrocaribe has

been beneficial for many Caribbean states, it is in the opinion of this work that the initiative served as a strategic gateway project for ALBA. The non-political nature of Petrocaribe and the financial and development gains it offers, has resulted in an unconventional alliance between eighteen Caribbean states, that fall on both left and right of the political spectrum and Venezuela- a radical leftist state. Prior to Petrocaribe's establishment in 2005, no Caribbean state was a member of ALBA, however one third of ALBA is now made up of Caribbean microstates. Just as ALBA has used Petrocaribe to build and strengthen relationships in the Caribbean, at the expense of the US, the Caribbean micro-states have strategically placed themselves in a position where they can benefit from Petrocaribe and in some cases, both initiatives, without binding themselves to an ideology that has the potential of damaging relations with the US and other western nations and institutions. However, it is important to note that neither the positive attributes nor benefits obtained through membership of ALBA and/or Petrocaribe can liberate the Caribbean microstates from the challenges associated with having vulnerable economies or the need to operate in a global economy that is dominated by vastly more powerful states. According to Kapoor (2008), these dominant states – both North and South – often present non-reciprocal financial assistance as free 'gifts'; however, these free 'gifts' consistently increase the coercive power of the donor and often involve indirect forms of repayment or obligation which frequently, within the global arena, involves an array of economic and diplomatic concessions (Kapoor, 2008). In line with Kapoor's (2008) argument, the Caribbean member states of ALBA and Petrocaribe invariably enhance the influence of Venezuela along with other ALBA member states over them. However, Fridell (2015) has interestingly suggested that, while Kapoor's (2008) argument is valid, the intent of

Venezuela's ideological assertiveness and role within ALBA and Petrocaribe plays out in a somewhat different way:

Alongside international cooperation, ALBA members have their own statecraft needs centrally in mind, which include the desire to build and strengthen alliances with Southern governments on the basis of common interests, encourage the emergence of a "multipolar" world with enhanced political clout for Southern blocs, confront deeply-entrenched economic and technological dependence on the North, and stymie attempts by the US and other imperial powers to isolate them economically and politically (Fridell, 2015 pp. 222-223).

While the merits of the Alliance's objectives to build and strengthen the Southern bloc's position within the global economy is noteworthy, the Caribbean's role with regards to this ambition is minimal at best, especially if one considers Venezuela's ideological centrality to ALBA. The Caribbean's minimal engagement can also be explained, at least to some extent, by a lack of ideological alignment. Antigua and Barbuda can be used as a prime example here, as it is a tax haven, in this way its membership is contradictory to the Alliance as an ideological project, as it goes against ALBA ideological underpinnings as a socialist project. Nevertheless, despite the evident power imbalances that exist between ALBA and Petrocaribe members, it would be incorrect to view the Caribbean microstates as having 'no geostrategic cards to play'. Although many have noted that the Caribbean states often fall into the category of 'vulnerable', Fridell (2015) has suggested that these small island economies can and should be seen as "highly resilient, adapting strategies that can "resist" and "reshape" wider structural forces through careful foreign and domestic policy choices" (Fridell, 2015 p. 223). According to Cooper (2013), in relation to

ALBA, Caribbean member states have been able to draw on their long history of leveraging the main features of the Westphalian system in their favour, thus capitalizing on international norms which assigns one vote and one seat to a single sovereign states (Cooper, 2013). Hence, while the combined population of the Caribbean member states of ALBA only represents 0.6% of the overall population of ALBA member states, the Caribbean constitutes one third of ALBA membership overall. According to Fridell (2015), as a result of becoming members of ALBA, the participating Caribbean states have been given an important political chip, which has allowed the microstates to increase their leverage over the larger members, which in turn, ensures the free flow of financial assistance in return for participation, to some extent, the “Caribbean members must now be kept content to avoid a major diplomatic embarrassment should one decide or threaten to pull out”(Fridell, 2015 p. 224).

Another important aspect of Caribbean membership of ALBA that must be considered when attempting to understand its dynamics, is the attractive alternative ALBA offers to members. Although the Alliance cannot ultimately offset the geostrategic interests of its Caribbean member states, it does offer ‘alternative visions’ of how unequal inter-state relations can be managed in a more economically and politically balanced and more socially efficient way (Fridell, 2015). In this way, ALBA can be seen as one of the most distinctly unique and conscious alternatives to FTAs. FTAs are generally framed around objectives that promote privatization, deregulation and reciprocal liberalisation, whereas ALBA, according to Girvan (2011) is framed around the prioritisation of social goals through cooperation, in an attempt to meet basic needs of member states, in areas such as education and health care, while simultaneously acknowledging the

necessity of non-reciprocal trading agreements between asymmetrical partners via concessional financing and preferential trade (Girvan, 2011). Furthermore, Paul Kellogg (2007) has pointed out, “where traditional trade deals use language like ‘comparative advantage,’ ALBA instead argues, ‘the political, social, economic and legal asymmetries of both countries have been taken into account” (Kellogg, 2007 p. 201). In this way ALBA’s distinct alternative has allowed for its Caribbean member states’ individual needs to be addressed. National development plans are prioritized and financed through this non-reciprocity mechanism, allowing Caribbean member-state governments to allocate resources to development initiatives where they deem necessary. In comparison, ALBA, in this way, explicitly symbolizes a political advancement over the previous EU-Caribbean preferential agreement, which offered Caribbean states only a consultative role within the EU financed project. ALBA has created the necessary environment, which has allowed for greater autonomy of its Caribbean member states. Non-reciprocal treatment under ALBA, does not equate to unequal political status, as all members regardless of size, have officially the same status in relation to governing Social, Economic and Political Councils within the Alliance. However, this supposed status equality that exists within the various ALBA Councils does not erase the very real geopolitical inequalities that exist between the Caribbean microstates and the larger wealthier South American member states of ALBA, particularly Venezuela, the primary funder of all ALBA projects within the Caribbean. Regardless, inequality between member states within regional integration bloc is not unique to ALBA. What makes ALBA different is that several projects that have been initiated under ALBA have been designed in such a way that cooperation and the objective of strengthening South-South relations have been prioritized over competition, “even in areas where

market dynamics themselves would otherwise impose competitive behaviour” (Fridell, 2015 p. 224). One such example is an ALBA initiated coffee enterprise, which involved Venezuela and Dominica. In 2009, Venezuela via ALBA financed a coffee processing plant in Dominica in an attempt to help offset the island’s failing banana industry. Although Venezuela at that time was intensifying its efforts to promote its own coffee in regional markets, it encouraged and financed - via ALBA - Dominica’s coffee industry, with the stated intention of developing a joint venture under ALBA’s GNP targeted at the Latin American market.

Although the project is still in its infancy and is certainly no panacea for development, as it evidently encourages dependence on unstable commodity markets, ALBA has offered Dominica and its failing banana industry a lifeline, an avenue by which has given Dominican farmers a more solid and stable market. Furthermore, because ALBA has financed a processing plant on the island, it means Dominica will be able to roast the beans on site, typically this stage of production is reserved for Northern-based companies (Fridell, 2015).

According to Lebowitz (2006), ALBA has attempted to facilitate the prioritisation of human development alongside economic growth - this is evident with its active support for such things as public infrastructure, education and health as necessary elements for facilitating long-term economic and social development (Lebowitz, 2006). Under the guidance of Prime Minister Ralph Gonzalves, St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) has pursued a social democratic model, which has enhanced public spending in an attempt to tackle the ongoing effects of the global recession, high unemployment and a failing banana industry (Payne, 2006). According to Fridell (2015), in an attempt to tackle the aforementioned issues the SVG government has promoted construction and service jobs along with developing

numerous significant social programs, such as the construction of hundreds of low-income houses and offering support for public employees to buy their own homes or distributing free antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) across the wider community. The government has also pursued an extensive public education initiative, spending in the region of \$1.5 billion over a ten year timeframe (2001-2011) to expand schools and teacher training which has resulted, according to Fridell (2015) in universal secondary education on the island and a rise in primary school teachers with a university degree from four in 2001 to five hundred in 2011 (Fridell, 2015).

Although SVG's social spending is in line with one of ALBA's core objectives, the alliance cannot be seen as the prominent agent which led the island to pursue such social reforms. Rather, it must be noted that the social reforms carried out in SVG where "driven by their own internal political logic and social dynamics" (Fridell, 2015 p. 227). Furthermore, it is evident that, since the 1960s, most of the Caribbean has pursued major public sector expansions. According to Bulmer-Thomas (2012), although the pursuit of these projects has contributed to "deficit and debt crisis in many instances due to insufficient tax collection to cover new costs, [they] have led to major gains in education, health care, housing, social services, and infrastructure" (Bulmer-Thomas, 2012 p. 368). Globally, given their inherent vulnerability to international trade, small Caribbean islands, have an important history of pursuing unconventional economic strategies, such as offshore financial services as well as lobbying for preferential trade agreements such as those offered by both Petrocaribe and ALBA (Cooper, 2013). Recently, many Eastern Caribbean islands, after several years of neoliberal austerity have demonstrated what Anthony Payne (2006) has suggested, "a renewed interest in rethinking national development strategies" (Payne, 2006 p. 27).

It is the collective development and renewal of new social democratic governments across the Caribbean, governments with a revived dirigisme vision of state action that has laid the foundation for ALBA to emerge and not the other way around. For Caribbean microstates, the Alliance fundamentally provides additional policy space for small economies in the Eastern Caribbean that has allowed their individual economies to pursue unconventional state projects. The alliance has also served a lifeline for Caribbean member states, in the form of diplomatic, economic and technical assistance, all of which has helped the various government efforts to “pursue countercyclical public spending and major investments in social and economic infrastructure in the context of a global economic recession and a real world economy offering little of the dynamic market-driven opportunities assumed to exist by the free trade package” (Fridell, 2015 pp. 227-228). One of the most fundamental questions that arise when attempting to understand the Caribbean’s accession to ALBA is whether their membership signifies any real commitment to ALBA’s overall objective of creating a counter-hegemonic regional movement that can challenge both neoliberalism and US hegemony. It is in the opinion of this work, that the Caribbean member states of the Alliance do not share the same counter-hegemonic disposition as their Latin American counter-parts, rather their commitment to the Alliance is more functionary, due to oil and the financial assistance attained through Petrocaribe and the ALBA fund for pro-poor development initiatives both of which aid in ensuring political popularity of the governments’ that roll out such initiatives with the help of ALBA funds. All too often the Alliance is seen as one unified body, whose members share the same ideological disposition and as a result the Caribbean’s ideological commitment to the Alliance is frequently assumed. Academic literature on ALBA has tended to favour analysis

of ALBA's major, most vocal anti-neoliberal/US players –Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba – very few have chosen to carry out research specifically on ALBA's Caribbean members. Norman Girvan (2010) and Asa Cusack (2018) make up the bulk of academics that have focused solely on attempting to understand the Caribbean's accession to and role within ALBA. This section will specifically focus on evaluating whether the Caribbean's involvement in ALBA goes beyond the economic benefits closely associated with membership. It aims to determine the extent that ideology has played in solidifying the Caribbean's place within the alliance.

However, according to Cusack (2018) with any attempt to understand the Eastern Caribbean's accession to ALBA in the 2000s, one must recognise the ideological restraints imposed by both the Caribbean region's history and geography. This ideological constraint can be understood via two prominent viewpoints, which have been commonly expressed in the literature, "1) that vulnerability related to smallness leaves states desperate for resources from any source; and 2) that neoliberal globalisation enforced by US foreign policy had led to an ideological narrowing which militates against left-of-centre policies" (Cusack, 2018c p. 117).

As Briguglio (1995) understands it, vulnerability associated with 'smallness', which is widely acknowledged within Caribbean centred academic literature, suggests that inward looking Caribbean micro states face specific constraints as small island developing states (SIDS), namely a very limited capacity for international influence, weak domestic finance, high transport costs, inefficient firms, limited natural resources, frequent natural disasters, small domestic markets, narrow export base, and a reliance on imports for consumption (Briguglio, 1995). All these factors make these Caribbean microstates extremely vulnerable to external shocks, commodity price fluctuations, and global demand. As Cusack (2018) points out, although in

general the literature on vulnerability and SIDs predominantly focuses on the economic effects, he suggests that there is a political correlation as well. He uses fiscal shortfall to illustrate his point, by pointing out that it often results in the erosion of public sector jobs which represents, in the case of the Caribbean, an unusually large proportion of employment overall. He goes on to suggest that with a decrease in investment both in relation to the private (predominately tourism) and the public (often infrastructure), the decline hits both “low-skilled employment” and the observable economic activity related to construction. “Irrespective of ideology, governments must balance the books to avoid politically lethal crises” (Cusack, 2018c p. 118).

In relation to the second most common viewpoint, that of ideological narrowing, according to Cusack (2018), the US turn from communist ‘containment’ to ‘rollback’ in the 1980s under Regan “saw both carrot (the Caribbean Basin Initiative, 1982) and stick (structural adjustment) applied to any leftward shift” (Cusack, 2018c p. 118). This US orchestrated strategy was so successful, according to Payne (1998), that the US managed to redesign “the agenda of Caribbean politics and economics to the point here, in almost every arena, it was able to lay down the parameters of what could be done and even what could be thought” (Payne, 1998 p. 210). In 1983, Marxist president Maurice Bishop of Grenada was removed from power; this US direct intervention illustrated the limits of tolerable ideology. According to Meeks (2014), the Soviet Union’s collapse along with Jamaica’s Prime Minister Michael Manley’s shift to the accommodation of international capital removed Jamaica’s various radical resistance models (Meeks, 2014). In addition to the above, rigid security centred governments, as well as domestic reforms imposed via international financial institutions, and a move from agriculture towards financial

services and tourism, allowed for the weakening of the union base of traditional labour parties (Meeks, 2014). The additional imposed neoliberal reforms resulted in the further reduction of fiscal revenue and only intensified the microstates' vulnerability. The situation for the Caribbean was further exacerbated by the loss of the WTO's preference regime for agricultural products (particularly bananas) as many Caribbean states, particularly the Eastern Caribbean were overly reliant on tariffs for tax revenues. However, where ALBA is concerned, there are significant caveats within the Caribbean region. Firstly, the physical smallness of the microstates, which is often associated with their vulnerability, has acted to amplify the political impact of initiatives in prioritized areas such as health, education and poverty reduction. Secondly, the ideological narrowing within the region should be considered as both externally imposed and relatively recent, rather than being seen as part of an internal shift, which independently developed over an extended period of time. As Cusack (2018) points out, many of those still involved in activism and politics at a senior level came up in the generation imbued in radicalism associated with the 1960s and 1970s. Although external restraints have increasingly restricted their policy options

Neither 'Comrade' Ralph Gonsalves in St Vincent and the Grenadines nor veteran trade unionist Baldwin Spencer in Antigua and Barbuda, for example, has undergone any Damascene conversion. Rather, the array of structural factors tying their hands means that their true colours might only be glimpsed when circumstances allow fiscal room for maneuver (Cusack, 2018c p. 119).

Although it is evident, particularly within the Eastern Caribbean, that vulnerabilities associated with smallness have tended to constrain the various

microstates' development strategies, there is to an extent, a level of commonality between the policies rolled out by some governments wishing to join the Alliance and their Latin American partners in ALBA. According to Cusack (2018) with the cases of St Vincent and Grenadines, Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda's accession to ALBA, there has been no indication of Venezuelan enforced socialism, be it 21st century or any other kind. Instead he suggests, that with these three cases, their respective left-leaning governments, regularly used foreign policy as their favoured mechanism for financing pro-poor development programmes "in a context of severe fiscal constraints, making state led, socially focused, solidaristic ALBA project a natural fit" (Cusack, 2018b p. 116). Such pro-poor development policies tend to rally support from the general population, which suggests that a roll out of such initiatives, although beneficial to the masses, can also be seen as being politically motivated, both from a domestic perspective and in relation to strategic foreign policy objectives as a means of gaining financial assistance from the alliance. With that being said, Cusack's (2018) case study research on St Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica has suggested that, with each case, the political accession of each left-leaning government came at a time when the Caribbean was being hit by deteriorating terms of trade, rising oil prices, and a 'post 9/11 war on tourism'. While it can be argued that there was indeed a retreat of US political influence within the region, which translated into a new degree of freedom of choice in International Relations, the economic conditions and severity meant that the level of political freedom remained, to a large extent, limited (Cusack, 2018b). The impact of this had a profound effect on the development strategies of each Eastern Caribbean state, and how they expressed their beliefs that underpinned them. In each case, instead of attempting to operate under a

totalizing ideology, each government focused on particular development priorities wherever conditions allowed them to do so. Nevertheless, the pursuit of such developmental priorities and pro-poor policies, even in the periphery of orthodox fiscal discipline, operated in conjunction with one of ALBA's overall ambitions of creating equality amongst and within nations through pro-poor policies. Furthermore, as Cusack (2018) has pointed out, "Local visions of foreign policy as a means of supporting domestic development goals also chimed with the Alliance's explicit allowance for special and differential treatment and central desire to strengthen a LAC pole in a newly multipolar world" (Cusack, 2018c p. 121). The conditionalities with receiving financial assistance for social development from ALBA funds are limited. In all three cases, the politically negotiated nature of their allocation meant that, in each case, the government was able to prioritize locally important issues such as infrastructure, healthcare and education. This local targeting, only amplified the disproportionality and visibility of these funds in a context of extreme smallness, this in turn gave ALBA an unusual degree of political impact, as it shored up incumbents' support and ultimately led to opposition parties in Dominica and Antigua to row back on initial hostilities. It is important to note that, despite Venezuela's alleged attempts to exert ideological influence across the region, the Caribbean ALBA member states, with the exception of Cuba, have not wholly supported or aligned themselves in a unified manner with the anti-US/anti-imperialist sentiment promoted by Caracas. According to Jácome (2011), "They also have not echoed President Chávez's militaristic approach to security and defence. In this respect, his main project for ALBA, namely the defence against imperialism and the need for a joint response to the threat of US aggression, has not resounded much among other countries" (Jácome, 2011 p. 4). At the 2009 7th

summit of ALBA, the ALBA Permanent Committee for Sovereignty and Defence was established. This committee had two central goals, 1- to define a Strategy for Joint Popular Defence and 2- to establish a School for Dignity and Sovereignty of Armed Forces. Although the latter was launched in Bolivia in 2011, it came at a cost. It became evident that cracks within the Alliance were beginning to appear with the creation of the ALBA defence school as many of the English-speaking Caribbean member states of ALBA aired their reservations about belonging to a regional security system. In part, the reservations expressed by the Alliance's Caribbean member states signifies their unease with the possibility of destabilizing their relations with the US. Likewise, the proposed sovereignty and defence commitment, for many Caribbean member states, represented a blanket commitment that did not specifically deal with nor express an interest in tackling important areas that represent the main threats to Caribbean security, such as "organized crime, arms trafficking, drug trafficking, the effects of climate change, and HIV-AIDS", all of which, are not part of ALBA's agenda (Jácome, 2011).

While undoubtedly, membership of the Alliance has benefited the Caribbean, particularly in relation to financial assistance. Their involvement in the Alliance has not equated to a totalizing ideological commitment. Although ideological similarities are apparent to a small extent, the level commitment from Caribbean member states to ALBA's overall objective in creating a counter-hegemonic regional movement to challenge the US and neoliberalism is non-existent. Rather, their alignment with the regional movement operates on a far more functional platform. Access to ALBA funds, attained through membership has allowed the various Caribbean governments to roll out various development initiatives which

in turn plays well with voters and has helped alleviate some of the financial problems which have crippled the small island economies of the Caribbean.

6.5 Conclusion

Overall this chapter has investigated the extent that ALBA has been able to move beyond an ideological alliance to produce a reality of change. In addition, it has sought to determine whether the emancipatory project, has been successful in its endeavour to reduce US involvement within the region. It has concluded that with any attempt to analyse the success and failures of the Alliance, it is necessary to look at ALBA's development in two distinct phases, from 2004-2005, which looks specifically at ALBA as an alternative, and from 2005 to its present form, which looks at its evolution, expansion and institutional and structural development. It has concluded that ALBA cannot be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic project that seeks to challenge US-inspired neo-liberalism. Although it must be noted, that ALBA as an Alternative (2004- 2005) did in fact become a reality with the failure of the FTAA. ALBA as an Alliance (2005 - to present) however, while achieving some success with various social programmes in the early years has failed in its ideological drive towards creating a Patria Grande within Latin America. Essentially this failure is the result of ALBA's inability to remain internally coherent and united with regards to governance and institutional structure. ALBA's ambition with regards to creating a new regional financial architecture, although innovative and initially revolutionary, has only highlighted its inability to implement and follow through on its agreements. Although there are many reasons why ALBA's various initiatives have failed to bring about the changes that the Alliance envisaged, fundamentally the Venezuelan economy lies at the centre. Every aspect

of ALBA's grand development of a new financial architecture for the region has been facilitated, funded and utilised primarily by Venezuela. Although participating member states have benefited from the various initiatives implemented under ALBA's economic zone for shared development, it has become apparent that the various projects future as a whole is completely dependent on Venezuela's ability to continue to finance them. Given the economic instability that Venezuela has experienced since 2012, the future of ALBA's economic zone for shared development is uncertain.

The chapter then looked at the extent that Venezuelan foreign policy has influenced ALBA. It specifically wanted to determine how the deterioration of ALBA's primary financial backer has affected the project's ability to attract members, considering the current economic and political upheavals that the Maduro government is presently experiencing. It suggested that since becoming a petro-state in the 1920s and a democracy in 1957, Venezuela has had a very active and successful foreign policy. Its ability to pursue foreign policy objectives successfully is a result of its active pursuit of a multifaceted identity, which has resulted in the development of strong ties with various groups and regions. This work has also suggested that ALBA has to a large extent become the cornerstone of Bolivarian Venezuela's foreign policy and a means by which Venezuela is attempting to situate itself as the leader of the anti-U.S. ideological agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has suggested that building on the various identities, Venezuela has developed since the 1960s, Chávez was able to gain support (backed by financial support) for ALBA membership from a variety of left-leaning states within the region and well as social movements operating across the region and construct an alliance of support towards its foreign policy positions, or at a

minimum censor opposing viewpoints. It then went on to determine how Venezuela's strong presence within ALBA has affected the regional bloc. This was investigated in two phases, 2004-2013, which looked specifically at the influence of Chávez within ALBA and the wider Latin American region (2004- 2013), and phase two, 2013 to present, which looked at ALBA in the Maduro era. This chapter has cited that the lack of membership expansion towards the end of the Chávez era can be explained by the charismatic leader dominance within ALBA, his vocal rejection of the Latin American right and his outspoken negative view on the US, which all contributed to a polarized Latin America. On one side you had a group of countries eager to sign free trade agreements with the US and on the other you had those belonging to ALBA. Furthermore, Chávez's active political support for left-leaning politicians very often acted as a detrimental factor, causing many to lose elections. It has also suggested that a lack of ALBA expansion can be explained by its strong ideological overtones, which meant in many instances, that the larger wealthier Latin American states as well as the smaller Caribbean economies were put in a position where they had to choose between closing themselves off to the possibility of new trade deals with the US or ALBA membership. The chapter went on to look at how Chávez's death impacted ALBA. It looks at how domestically the loss of its charismatic leader coupled with political instability and economic uncertainty has underwritten much of ALBA's progress to date. It also suggested that given the current financial constraints that the Maduro government finds itself in, it is unlikely that Venezuela will be able to continue to bank roll ALBA and its various initiatives nor will it be able to influence the direction of the regional project.

Lastly this chapter attempted to understand the Caribbean's place within ALBA.

It suggested that while undoubtedly; membership of the Alliance has benefited the Caribbean, particularly in relation to financial assistance. Their involvement in the Alliance has not equated to a totalizing ideological commitment. It was determined that although ideological similarities are apparent to a small extent, the level of commitment from Caribbean member states to ALBA's overall objective in creating a counter-hegemonic regional movement to challenge the US and neoliberalism is non-existent. Rather, their alignment with the regional movement operates on a far more functional platform. It determined that the overarching reason for Caribbean accession to ALBA can be explained by its access to ALBA funds, attained through membership, which allowed the various Caribbean governments to roll out numerous development initiatives which in turn plays well with voters and has helped alleviate some of the financial problems which have crippled the small island economies of the Caribbean.

Chapter 7: Understanding ALBA's demise and potential future

7.1 Introduction

Through the lens of critical International Political Economy (critical IPE), drawing on the work of Gramsci and Cox, this thesis sets out specifically, to determine the extent that ALBA can be viewed as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance that is engaged in a war of position against open regionalism, US hegemony and, by extension, neoliberalism. According to Cox, a war of position is built on the principle of dialectics in critical theory, which opens up the revolutionary possibility through the development of a rival structure within the hegemonic super-structure “by seeking out” the counter-structures “possible bases of support and elements of cohesion” (Cox, 1981 p. 144). In other words, a war of position allows for the natural erosion of consensual legitimacy that a current order has, while simultaneously building up a basis of consent for a new alternative society. With this considered, ALBA as a regional project represents this development of a rival structure, which since its creation, has attempted to erode the consensual legitimacy of the current US hegemony and neoliberal world order. Fitting with neo-Gramscian critical theory, ALBA in its early years evidently represented a pattern of development that corresponded with Cox’s understanding of a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position, as its initial development involved an orchestrated attempt to restructure society from below. As already noted in chapter two, within a counter-hegemonic movement, a war of position attempts to critique the common sense but also seeks to go beyond this critique rather than re-embed it. He suggests that this is done by critical education that endeavours to move beyond the common sense’s ideological underpinnings to

reconstruct a collective will. The resulting reconstruction of the collective will enable a common ground on which a counter-hegemonic historic bloc can be established. While ALBA falls short of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc, it was representative, at least in its early years, as a prime example of a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position against the neoliberal historic bloc, which attempted to destabilize the US hegemonic super structure's legitimacy and consent. This was evident in ALBA's first year, as it successfully engaged in a 'war of position' against US hegemony when it defeated the proposed FTAA. This triumphant moment allowed ALBA to gain consent amongst member states and prospective members as well as amongst the masses.

ALBA's development since then however, has not equated to the same kind of resistance it was once heralded for. Rather ALBA's momentum and support has consistently deteriorated. While it is evident that ALBA attempted to implement the necessary building blocks - a new financial architecture via an ALBA Bank, a regional virtual currency via the SUCRE and an intra-ALBA trading system, along with Grand National programs and social programs - it has fallen short of maintaining the necessary conditions that could of potentially led to the creation of a viable rival structure. Understanding the extent that ALBA has failed to achieve its primary objective, both from a theoretical perspective and from a practical stance consists of three important elements. Firstly, it is necessary to investigate ALBA as a form of counter-hegemony with regards to the extent of its effectiveness and its potentialities or lack thereof; secondly, it will look at ALBA's dysfunctional governance structure and incoherence and subsequent de-legitimation, and lastly, it will look at various regional transformations, which have culminated in the demise of ALBA.

7.2 ALBA as a form of counter-hegemony/resistance: effectiveness and potentialities

As illustrated in chapter three extensively, regionalism represents a strategy used by states or state/society complexes, to influence the very nature of the world order in pursuit of achieving their economic goals (Söderbaum and Shaw, 2004). In accordance with this understanding, ALBA's form of regionalism was purposely designed to challenge both the neoliberal world order and US hegemony, however ALBA's specific type of regionalism (counter-hegemonic/anti-neoliberal in nature), represents a move away from traditional economic integration that focuses on enhancing free trade and access to global markets. Instead, ALBA has pursued a more political focus, one that emphasizes its intent to fully gain autonomy from outside forces, in the hope that the region as a whole, can regulate its own political agenda without external influence (Burgess, 2016).

In this way, ALBA's specific form of regionalism represents a unique regional space, one which can be defined by shared territory as well as a space that has been shaped by history, common interests and culture along with its people's needs and potentialities. When the aforementioned is taken into consideration according to Muhr (2010), ALBA represents "the only genuinely regionalist project in the construction of a LAC region" (Muhr, 2010 p. 613)

In chapter three of this work, ALBA's specific form of regionalism has been extensively discussed. It has put forth the idea that the creation of ALBA should, to an extent, be a reinvention of regionalism, one that has broken away from the neoliberal orthodoxy and has established itself as a counter-hegemonic regional movement. What makes ALBA counter-hegemonic by nature, according to Artaraz (2018), can be characterised firstly by its ideological rejection of the neoliberal wave of development within the region and its ambition to move beyond it, by

attempting to lay a foundation for the construction of societies that reflect and embrace a new set of values. Secondly, through this ambitious project, ALBA attempted to develop support and bring together like-minded actors such as left-leaning governments and more importantly organised society. Lastly, in search of viable alternatives, ALBA attempts to utilise alternative and traditional forms of knowledge, in an effort to construct its preferred future (Artaraz, 2018). While it is well documented that ALBA views itself as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance, in reality, 'observable ALBA' paints a different picture. From its anti-US/neoliberal initiatives to its alternative institutional structure, ALBA in practical reality is dysfunctional, irregular and to a large extent chaotic. According to Cusack (2019) on the surface, ALBA operates "via a kind of 'brand governance', whereby pre-existing initiatives, improvised, and fully institutionalised initiatives and governance arrangements are depicted as a unitary integration scheme" (Cusack, 2019 p. 27). However, behind this 'brand' façade, ALBA's internal workings tell a different story, one of a highly unpredictable and unstable group of projects, whose very existence and future is almost completely dependent on its funder, Venezuela. While it is true to say that ALBA's very existence, construction as an alternative path to development and regionalism represents a counter-hegemonic response to the crippling dominating forces of neoliberalism and the US, it is in the opinion of this work that ALBA lacks internal structure and commitment from its member states to be able to operate as a viable alternative regional movement for the region, let alone its member states.

One of the most prominent features that portray ALBA's counter-hegemonic nature is its economic zone of shared development. Within this economic zone a new regional financial architecture was rolled out. Initiatives such as the TCP (People's

Trade Agreement), the ALBA Bank, SUCRE (Sistema Unitario de Compensación Regional de Pagos), and GNC's (Grand National Companies) were all established in an effort to thwart member states reliance on both the US and neoliberalism as a whole. While, in an earlier section of this chapter, a detailed account of each of these initiatives has been given, this section focuses on determining the extent that the creation of the Alliance's economic zone of shared development has successfully challenged neoliberalism and US hegemony?

The TCP's (2006), primary objective is to support complementary, state-guided fair trade and integration based on solidarity within Latin America. Essentially the TCP is a framework of principles which have been devised to encourage and support state-led, complementary as well as cooperative integration in both bilateral and multilateral investment and trade agreements between ALBA member-states. The TCP was intentionally designed to facilitate and bolster endogenous development, as well as support multi polarity, reduce intraregional inequalities, and empower the poor and the marginalized, all of which contribute to legitimizing left-inspired agendas and governments. The initiative was created as a response to the failure of the neoliberal model, which is based on principles of privatization, deregulation and the arbitrary opening of markets. In direct contrast to neoliberalism, the TCP promotes solidarity, complementarity, reciprocity, cooperation and sovereignty. The incorporation of these key objectives falls outside the remit of traditional neoliberal integration programmes that are advanced by the North.

At its core, the TCP represents a Latin American centred alternative trade and investment model that is based on the internal needs of participating member states. Its very existence represents a form of resistance against the dominant neoliberal economic model, which is promoted by the global North. Although the

TCP can be considered counter-hegemonic, in as much as it operates as an alternative trade and investment integration scheme, to what extent has it undermined US hegemony or neoliberalism overall? Although ideologically speaking, the TCP meets all the criteria for acting as an agent of resistance to both US hegemony and neoliberalism, in reality however; the initiative has failed to move beyond an ideological ambition. Its existence although initially groundbreaking, has not produced any conclusive or even measurable results, as it has failed to be implemented. Its existence remains entirely in the realm of declarations and official agreements. As Cusack (2019) notes, “in reality attempts to concretise the TCP in both multi and bilateral forms only consumed scarce human and material resources without producing any new agreement”. He goes on to suggest that “background and conditions relating to structural and historical legacies proved restrictive, in part because their influence was not properly anticipated” (Cusack, 2019 p. 20). Additionally, legal issues arising between other regional and international organisations as well as institutions constrained the TCP negotiators’ capacity to move beyond the existing standards in any innovative or revolutionary sense. The combination of which, resulted in the TCP’s inability to get off the ground. Twelve years on it is evident, that the trade and investment scheme has failed to act or operate in any measurable way, as a form of resistance to neoliberalism and US hegemony. Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent that TCP has ultimately only succeeded in raising the transaction cost that it had intended to lower. Instead of promoting trust between member-states, in agreement with Cusack (2019) “the lesson for most countries was instead that any joint venture with Venezuela would be fraught and potentially futile, given the

incoherence and irregularity of their engagement of international initiatives” (Cusack, 2019 p. 105).

The Bank of ALBA acts in direct opposition to IFIs, offers loans without conditionalities under fair terms with little to no interest rates. In essence this represents a form of resistance to neoliberal and to US hegemony as it offers member-states an avenue to develop outside the remit of the IFIs. It has produced tangible results particularly with small ALBA member states. But it seems to be regressing with the economic downturn of the Venezuelan economy. The bank’s over-reliance on Venezuela as its primary funder means its ability to perform its primary function as well its likely sustainability is unlikely to continue. Therefore, while the bank is at its core a form of resistance, its inadequate funding mechanism and its staunch anti-profit-making stance along with its intrinsic link to the Venezuelan economy makes its likelihood of survival extremely grim.

The purpose of SUCRE as already explained in a previous chapter, is to simplify intra-ALBA trade while reducing the role of the US dollar as an intermediary currency vehicle. Through this mechanism, both member-state importers and exporters can carry out transactions in local currency with ease. This, in turn, reduces states’ foreign exchange expenditure as well as diminishing transaction costs for businesses. Additionally, the use of the SUCRE allows firms operating within the ALBA zone to gain a competitive edge over its non-ALBA competitors, which enhances autonomy by supporting intra-ALBA trade over external trade. In theory, the SUCRE should promote cooperative regionalism and reinforce endogenous development legitimizing and reinforcing ALBA as an engine for resistance. However, what is observable with the SUCRE paints a vastly different picture. Despite its well-thought out design, the SUCRE has strengthened and

reinforced corruption and conflict as much as trade and production. Instead of the SUCRE being used as an inclusive currency mechanism by member-states to reduce transaction costs, fewer than twenty transactions have taken place through the mechanism without Venezuelan direct participation. The majority of transactions that have occurred have been highly concentrated on trade between Venezuela and Ecuador, 90 per cent of which has consisted of Venezuela importing Ecuadorian foodstuffs. Not only does the above explicitly reveal that instead of being used as mechanisms which further integrates ALBA member states and its specific form of regionalism, the SUCRE has predominately been used as a political tool by the Venezuelan government, to secure political support of the masses at home. Having a constant stream of Ecuadorian food imports has meant that the Venezuelan government is less reliant of hostile local elites and their companies. In this way, the SUCRE represents the weaponisation and politicisation of imports that serves to keep the Maduro government in power while simultaneously reducing the Venezuelan oppositional elites' ability to gain any strategic foothold politically.

Although from an ideological perspective, Grand National Enterprises (GNEs) represent joint state ventures that enhance both productive capacity in relation to intra-ALBA trade and regional integration within the ALBA space, in reality however, very few have 'become operational. Since the GNEs introduction into the ALBA Framework in 2007, only 3 GNEs have become operational, Furthermore, of the three operational GNEs that did get off the ground, it is impossible to measure or even monitor any real progress they may of made because every kind of bilateral joint state venture have been branded as "grand national" with official acknowledgment or permission. This issue arose because grand nationals since its

inception have been under the control of ministries in related sectors within a national sphere, rather than by the ALBA Council's system.

What has been even more damaging to the operational ability of GNEs however, has been, as Aponte-García (2011) notes their inescapable association with the Venezuelan economy, in particular the petro state's oil industry (Aponte-García, 2011). Dependence on the Venezuelan economy has meant that cash flow problems stemming from Venezuela's dysfunctional currency regime have resulted in Venezuela's inability to finance the projects. This in turn has affected ALBA as a regional integration initiative to be just that- regionally integrated. Furthermore, failure to deliver on financial promises has created a space for doubt, about ALBA's ability to develop functional initiatives that can together act as a viable form of resistance against US hegemony and neoliberalism.

7.3 Incoherence and de-legitimisation

One of the main problems, which undoubtedly affected ALBA's ability to become a viable regional project for the Latin American region, can be explained by ALBA's internal incoherence. This incoherence has played out in numerous ways. From a governance perspective, when one draws a comparison between how ALBA works officially and how it works in reality, it becomes apparent according to Cusack (2018) that "no one element has full knowledge or control of its extent or status" (Cusack, 2018a p. 227). What is observable however, is that the internal governance structure of ALBA consists of volatile and unstable coalitions of officials, who convene at sporadic intervals depending on presidential interest. In particular, Venezuela's unpredictable, unplanned and at times unethical involvement often proving defining. Furthermore, the executive secretariat - ALBA's only

bureaucratic body – is evidently unmanageably overwhelmed that it has become impossible for it to provide any meaningful direction or oversight for the movement. As a consequence of the above, a lack of accountability brought about partly by an absence of concrete commitment by member states as well as partly by Venezuelan dominance has deepened both internal disorder and neglect. This lack of commitment by ALBA member states is observable with members' lack or minimum participation in ALBA projects, but more specifically, with projects that don't necessarily offer immediate gains to its participants, such as the SUCRE (90 per cent of all transactions are between Venezuela and Ecuador). Internal incoherence is also observable through ALBA's inactivity in relation to ALBA summits and official declarations, which in recent years have been sparse (the last ALBA summit took place in 2015). As Cusack (2018) has noted, although regional agreements are rarely implemented perfectly, with the case of ALBA "its consistently grand plans to encompass virtually every domain of integration across the entire LAC region have jarred violently with its failure to integrate even narrow domains across a small membership" (Cusack, 2018a p.221). Undoubtedly the most important domain for ALBA integration has been economic. Although it is evident that ALBA's ground-breaking ideas and economic aspirations have played well amongst member-states as well as internationally, the same is true of its innovative failures... At the heart of many of these problems has been an inability to establish adequately functional – let alone demonstrably superior – alternatives to neoliberal institutions in societies they have long dominated (Cusack, 2018a p.221). The centrality of ALBA's bottom-up economic and political inclusion discourse has increasingly and consistently deviated from reality on the ground, this in itself has had an extremely negative effect on ALBA's credibility across the board –this refers

to the lack of participation by the Council of Social Movements, as it has become increasingly apparent that their involvement in ALBA exist only on paper after 2005. It is evident that there is an unmistakable gap between ALBA's design and its implementation, which in the view of this work represents a severely dysfunctional governance structure. The severity of this gap has only increased with time and has led to major problems for the Alliance; most notably ALBA's specific kind of governance has developed a reputation of not only impotence but, worse still, toxicity. Although in theory, the Alliance's ambition for the region can be considered revolutionary and counter-hegemonic in nature, ALBA's alternative economic, political and social vision has not become a reality. With that being said, as Dr Philbert Aaron, the Dominican ambassador to Venezuela and national coordinator of ALBA, stated in an interview conducted in 2017, that it is important to acknowledge the diverse legal, economic and political dynamics of each member state which are all trying to work to form a better region together. He suggests that because of this, problems within the ALBA space have arisen. Particularly in relation to ALBA leadership and management, and adaptability (Aaron 2017). For Silva (2017) the Venezuelan ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, ALBA's inability to move beyond an ideological alliance is predominately the result of structural problems inherent within the project itself. He suggested, in an interview conducted in 2017, that the project's structural organisation needed to be revisited in order for ALBA to remain relevant. What it offered was new and revolutionary, but the current situation sees ALBA struggling to keep its various initiatives' afloat. ALBA's evolution since 2005 with its roll out of various grand schemes and initiatives, has failed to produce any meaningful or tangible results.

All of these observable problems, which have affected ALBA's ability to function at an adequate level, can predominately be explained by Venezuela's dominance within the project. This following section will specifically look at how Venezuela's centrality to ALBA has and continues to affect the viability of the regional project.

7.4 The Venezuelan crisis and ALBA

While having one state, as the primary financial backer for a regional project is not unusual, in the case of Venezuela, its dominance within ALBA is at such a high level, that their individual destinies have become intertwined. From an economic perspective, the petro-state's reliance on oil exports has increasingly led to numerous problems for ALBA. Firstly, from an ideological perspective, Venezuela's development model is extractivist in nature, this in itself goes against ALBA as a collective stance on climate change and specific member states (most notably Bolivia) position with regards to the right of nature. Secondly, the Alliance and Venezuela's stability is intrinsically connected to extremely unstable oil prices, which are determined on the international markets. This volatile dependency became apparent with the 2015 dramatic fall in oil prices, which led the petro-state to dramatically reduce available funding and support for ALBA initiatives, leading in many cases to project stagnation. ALBA's evident internal incoherence and external de-legitimisation has hampered the Alliance's future potentialities. Considering the ideological inconsistencies that have begun to surface amongst member-states, along with the Alliance's entanglement with the Venezuelan economy, it is inevitable that the future of ALBA will be determined by firstly, the Maduro government's capacity to stay in power and secondly by Venezuela's ability to stabilize its economic situation. Evidently, ALBA as a regional integration project

“has become synonymous with the radical reforms underway in Venezuela and a symbol of the hopes for radical transformation that have emerged with the move Left in Latin America as a whole”(Kellogg, 2007 p. 200). While it is true to say that the development of ALBA coincided and reflected the radical developments of Venezuela in the mid-2000s, it is also fair to say that ALBA now has become synonymous with the abysmal political and economic situation that Venezuela is currently experiencing. Their perspective destinies have become so intertwined that it has become impossible for the Alliance to become in any way detached from the petro state. Furthermore, instead of having a life of its own, it has become apparent that ALBA is a mere extension of the Bolivarian state. With the above considered, understanding the internal failures of the Bolivarian state in relation to a Gramscian framework is paramount to understanding the current situation that ALBA now faces. In an article written by Pinar and Morton (2002), they examine potential state failures through a framework developed by Antonio Gramsci in relation to “shifts or variations in hegemony which may reveal the limits of social order in organizing a reciprocal balance between force and consent,” (Pinar, 2002 pp. 71-72). From Gramsci’s perspective, hegemony or social and political dominance, is attained by a particular group that obtains the active consent of ‘subaltern groups’ through both the exercise of “intellectual and moral leadership” and via material concessions (Gramsci et al., 1971 p. 161). A hegemonic struggle on the other hand, can be understood as the emergence of oppositional groups that challenge both each other for leadership and the former dominant class. According to López-Maya and Lander (2005) this hegemonic struggle was evident within Venezuela following the collapse of the Punto Fijo’s elite hegemony in 1989 (López M. and Lander, 2005). Here, rather than understanding Fijo’s elitist government’s

demise as a result of state failure, it represents the erosion of the social consensus that was underlying in that particular regime.

Similarly, Venezuela is currently experiencing a hegemonic struggle under its present government. Just like the Fijo government's demise, the Maduro government is facing a continuous and evidently relentless assault brought about by various oppositional forces. Although such oppositional forces are fractioned and disorganized, Maduro's government has begun to unravel as the social consensus for Chavismo has begun to lose its legitimacy. This erosion of consensus, which has led to the current hegemonic struggle, has been brought about by several factors, most notably by Venezuela's severe economic decline.

Since 2015, in the absence of its figurehead, Venezuelan support for Chavismo has declined massively – with the opposition winning a majority in the 2015's parliamentary elections. This coupled with heightened inflation, food shortages and the persistent rise in violent protests, has enormously reduced the Maduro government's popularity. This decline could only be reversed if there was a dramatic spike in oil prices or the government introduced major economic reforms, specifically in relation to the currency regime. However, the Venezuelan government has made no attempt to address these detrimental economic issues to date. As a result as Cusack (2018) has pointed out leaves the Maduro government "reliant on the mobilizing power of the party and the state it controls, as well as on the continued incompetence of a fragmented, tone deaf, and inconsistent opposition" (Cusack, 2018a p. 226). However, as long as there exists a fountain of accessible discontent and resistance, the rise of a less inexperienced opposition will remain a substantial threat. Considering that currently the dominant parties of Venezuela's opposition alliance view ALBA as a waste of Venezuelan resources, an

opposition presidency would more than likely cut funding to all ALBA initiatives or even permanently suspend funding entirely. It is evident that this twofold political and economic reliance on the “continuation in power of one party in one key member state, thanks to the price of one volatile commodity, represents a grave failure to institutionalised meaningful participation from ALBA’s wider membership”(Cusack, 2018d p. 226).

7.5 Regional transformations culminating in the potential demise of ALBA.

ALBA’s specific brand of “post-neoliberal” regionalism, rather than being distinctive and transformative or in any way representative of a ‘post’ neoliberal model, evidently portrays a model on the brink of failing. While initially heralded as potentially a revolutionary model -representing of a shift away from open regionalism towards a new kind of people focused, bottom up regionalism, the project has fallen short. Seventeen years on, it has become apparent that ALBA’s brand of regionalism is not as revolutionary or even distinctive as once thought. ALBA slow deterioration, according to Malamud (2005), supports the idea that Latin American regionalism as essentially intergovernmental or interpresidential (Malamud, 2005). ALBA, while at a regional level, was initially substantiated; ultimately it undermined the idea of a distinctive wave of ‘post neoliberal’ Latin American regionalism. The ‘move away’ from open regionalism towards political concentration of autonomous, resurgent, developmentalist states, was nowhere more clearer than in ALBA, yet its failure to deliver on its early promises raises questions about the real impact and distinctiveness of its model of regionalism. Rather than creating a model that has the capacity to undermine or even potentially replace neoliberalism, with an alternative governance structure that

confronts and contests various neoliberal processes across various domain. In reality, its uneven implementation, Venezuelan centrism, and “bottom-up” development model has “Inadvertently highlighted the ways in which alternative governance projects confront neoliberalising processes at various scales and in various domain and in the form of various actors” (Brenner, 2010). As Brenner et al (2010) have remarked, ALBA in this light, represents ‘variegated neoliberalisation’ rather than societal transformation or a revolutionary form of regionalism for Latin America (Brenner, 2010).

Dr. Philbert Aaron, the Dominican ambassador to Venezuela and national coordinator of ALBA, has stated in an interview conducted in 2017, that the waning of ALBA, which it is experiencing presently, is a normal expression, a common occurrence within the evolution of movements. He has also argued that phases of growth followed by phases of stagnation are natural and commonplace amongst regional projects. However, his optimistic outlook on the development of ALBA as well as its future is misplaced. While Dr. Aaron is of the opinion that the current difficulties ALBA is experiencing are temporary hurdles and that through the support of the member states, the alliance in time, will adapt and continue to evolve. Given ALBA’s slow progress to date, and the severe problems that have hampered it, ALBA’s prospects look bleak. Furthermore, the Latin American region is going through somewhat of political transformation currently. The rise of the right in Argentina, Chile and Brazil has begun to reshape the Latin American political environment once again. After more than two-decades since the ‘pink tide’, Chávez’s Bolivarian revolution lives on in the hands of a handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro. However very few would regard the Venezuelan diminishing economy and abysmal democratic institutions as an aspiring model. Regionally,

discontent brought about by economic turmoil can be seen as a driving force for the turn right in Latin America. The rise of the left coincided with one of the largest economic expansions in the region's history. Principally, as a consequence of a slowdown of the Chinese economy, economic growth in Latin America began to diminish from 2012 onwards, leading to regional economic underperformance and with the case of Brazil, severe economic recession. This downturn led to a reduction in public spending, which consequently has resulted in the diminished popularity of the left. Leading in some instances to the right gaining power, as was the case in Brazil, Chile and Argentina and in other instances, a retreat of radical or far-left politics, as was the case with Ecuador. In the Ecuadorian case, Lenin Moreno's moderate left stance boded well amongst the masses but severely hampered its relationship with former president Correa, along with Venezuela and ALBA. This loss of solidarity with Venezuela but more specifically with ALBA has cumulated in Ecuador's withdrawal from the regional project. To understand Ecuador's loss of solidarity with ALBA, it is necessary to firstly look at the changing nature of leftist politics within the state. While Moreno was fully supported by Correa as his successor in 2017, his degree of left can be seen to a large extent, as moderate. Moreno's active disassociation with ALBA and with the far or radical left more broadly, can be understood by three important aspects. Firstly, ALBA as a 'brand' of regionalism has become fatally toxic. This is as a result of Venezuelan centralism to the regional project. Secondly, the shifting tide of politics in Latin America from left to right and from far left to moderate, represents a changing sentiment amongst the masses and within the wider international community, this in turn has informed the direction of governments' projected ideology and political, regional and economic affiliations. For Ecuador, due to a repositioning of ideology,

membership of ALBA is no longer a viable option. Lastly, Latin America is a region like no other, in as much as regional organisations are plentiful. Essentially, their very existence can be seen as a product of a particular time and as a result, regional projects often become redundant with changes in state ideological positioning. Just as it was the case with CAN, Mercosur and to a large extent UNASUR, it seems that ALBA now has lost its shine. ALBA's specific brand of regionalism or indeed its leftist ideological core, while initially grew in popularity as it represented for many, a regional ideological alignment that could potentially restructure or revolutionize the regional space, is now seen by many, including some of its own member states as an obsolete and redundant project with very little to offer.

Given ALBA's slow progress to date, and the severe problems that have hampered it, ALBA's prospects look bleak. Dabène (2018) envisions three possible future scenarios in which ALBA is likely to evolve. The first being dismantlement. However, for Dabène this future outcome should be considered the least likely, as it would run against Latin American tradition, as to date no Latin American regional integration project has ever been officially declared dead. For this to become a likely possibility ALBA would have to fully endorse and acknowledge that CELAC and/or UNASUR are now the most appropriate groupings to work with, but this possible scenario seems extremely unlikely, given the ideological underpinnings of ALBA.

An ALBA reboot is the second possible future scenario put forth by Dabène (2018). He suggests that the signing of a new treaty or important declaration could possibly breathe new life into the Alliance and "trigger a renewed activation with a renewed agenda" (Dabène, 2018 p. 49). For Dabène (2018) the motive for this possible reboot could be a "diplomatic offensive from the Pacific Alliance group, which is

always seeking to expand the reach of its free trade agreements” (Dabène, 2018 p. 49). However, this possibility also seems highly unlikely, as it is evident that opposition to free trade has waned in recent years. While Bolivia and of course Venezuela remain strongly opposed to free trade, other ALBA member states, such as Uruguay are in favour of free trade agreements. Additionally, the rise of the right in both Brazil and Argentina is likely to result in a merging between the Alliance of the Pacific and Mercosur. Furthermore, Venezuela’s internal economic and political problems have led to an evident lack of strong leadership within ALBA and with Cuba’s attention turned towards mending US relations, no other ALBA member state seems up to the task of leading the Alliance through this reboot (Cusack, 2018a).

The third and, in Dabène’s (2018) opinion, the most likely scenario for ALBA is stalemate and indifference. According to Philippe Schmitter (1970) in a seminal piece, he describes a ‘zone of indifference’ in which some regional integration movements have become confined. Within this zone of indifference, regional actors are tolerated within the broader region as long as they do not impose new costs (Schmitter, 1970). An example of this can be seen with the Andean Community, which has evidently been stuck in this lethargic state for quite a while. According to Dabène (2018) ALBA is likely to follow suit. He suggests that given the fact that the Andean Community has been incapable of transitioning out of this ‘zone of indifference’ despite having a large regional bureaucracy, “makes it even more likely that the Alliance, a poorly institutionalised grouping, will remain in deadlock” (Dabène, 2018 p. 49).

Furthermore, given the paralyzing effect that Venezuelan centrality has had on ALBA in recent years, an important question to consider when attempting to

determine ALBA's potential future is whether the Alliance could function in the absence of Venezuela? Put very simply, without Venezuela, ALBA would cease to exist. Every aspect of every project that ALBA has rolled out involves Venezuela or Venezuelan financial support. For example, the SUCRE has served as a mechanism, which almost exclusively channels Ecuadorian exports to Venezuela. Despite its clear purpose and intricate design, the absence of Venezuela's demand would more than likely lead to the SUCRE's demise. Without Venezuelan investment, GNE's would meet a similar faith. Considering that all GNEs to date have Venezuela as a principal partner, it seems extremely likely that the withdrawal of Venezuelan investment would be fatal to their operations. Petrocaribe's financial, commercial, and infrastructural aspects are all premised entirely on Venezuelan oil's availability and profitability. It goes without saying that without Venezuelan support Petrocaribe would cease to exist, as the project is completely dependent on Venezuelan oil. But is Venezuela's absence or even reduced involvement a possibility? According to Puente (2018) it is a likely possibility. The catastrophic effect of plummeting oil prices on the Venezuelan economy has raised serious doubts as to whether the petro states has the ability to act as ALBA's financier in the future (Puente, 2018). For Cusack (2018) the contact discrediting of Bolivarianism by opposition forces within Venezuela has severely reduced the once captivating force of post-neoliberal ideas within the Alliance in general, which has in turn blunted ALBA's radical edges (Cusack, 2018a). Furthermore, previously available Venezuelan funding for various ALBA initiatives is now required urgently within the Bolivarian state. Failure to redirect these funds back home would have catastrophic political consequences for the Maduro government. It is evident that since 2015, in the absence of its figurehead, Venezuelan support for Chavismo has

declined massively – with the opposition winning a majority in the 2015's parliamentary elections. This coupled with the heightened inflation and food shortages has enormously reduced the Maduro government's popularity. For Cusack (2018) this decline could only be reversed if there was a dramatic spike in oil prices or the government introduced major economic reforms, specifically in relation to the currency regime (Cusack, 2018a). However, the Venezuelan government has made no attempt to address these detrimental economic issues to date. As a result as Cusack (2018) has pointed out leaves the Maduro government "reliant on the mobilizing power of the party and the state it controls, as well as on the continued incompetence of a fragmented, tone deaf, and inconsistent opposition" (Cusack, 2018a p. 226). With that being said, as long as there exists a fountain of accessible discontent and resistance, the rise of a less inexperienced opposition will remain a substantial threat. Considering that currently the dominant parties of Venezuela's opposition alliance view ALBA as a waste of Venezuelan resources, an opposition presidency would more than likely cut funding to all ALBA initiatives or even permanently suspend funding entirely. It is evident that this twofold political and economic reliance on the "continuation in power of one party in one key member state, thanks to the price of one volatile commodity, represents a grave failure to institutionalised meaningful participation from ALBA's wider membership"(Cusack, 2018d p. 226).

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has situated ALBA, understanding its demise and potential future within a neo-Gramscian framework. It set out to determine the extent that ALBA can be viewed as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance that is engaged in a war

of position against open regionalism, US hegemony and, by extension, neoliberalism. It has suggested that ALBA in its early years evidently represented a pattern of development that corresponded with Cox's understanding of a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position, as its initial development involved an orchestrated attempt to restructure society from below. However, this chapter has determined that the regional project's development since then however, has not equated to the same kind of resistance it was once heralded for. Rather ALBA's momentum and support has consistently deteriorated, suggesting it has fallen short of maintaining the necessary conditions that could have potentially led to the creation of a viable rival structure.

The chapter then looked at ALBA as a form of counter-hegemony/resistance, its effectiveness and potentialities. It looked at ALBA's specific form of regionalism and argued that while ALBA views itself as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance, in reality 'observable ALBA' paints a different picture. From its anti-US/neoliberal initiatives to its alternative institutional structure, ALBA in practical reality is dysfunctional, irregular and to a large extent chaotic. Chapter seven has argued that on the surface ALBA operates via a kind of brand governance, whereby the champions of ALBA depict the movement as a unitary integration scheme. However, the chapter has proposed that behind this 'brand' façade, ALBA's internal workings represents a highly unpredictable and unstable group of projects, whose very existence and future is almost completely dependent on its funder, Venezuela.

Although ALBA's very existence, and construction as an alternative path to development and regionalism represents a counter-hegemonic response to the crippling dominating forces of neoliberalism and the US, chapter seven argued that ALBA's complete lack of a functioning internal structure and commitment from its

member states has detrimentally affected its ability to operate as a viable alternative regional movement for the region.

The chapter then looked at the extent that the creation of the Alliance's economic zone of shared development has been successful in challenging neoliberalism and US hegemony. With regards to the TCP, chapter seven has argued that while ideologically speaking, the TCP meets all the criteria for acting as an agent of resistance to both US hegemony and neoliberalism, in reality however; the initiative has failed to move beyond its ideological ambition. Its existence, although initially ground-breaking, has not produced any conclusive or even measurable results as it has failed to be implemented. Additionally, legal issues arising between other regional and international organisations as well as institutions constrained the TCP negotiators' capacity to move beyond the existing standards in any innovative or revolutionary sense. The combination of which, resulted in the TCP's inability to get off the ground. Twelve years on as chapter seven points out, the trade and investment scheme has failed to act or operate in any measurable way, as a form of resistance to neoliberalism and US hegemony. In relation to the ALBA Bank, chapter seven has argued that its over-reliance on Venezuela as its primary funder has been a determining factor in relation to its ability to perform its primary function. It has suggested that while the bank is at its core a form of resistance, its inadequate funding mechanism and its staunch anti-profit-making stance along with its intrinsic link to the Venezuelan economy makes its likelihood of survival extremely grim. The SUCRE in theory the mechanism should promote cooperative regionalism and reinforce endogenous development, legitimizing and reinforcing ALBA as an engine for resistance. However, chapter seven has argued that what is observable with the SUCRE paints a vastly different picture. Instead of the SUCRE

being used as an inclusive currency mechanism by member-states to reduce transaction costs, fewer than twenty transactions have taken place through the mechanism without Venezuelan direct participation. Most transactions that have occurred have been highly concentrated on trade between Venezuela and Ecuador, 90 per cent of which has consisted of Venezuela importing Ecuadorian foodstuffs. Not only does the above explicitly reveal that instead of being used as a mechanism which further integrates ALBA member states and its specific form of regionalism, the SUCRE has predominately been used as a political tool by the Venezuelan government, to secure political support of the masses at home. Having a constant stream of Ecuadorian food imports has meant that the Venezuelan government is less reliant of hostile local elites and their companies. In this way, the SUCRE represents the weaponisation and politicisation of imports served to keep the Maduro government in power while simultaneously reducing the Venezuelan oppositional elites' ability to gain any strategic foothold politically. Chapter seven then suggested that while ideologically speaking GNEs represent joint state ventures that should enhance both productive capacity in relation to intra-ALBA trade and regional integration within the ALBA space, in reality however, very few have 'become operational. Since the GNEs introduction into the ALBA Framework in 2007, only 3 GNEs have become operational, and of those three operational GNEs, it is impossible to measure or even monitor any real progress they may have made because every kind of bilateral joint state venture have been branded as "grand national" with official acknowledgment or permission. What has been even more damaging to the operational ability of GNEs however, chapter seven has argued, has been GNEs inescapable association with the Venezuelan economy, in particular the petro state's oil industry. Dependence on the Venezuelan economy

has meant that cash flow problems stemming from Venezuela's dysfunctional currency regime has resulted in Venezuela's inability to finance the projects. This in turn has affected ALBA as a regional integration initiative to be just that- regionally integrated. Furthermore, failure to deliver on financial promises has created a space for doubt, about ALBA's ability to develop functional initiatives that can together act as a viable form of resistance against US hegemony and neoliberalism. From here, chapter seven looked at specific factors, which have affected ALBA's ability to become a viable regional project for the Latin American region, factors such as internal incoherence and subsequent its de-legitimisation.

From what is observable, chapter seven has argued, ALBA's internal governance structure consists of volatile and unstable coalitions of officials, who convene at sporadic intervals depending on presidential interest. It has suggested that the executive secretariat – ALBA's only bureaucratic body – is unmanageably overwhelmed that it has become impossible for it to provide any meaningful direction or oversight for the movement. As a consequence of the above, a lack of accountability brought about partly by an absence of concrete commitment by member states as well as partly by Venezuelan dominance, has deepened both internal disorder and neglect. This lack of commitment by ALBA member states, chapter seven has argued, is observable with members' lack or minimum participation in ALBA projects, but more specifically, with projects that don't necessarily offer immediate gains to its participants, such as the SUCRE (90 per cent of all transactions are between Venezuela and Ecuador). Chapter seven suggests that internal incoherence is also observable through ALBA's inactivity in relation to ALBA summits and official declarations, which in recent years have been sparse (the last ALBA summit took place in 2015). At the core of many of its

problems, chapter seven has argued, has been an inability to establish adequately functional – let alone demonstrably superior – alternatives to neoliberal institutions in societies they have long dominated. Additionally, the centrality of ALBA's bottom-up economic and political inclusion discourse has increasingly and consistently deviated from reality on the ground, this in itself has had an extremely negative effect on ALBA's credibility across the board, specifically in relation to social movements, as it has become increasingly apparent that their involvement in ALBA exist only on paper after 2005. Furthermore, chapter seven has argued that there is an unmistakable gap between ALBA's design and its implementation; this represents a severely dysfunctional governance structure. The severity of this gap has only increased with time and has led to major problems for the Alliance; most notably ALBA's specific kind of governance has developed a reputation of not only impotence but, worse still, toxicity. Chapter seven has argued that all these observable problems as mentioned above, which have affected ALBA's ability to function at an adequate level, can predominately be explained by Venezuela's dominance within the project. Chapter seven has argued that Venezuela's dominance within ALBA is at such a high level that their respective destinies have become intertwined. From an economic perspective, the petro-state's reliance on oil exports has increasingly led to numerous problems for ALBA. Firstly, from an ideological perspective, Venezuela's development model is extractivist in nature; this in itself goes against ALBA as a collective stance on climate change and specific member states. Secondly, the Alliance and Venezuela's stability is intrinsically connected to extremely unstable oil prices. This volatile dependency became apparent with the 2015 dramatic fall in oil prices, which led the petro-state to

dramatically reduce available funding and support for ALBA initiatives, leading in many cases to project stagnation.

Chapter seven has argued that while it is true to say that the developments of ALBA coincided and reflected the radical developments of Venezuela in the mid-2000s, it is also fair to say that ALBA now has become synonymous with the abysmal political and economic situation that Venezuela is currently experiencing. Their perspective destinies have become so intertwined that it has become impossible for the Alliance to become in any way detached from the petro state. Furthermore, with the above considered, chapter seven has argued that ALBA should be seen as a mere extension of the Bolivarian state. From neo-Gramsci's perspective,

Chapter seven has argued, Venezuela is currently experiencing a hegemonic struggle under its present government. Similarly, to the Fijo government's demise, the Maduro government is facing a continuous and evidently relentless assault brought about by various oppositional forces. Although such oppositional forces are fractioned and disorganized, Maduro's government has begun to unravel as the social consensus for Chavismo has begun to lose its legitimacy. This erosion of consensus, which has led to the current hegemonic struggle, has been brought about by several factors, most notably by Venezuela's severe economic decline. One of which, as chapter seven has cited, has been a massive decrease in support of Chavismo since 2015. This decline in combination with heightened inflation, food shortages and the persistent rise in violent protests, has enormously reduced the Maduro government's popularity. Chapter seven has argued that the current Venezuelan government has made no attempt to address these detrimental economic issues to date. As a result the Maduro government "reliant on the mobilizing power of the party and the state it controls, as well as on the continued

incompetence of a fragmented, tone deaf, and inconsistent opposition” (Cusack, 2018a p. 226). However, chapter seven has also argued that as long as there exists a fountain of accessible discontent and resistance, the rise of a less inexperienced opposition will remain a substantial threat. Lastly chapter seven has suggested that this twofold political and economic reliance on the “continuation in power of one party in one key member state, thanks to the price of one volatile commodity, represents a grave failure to institutionalised meaningful participation from ALBA’s wider membership” (Cusack, 2018d p. 226).

In the final section of chapter seven, ALBA’s specific brand of ‘post-neoliberal’ regionalism was explored. The chapter argued that ALBA, rather than being distinctive and transformative or in any way representative of a ‘post’ neoliberal model, it portrays a model on the brink of failing. It has argued that ALBA’s slow deterioration supports the idea that Latin American regionalism as essentially intergovernmental or interpresidential. It has suggested that while ALBA’s ‘move away’ from open regionalism towards a political concentration of autonomous, resurgent, developmentalist states (Cusack, 2018a), its failure to deliver on its early promises raises questions about the real impact and distinctiveness of its model of regionalism.

Rather than creating a model that has the capacity to undermine or even potentially replace open regionalism, with an alternative governance structure that confronts and contests various neoliberal processes across various domains. In reality, ALBA’S uneven implementation, Venezuelan centrism, and “bottom-up” development model has hampered its developments and its future potential. Chapter seven has also argued that the Latin American region as a whole is going through somewhat of political transformation currently. The rise of the right in

Argentina, Chile and Brazil has begun to reshape the Latin American political environment. It has argued that the idea of the 'pink tide' and Chávez's Bolivarian revolution lives on in the hands of a sole handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro. Considering the state of Venezuelan affairs, its diminishing economy and abysmal democratic institutions, it is evident that it can no longer be seen as a poster boy for the left or as an aspiring model. Regionally, chapter seven has argued, discontent brought about by economic turmoil has been a driving force for the turn right in Latin America. It has been suggested in chapter seven that this discontent is principally a consequence of a slowdown of economic growth in which began in 2012, leading to regional economic underperformance and with the case of Brazil, severe economic recession. This downturn led to a reduction in public spending, which as a consequence has resulted in the diminished popularity of the left. Leading in some instances to the right gaining power, as was the case in Brazil, Chile and Argentina and in other instances, a retreat of radical or far-left politics, as was the case with Ecuador. Chapter seven has argued that in the Ecuadorian case, Lenin Moreno's moderate left stance boded well amongst the masses but severely hampered its relationship with former president Correa, along with Venezuela and ALBA. This loss of solidarity with Venezuela but more specifically with ALBA has cumulated in Ecuador's withdrawal from the regional project. This withdrawal signifies the changing nature of leftist politics in the region. Chapter seven has suggested that Moreno's active disassociation with ALBA and with the far or radical left more broadly, can be understood by three important aspects. Firstly, ALBA as a 'brand' of regionalism has become fatally toxic. This is as a result of Venezuelan centralism to the regional project. Secondly, the shifting tide of politics in Latin America from left to right and from far-left to moderate,

represents a changing sentiment amongst the masses and within the wider international community, this in turn has informed the direction of governments' projected ideology and political, regional and economic affiliations. For Ecuador, due to a repositioning of ideology, membership of ALBA is no longer a viable option. Lastly, Latin America is a region like no other, in as much as regional organisations are plentiful. Essentially, their very existence can be seen as a product of a particular time and as a result, regional projects often become redundant with changes in state ideological positioning. Just as it was the case with CAN, Mercosur and to a large extent UNASUR, it seems that ALBA now has lost its shine. ALBA'S specific brand of regionalism or indeed its leftist ideological core, while initially grew in popularity as it represented for many, a regional ideological alignment that could potentially restructure or revolutionize the regional space, is now, as chapter seven has argued, as an obsolete and redundant project with very little to offer.

In the last part of chapter seven, an overview of three potential future scenarios in relation to the ALBA was outlined. The first being dismantlement. However, this future outcome as chapter seven has suggested is highly unlikely as it would run against Latin American tradition if one considers that no Latin American regional integration project, to date, has ever been officially declared dead. The second possibility is a reboot. Potentially, the signing of a new treaty or important declaration could possibly breathe new life into the Alliance and trigger a renewed activation. This reboot, according to chapter seven, could be motivated by a diplomatic offensive from the Pacific Alliance group for instance, which is always seeking to expand the reach of its free trade agreements. However, chapter seven has suggested that this possibility also seems highly unlikely, as opposition to free trade has waned in recent years. Furthermore, Venezuela's internal economic and

political problems has led to an evident lack of strong leadership within ALBA and with Cuba's attention turned towards mending US relation, no other ALBA member states seem up to the task of leading the Alliance through this reboot.

The third and, the most likely scenario for ALBA as chapter seven has suggested is a stalemate and indifference. The chapter has argued that a 'zone of indifference', where regional actors are tolerated within the broader region as long as they do not impose new costs, seems the most likely future scenarios for ALBA. The chapter uses the example of the Andean Community to illustrate its point, and argued that if one considers how incapable the Andean Community's has been at transitioning out of the this 'zone of indifference' despite having a large regional bureaucracy, it makes it even more likely that the Alliance, a poorly institutionalised grouping, will remain in deadlock.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Summative conclusion

Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci and the late Robert Cox, this thesis set out specifically, to determine the extent that ALBA can be viewed as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance that is engaged in a war of position against open regionalism, US hegemony and, by extension, neoliberalism. It examined ALBA through a historical narrative, assessing its progression from its early developments to its current form. This was carried out through a critical analysis, which allowed for a historical examination of the evolution of ALBA. By analysing ALBA in this way, this work was able to put a central focus on the regional movement's demise in recent years, by evaluating Venezuelan centrality to the Alliance, and by situating ALBA within the wider context of an ever-changing political and regional landscape with the Latin American region as a whole. While the Alliance evidently in its early years represented a form of contestation, of resistance and to a large extent, a new form of regionalism that had the potential to transform the region, this thesis found that over time, the regional movement lost its momentum, its allure and failed to achieve any of its ideological aspirations in every tangible sense, all of which have led this thesis to the conclusion that ALBA is no longer a viable counter-hegemonic regional movement. The following sections of this chapter will present in detail a summary and contributions of this thesis. The limitations that it contains are discussed as well as recommendations for future research is indicated.

8.2 Summary and Contributions

In chapter two of this thesis, the central focus was placed on situating ALBA within a Coxian approach to world order and hegemony. Chapter two of this dissertation provided a literature review which predominately focused on assessing the work of key academics within the field of the contemporary International Political Economy. The central objective of this chapter was to assess the key features of the neo-Gramscian/Coxian critical theory approach to the study of the contemporary International Political Economy. By drawing on the work of Gramsci, Gill, and Cox in particular, chapter two provided a strong theoretical basis, which allowed for ALBA to be situated within the aforementioned theoretical perspectives. The introduction of key concepts such as counter-hegemony, war of position, and the idea of gaining consent were introduced in order to situate ALBA within this theoretical perspective and allowing this thesis to lay a solid theoretical foundation by which ALBA could begin to be critically analysed from.

Chapter three of this thesis provided a second literature review, which aimed to facilitate an understanding of the current global trend towards regionalism. The chapter mainly focused on literature that uses Robert Cox's notion of world order to explain the contemporary rise of regionalism. It then went on to use relevant academic literature that specifically looked at the relationship between regionalism and neoliberalism in order to determine how the rise of neoliberalism has affected and shaped open/new regionalism in the contemporary era. The chapter suggested that understood from a Coxian/neo-Gramscian world order perspective, open regionalism can be seen to facilitate and complement the practices of neoliberalism

very efficiently. As the creation, development, and purpose of regional bodies have been centred around enhancing more trade, increasing liberalisation and the enhancing harmonization in relation to regulation on investment (Worth, 2015). Furthermore, chapter three has suggested that with the above considered, open regionalism view within this light, can be seen to contributing to structural conditions of the prevailing order (Gamble and Payne, 1996). From here, academic literature that focused on the evolution of Latin American regionalism and its relationship with neoliberalism was presented. It specifically looked at the evolution of regionalism within the region and introduced the concept of post-hegemonic regionalism. It suggested that a selection of academics have used this concept to understand a change in the way regional integration began to take place with the rise of the left in Latin America (Burges 2016). It has suggested that within this core academic circle, forms of contestation that began to emerge in the 2000s, most notably ALBA, which for many can be understood in this light. However, rather than viewing ALBA's emergence as representative of this notion of post-hegemonic regional, chapter three merely highlights the existence of support for understanding ALBA in this way. It suggested that while ALBA can undoubtedly be viewed as a form of contestation against open regionalism, it is yet to be determined whether it can be seen as fitting in with this wider a debatable understanding of 'post-hegemonic regionalism'.

Chapter four took the form of an empirical chapter on ALBA. It specifically looked at the rise of the contemporary left. It has suggested that the failure of neoliberalism to consolidate the necessary social forces for its stabilization, led to the rise of the left. It has suggested that this shift in political ideology laid a

foundation, which allowed for a form of counter-hegemonic resistance to begin. Chapter four investigated the rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and looked at his idea of twenty-first-century socialism. It suggested that Chávez's alternative strategy for autonomy and development through twenty-first-century socialism inspired and influenced many other leftist governments to move beyond the ideas of neoliberalism, which in turn resulted in a variety of individual and collective attempts to construct counter-hegemonic alternatives to neoliberalism and US imperialism.

Following on from this, the chapter looked at how and in what ways the left has led to the construction of a new era of regional dynamics, which has developed alternative models of regional integration within Latin America. Chapter four suggested that leftist policies and principles such as the redistribution of wealth, social development initiatives, autonomy and advancing alternative development strategies have all been expressed through regional integration projects. With the left turn, regional integration projects began to be framed around solidarity and the consolidation of shared approaches, while at the same time it has brought to the forefront of its agenda the issues of social inequality as well as offering alternative paths to great autonomy from the US. It was also pointed out that with this leftist turn, open regional projects such as Mercosur began to align itself with leftist principles. It has also cited the creation of ALBA and the development of UNASUR as examples of this leftist shift. Additionally, it was suggested that the emergence of both ALBA and UNASUR, as leftist inspired regional integration projects, could be considered as part of the fourth wave of regionalism, in as much as they both represent a move away from a predominant focus on economic objectives and free

trade. However, it was also suggested that with regards to USASUR, although opposed to US hegemony, Brazil has become a sub-imperialist power within the regional project. It was suggested that because of this, the project could be seen as being rooted in the politics of above. By contrast, ALBA at least in its early years, can be seen as an expression of regional integration from below and has become a symbol of hope for radical transformation that has emerged with the move left in Latin America as a whole.

Following on from here, the chapter looked at the specific social forces that led to the establishment of the Bolivarian historic bloc in Venezuela and investigated how its establishment has influenced other leftist states within the region, and how the combination of both has led to the creation of ALBA. It has suggested that the Bolivarian revolution has attempted to construct a historic bloc that is representative of a resistance movement as well as forming an alternative to neoliberalism. It has suggested that the establishment of the Bolivarian collective will, at least initially, was successful because it was made up of a diverse alliance of subaltern social forces that incorporated a variety of marginalized groups and informal masses as well as the working class, the state and the military, all of which came together to form a heterogeneous alliance that forms the Bolivarian collective will, that is internally harmonious. The chapter has also suggested that the success of the Bolivarian collective will as a form of resistance and contestation to neoliberalism has influenced many other leftist governments throughout the region. As a result, anti-neoliberal forms of governance emerged with Latin America, producing a new political economy for development in the region, leading to the creation of alternative, regional approaches to neoliberalism in Latin America. The

most notable of which is ALBA. It suggested that the creation of ALBA represents a rising demand for regional autonomy by Latin American social movement, capital and governments. It has proposed that the support from social forces leading to its establishment should be understood as a crucial element that has further legitimized ALBA as a counter-hegemonic movement.

Lastly, chapter four considered the 'pink tide' in the post-Chávez era. It has highlighted that economic decline and political instability has begun to shake the Latin America left. It has also highlighted the complexity of the pink tide as a term and has suggested that all too often it has been oversimplified in order to support the argument that left as a whole is in decline along with the argument that the various left-leaning movements should be looked at as a whole. Lastly it has suggested that although the future of 'pink tide' governments may be uncertain; their principles are likely to remain especially in relation to regional development strategies and projects as they still remain popular amongst the Latin America masses.

Chapter five focused specifically on the factors and events that led to the creation of ALBA through a historical narrative. It was argued that since its inception, ALBA has been put forward as an alternative to not only the Washington Consensus but to all other forms of neoliberalism. It argued that while a large body of research has suggested that Chávez has played an integral part in the creation and development of ALBA, Chávez should not be seen as a totalizing force who moulded the regional bloc. Rather the chapter has argument, that at least to a degree, ALBA can be understood as a merging of a sequence of particular opinions around common themes - emancipation from neoliberalism and aspirations to challenge the status

quo, all of which was brought together by Chavez. The chapter then moved on to specifically look at the evolution of ALBA, tracing its development from its creation to present form. It began by looking at the initial implementation of neoliberalism in Latin America, beginning with Chile in 1973. It provided an account of how the implementation instigated a series of events, such as the oppression of the left, the suppression of popular organisations as well as the workers' movements, leading to the reconstruction of Latin American economies along free-market lines, through manufacturing consent. It has also suggested that this manufacturing of consent within the region had two main characteristics, the first one being the oppression of the national development strategy by a new form of regionalism which was carried out by the second characteristic, that of US hegemony. This chapter has suggested that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which was initially launched in 1994, can be seen as a form of new regionalism. It has proposed that the US inspired FTAA intended to reshape the region in a specific way that was aligned with US interests. Chapter five argued that it was out of resistance to this form of new regionalism that ALBA was created. It has also suggested that ALBA's creation is representative of the left's resistance to US imperialism as well as a form of contestation against the US-sponsored FTAA. It represents not only a move by the left to develop a substitute for the FTAA but also it can be seen as an attempt to create a mechanism to combat western-style economic integration, replacing it with a new political and economic model known as twenty-first-century socialism, which aims to transform Latin American societies through establishing new political, economic and social alliances. The main objective of which is to create a 'patria grande' in the Latin American and the Caribbean region based on independence, sovereignty and identity.

The chapter then went on to look at the Cuban-Venezuelan joint declaration, which is seen as the preamble of the inaugural ALBA treaty. It has suggested that the joint declaration as well as the apparent impending establishment of the FTAA that not only led to the creation of ALBA but inspired the foundational principles that the ALBA treaty is built on. Principles centred around aspirations to broaden solidarity among Latin American, aspirations centred on transforming Latin American society through education, participation and through the elimination of social inequalities. This chapter has also suggested that both the experiences of Venezuela with its success in its Bolivarian social missions and Cuba's 'internationalist' experience led to a shared belief that a workable regional integration model was possible. However, chapter five has also suggested that while the creation of ALBA began with the joint declaration between the two countries, its emergence should be viewed in the context of the developments within the political economy Latin America at that time. It cites mass disenchantment, the rise of social movements opposed to neoliberalism as well as the election of left and centre left governments in several Latin American countries as contributing factors, which led to the creation and development of ALBA.

The chapter then went on to discuss the expansion and development of ALBA. It has argued that the rise in prominence of a shared ideological understanding of the importance of ALBA for the region led to its expansion through membership. It has suggested that newly elected left-leaning government who shared in this belief began to join the regional movement beginning with Bolivia under Morales in 2006. From there the chapter points out that with the Bolivian adhesion to the alliance, the regional project began to further develop its integration model through the adoption of the "Peoples Trade Agreement" or TCP. This addition served to refine

the integration project and for the first time it begun to develop beyond mere commitment, it offered an alternative trading mechanism to the proposed trade agreement of the North. The chapter then went on the outline the TCPs main objective, which was to provide a distinct form of trade integration that is complementary to the national interests of participating members as well as the region, as opposed to market driven forms of trade. The chapter highlighted that 2009 marked a turning point for the movement as ALBA began to evolve again, reorienting its focus in relation to the development of cooperation amongst its member states (reaching nine in there year) but also through the establishment of international relationship with countries such as China, India, Russia, Syria and Iran, the combination of which further legitimized ALBA as a Latin American regional movement.

The chapter then went on to look at the organisational and institutional structure of ALBA. It has highlighted that its institutional structure developed alongside its membership expansion. It then went on to look at ALBA's organisational structure given a detailed account of its makeup. It looks specifically are the role and functions of the Presidential Council, the Political Council, the Economic Council, the Social Council and lastly the Council of Social Movements.

From there, the chapter gave an in-depth account of ALBA's Grand-National concepts, which led to the creation of its grand-national companies (GNCs) and grand-national projects (GNPs). It suggested that ALBA's grand-national concept is essentially a political concept but incorporated other elements. Primarily, it is based on the Bolivarian vision of a Latin American union. Within an ideological context, the concept is grounded in what can be seen as a set of shared beliefs by ALBA member states, with regards to a critical stance in relation to neoliberalism,

as well as an emphasis placed on sustainable development, social justice, sovereignty, self-determination as well as developing a regional bloc that has the capacity to produce sovereign regional policies. Then chapter then went on to look at ALBA's development of grand-national companies (GNCs), which were created in opposition to multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational companies (TNCs). It has suggested that GNCs were purposefully designed to favour the production of goods and services for the satisfaction of human needs as opposed to being profit driven. The chapter highlighted that each GNC acts fundamentally as an economic instrument that attempts to create and develop a wide area or network of fair trade between ALBA member states. The chapter then goes on to discuss the grand-national projects (GNPs) and their orientation towards goods and services that satisfy human needs within the emergent ALBA markets. Before giving a detailed account of the operational capacity of both GNCs and GNPs, the chapter focuses on the new regional financial architecture (NRFA) that ALBA has created with the establishment of the Bank of ALBA. Its creation has two purposes, to firstly fund GNPs and GNCs but also it was created as a way to reduce its member-states reliance on international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) and the US. The chapter then turned its attention to ALBA's expansion of its NRFA with the creation of SUCRE, its regional trading currency which was created to help to facilitate trade and exchange between member-states but was also created in an attempt to circumvent the US Dollar. The chapter then goes on to focus on Venezuela's role with regards to the financial support of the various GNPs and GNCs. It suggests that Venezuela's role and the financial support for GNPs is vital as is the case with Petro ALBA, whose success is completely dependent on Venezuelan oil. The chapter then

looked at various GNPs in other fields such as TeleSur within the telecommunication sector, which has gained international recognition in recent years, as well as ALBA's educational projects, which can be considered one of its most successful GNPs. It has also highlighted, that there is severe limitations and inactiveness with regards to some GNPs and cited severe mismanagement as the cause of its failure as is the case with ALBA Agriculture.

The purpose of chapter six was to specifically look at the ways in which ALBA can be seen as a viable counter-hegemonic project that looks to challenge US-inspired neo-liberalism. Additionally, the chapter sought to determine the extent that the Alliance has acted as a mechanism of support for small states. In order to fulfil this objective, the chapter firstly situated this research within the broader academic literature and justified its contribution by specifically addressing the gap that exists between ALBA's aspirations and the reality of the project on the ground. As academic research carried out on ALBA has been notably sparse. This deficit has meant that the available literature on the Alliance is both dated and to a large extent out of touch. As a result, this examination has been conducted in order to produce an up-to-date research paper that sheds light on ALBA's evolution and current situation. It argued that the use of semi-structured interviews with various political elites that work within the ALBA, as its primary method of assessment was an optimum method of analysis as the chosen target group, could offer a unique perspective as to how the regional movement operates but also because they could give an insight into the evolution of the movement, from its beginning to its current form as well as offering a complete new avenue to explore the inner workings of the regional movement. Chapter six argued that by conducting interviews in this way, valuable insight into the internal workings of the regional movement would

be gained, allowing it to determine the extent of the gap between the participating political elites aspirations for the regional project and the reality of where the movement actually is.

Chapter six has suggested that ALBA's ambitions and ideological underpinnings, which have shaped and guided the regional alliance since its creation in 2004, have not entirely translated into tangible results. Although ALBA as an Alternative (2004- 2005) ambition did in fact become a reality with the failure of the FTAA. ALBA as an Alliance (2005 - to present) however, while achieving some success with various social programmes in the early years has failed in its ideological drive towards creating a Patria Grande within Latin America. The chapter has proposed that essentially this failure is the result of ALBA's inability to remain internally coherent and united with regards to governance and institutional structure. ALBA's ambition with regards to creating a new regional financial architecture, although innovative and initially revolutionary, has only highlighted its inability to implement and follow through on its agreements. While there are many reasons why ALBA's various initiatives have failed to bring about the changes that the Alliance envisaged, chapter six suggests that fundamentally the Venezuelan economy lies at the centre. Every aspect of ALBA's ambitious development of a new financial architecture for the region has been facilitated, funded and utilised primarily by Venezuela. Although participating member states have benefited from the various initiatives implemented under ALBA's economic zone for shared development, it has become apparent that the various projects future as a whole is completely dependent on Venezuela's ability to continue to finance them. Given the economic instability that Venezuela has experienced since 2012, the future of ALBA's economic zone for shared development is uncertain.

The chapter then looked at the extent that Venezuelan foreign policy has influenced ALBA. It specifically wanted to determine how the deterioration of ALBA's primary financial backer has affected the project's ability to attract members, in light of the current economic and political upheavals that the Maduro government is presently experiencing. It suggested that since becoming a petro-state in the 1920s and a democracy in 1957, Venezuela has had a very active and successful foreign policy. Its ability to pursue foreign policy objectives successfully is a result of its active pursuit of a multifaceted identity, which has resulted in the development of strong ties with various groups and regions. Chapter six has also suggested that ALBA has to a large extent become the cornerstone of Bolivarian Venezuela's foreign policy and a means by which Venezuela is attempting to situate itself as the leader of the anti-U.S. ideological agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has suggested that building on the various identities, Venezuela has developed since the 1960s, Chávez was able to gain support for ALBA membership from a variety of left-leaning states within the region as well as social movements operating across the region. This allowed him to construct an alliance of support towards his foreign policy positions, or at a minimum censor opposing viewpoints. From here the chapter went on to determine how Venezuela's strong presence within ALBA has affected the regional bloc. This was investigated in two phases, 2004-2013, which looks specifically at the influence of Chávez within ALBA and the wider Latin American region, and from 2013 to present, which looked at ALBA in the Maduro era. Chapter six proposed that the lack of membership expansion towards the end of the Chávez era can be explained by the charismatic leader's dominance within ALBA, his vocal rejection of the Latin American right and his outspoken negative view on the US, which all contributed to polarized Latin

America. On one side you have a group of countries eager to sign free trade agreements with the US and on the other you had those belonging to ALBA. Furthermore, Chávez's active political support for left-leaning politicians very often acted as a detrimental factor, causing many to lose elections. It has also suggested that a lack of ALBA expansion can be explained by its strong ideological overtones, which meant in many instances, that the larger wealthier Latin American states as well as the smaller Caribbean economies were put in a position where they had to choose between closing themselves off to the possibility of new trade deals with the US or ALBA membership. The chapter went on to look at how Chávez's death impacted ALBA. It looked at how domestically the loss of its charismatic leader coupled with political instability and economic uncertainty has underwritten much of ALBA's progress to date. It has also suggested that given the current financial constraint that the Maduro government finds itself in, it is unlikely that Venezuela will be able to continue to bank roll ALBA and its various initiatives nor will it be able to influence the direction of the regional project.

Lastly this chapter attempted to understand the Caribbean's place within ALBA. It proposed that while undoubtedly membership of the Alliance has benefited the Caribbean, particularly in relation to financial assistance. Their involvement in the Alliance has not equated to a totalizing ideological commitment. It determined that although ideological similarities are apparent to a small extent, the level of commitment from Caribbean member states to ALBA's overall objective in creating a counter-hegemonic regional movement to challenge the US and neoliberalism is non-existent. Rather, their alignment with the regional movement operates on a far more functional platform. It determined that the overarching reason for Caribbean accession to ALBA can be explained by its access to ALBA funds, attained

through membership, which allowed the various Caribbean governments to roll out various development initiatives which in turn played well with voters and has helped alleviate some of the financial problems which have crippled the small island economies of the Caribbean.

Chapter seven situated ALBA - understanding its demise and potential future - within a neo-Gramscian framework. The chapter's purpose was to determine the extent that ALBA could be viewed as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance that is engaged in a war of position against open regionalism, US hegemony and, by extension, neoliberalism. It suggested that ALBA in its early years, evidently represented a pattern of development that corresponded with Cox's understanding of a counter-hegemonic movement engaged in a war of position, as its initial development involved an orchestrated attempt to restructure society from below. However, chapter seven determined that the regional project's development since then, has not equated to the same kind of resistance it was once heralded for. Rather, ALBA's momentum and support has consistently deteriorated, as a result chapter seven has proposed that ALBA has fallen short of maintaining the necessary conditions that could have potentially led to the creation of a viable rival structure.

The chapter then looked at ALBA as a form of counter-hegemony/resistance, its effectiveness and potentialities. It looked at ALBA's specific form of regionalism and argued that while ALBA views itself as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance, in reality 'observable ALBA' paints a different picture. From its anti- US/neoliberal initiatives to its alternative institutional structure, ALBA in practical reality is dysfunctional, irregular and to a large extent chaotic. Chapter seven has argued that on the surface ALBA operates via a kind of brand governance, whereby the

champions of ALBA depict the movement as a unitary integration scheme. However, the chapter has proposed that behind this 'brand' façade, ALBA's internal workings represents a highly unpredictable and unstable group of projects, whose very existence and future is almost completely dependent on its funder, Venezuela.

Although ALBA's very existence and construction as an alternative path to development and regionalism represents a counter-hegemonic response to the crippling dominating forces of neoliberalism and the US, chapter seven argued that ALBA's complete lack of a functioning internal structure and commitment from its member states has detrimentally affected its ability to operate as a viable alternative regional movement for the region.

The chapter then looked at the extent that the creation of the Alliance's economic zone of shared development has been successful in challenging neoliberalism and US hegemony. With regards to the TCP, chapter seven has argued that while ideologically speaking, the TCP meets all the criteria for acting as an agent of resistance to both US hegemony and neoliberalism, in reality however; the initiative has failed to move beyond its ideological ambition. Its existence, although initially ground-breaking, has not produced any conclusive or even measurable results as it has failed to be implemented. Additionally, legal issues arising between other regional and international organisations as well as institutions constrained the TCP negotiators' capacity to move beyond the existing standards in any innovative or revolutionary sense. The combination of which, resulted in the TCP's inability to get off the ground. Twelve years on as chapter seven points out, the trade and investment scheme has failed to act or operate in any measurable way, as a form of resistance to neoliberalism and US hegemony. In relation to the ALBA Bank, chapter seven has argued that its over-reliance on Venezuela as its primary

funder has been a determining factor in relation to its ability to perform its primary function. It has suggested that while the bank is at its core a form of resistance, its inadequate funding mechanism and its staunch anti-profit-making stance along with its intrinsic link to the Venezuelan economy makes its likelihood of survival extremely grim. The SUCRE in theory the mechanism should promote cooperative regionalism and reinforce endogenous development, legitimizing and reinforcing ALBA as an engine for resistance. However, chapter seven has argued that what is observable with the SUCRE paints a vastly different picture. Instead of the SUCRE being used as an inclusive currency mechanism by member-states to reduce transaction costs, fewer than twenty transactions have taken place through the mechanism without Venezuelan direct participation. The majority of transactions that have occurred have been highly concentrated on trade between Venezuela and Ecuador, 90 per cent of which has consisted of Venezuela importing Ecuadorian foodstuffs. Not only does the above explicitly reveal that instead of being used as mechanisms which further integrates ALBA member states and its specific form of regionalism, the SUCRE has predominately been used as a political tool by the Venezuelan government, to secure political support of the masses at home. Having a constant stream of Ecuadorian food imports has meant that the Venezuelan government is less reliant of hostile local elites and their companies. In this way, the SUCRE represents the weaponisation and politicisation of imports served to keep the Maduro government in power while simultaneously reducing the Venezuelan oppositional elites' ability to gain any strategic foothold politically. Chapter seven then suggested that while ideologically speaking GNEs represent joint state ventures that should enhance both productive capacity in relation to intra-ALBA trade and regional integration within the ALBA space, in reality

however, very few have 'become operational. Since the GNEs introduction into the ALBA Framework in 2007, only 3 GNEs have become operational, and of those three operational GNEs, it is impossible to measure or even monitor any real progress they may have made because every kind of bilateral joint state venture have been branded as "grand national" with official acknowledgment or permission. What has been even more damaging to the operational ability of GNEs however, chapter seven has argued, has been GNEs inescapable association with the Venezuelan economy, in particular the petro state's oil industry. Dependence on the Venezuelan economy has meant that cash flow problems stemming for Venezuela's dysfunctional currency regime has resulted in Venezuela's inability to finance the projects. This in turn has affected ALBA as a regional integration initiative to be just that- regionally integrated. Furthermore, failure to deliver on financial promises has created a space for doubt, about ALBA's ability to develop functional initiatives that can together act as a viable form of resistance against US hegemony and neoliberalism. From here, chapter seven looked at specific factors, which have affected ALBA's ability to become a viable regional project for the Latin American region, factors such as internal incoherence and subsequent its de-legitimisation.

From what is observable, chapter seven has argued, ALBA's internal governance structure consists of volatile and unstable coalitions of officials, who convene at sporadic intervals depending on presidential interest. It has suggested that the executive secretariat – ALBA's only bureaucratic body – is unmanageably overwhelmed that it has become impossible for it to provide any meaningful direction or oversight for the movement. As a consequence of the above, a lack of accountability brought about partly by an absence of concrete commitment by

member states as well as partly by Venezuelan dominance, has deepened both internal disorder and neglect. This lack of commitment by ALBA member states, chapter seven has argued, is observable with members' lack or minimum participation in ALBA projects, but more specifically, with projects that don't necessarily offer immediate gains to its participants, such as the SUCRE (90 per cent of all transactions are between Venezuela and Ecuador). Chapter seven suggests that internal incoherence is also observable through ALBA's inactivity in relation to ALBA summits and official declarations, which in recent years have been sparse (the last ALBA summit took place in 2015).

At the core of many of its problems, chapter seven has argued, has been an inability to establish adequately functional – let alone demonstrably superior – alternatives to neoliberal institutions in societies they have long dominated. Additionally, the centrality of ALBA's bottom-up economic and political inclusion discourse has increasingly and consistently deviated from reality on the ground, this in itself has had an extremely negative effect on ALBA's credibility across the board, specifically in relation to social movements, as it has become increasingly apparent that their involvement in ALBA exist only on paper after 2005. Furthermore, chapter seven has argued that there is an unmistakable gap between ALBA's design and its implementation; this represents a severely dysfunctional governance structure. The severity of this gap has only increased with time and has led to major problems for the Alliance; most notably ALBA's specific kind of governance has developed a reputation of not only impotence but, worse still, toxicity.

Chapter seven has argued that all of these observable problems as mentioned above, which have affected ALBA's ability to function at an adequate level, can predominately be explained by Venezuela's dominance within the project. Chapter

seven has argued that Venezuela's dominance within ALBA is at such a high level that their respective destinies have become intertwined.

From an economic perspective, the petro-state's reliance on oil exports has increasingly led to numerous problems for ALBA. Firstly, from an ideological perspective, Venezuela's development model is extractivist in nature, this in itself goes against ALBA as a collective stance on climate change and specific member states. Secondly, the Alliance and Venezuela's stability is intrinsically connected to extremely unstable oil prices. This volatile dependence became apparent with the 2015 dramatic fall in oil prices, which led the petro-state to dramatically reduce available funding and support for ALBA initiatives, leading in many cases to project stagnation.

Chapter seven has argued that while it is true to say that developments of ALBA coincided and reflected the radical developments of Venezuela in the mid-2000s, it is also fair to say that ALBA now has become synonymous with the abysmal political and economic situation that Venezuela is currently experiencing. Their perspective destinies have become so intertwined that it has become impossible for the Alliance to become in any way detached from the petro state. Furthermore, with the above considered, chapter seven has argued that ALBA should be seen as a mere extension of the Bolivarian state. From neo-Gramsci's perspective,

Chapter seven has argued, Venezuela is currently experiencing a hegemonic struggle under its present government. Similarly, to the Fijo government's demise, the Maduro government is facing a continuous and evidently relentless assault brought about by various oppositional forces. Although such oppositional forces are fractioned and disorganized, Maduro's government has begun to unravel as the social consensus for Chavismo has begun to lose its legitimacy. This erosion of

consensus, which has led to the current hegemonic struggle, has been brought about by a number of factors, most notably by Venezuela's severe economic decline. One of which, as chapter seven has cited, has been a massive decrease in support of Chavismo since 2015. This decline in combination with heightened inflation, food shortages and the persistent rise in violent protests, has enormously reduced the Maduro government's popularity. Chapter seven has argued that the current Venezuelan government has made no attempt to address these detrimental economic issues to date. As a result the Maduro government "reliant on the mobilizing power of the party and the state it controls, as well as on the continued incompetence of a fragmented, tone deaf, and inconsistent opposition" (Cusack, 2018a). However, chapter seven has also argued that as long as there exists a fountain of accessible discontent and resistance, the rise of a less inexperienced opposition will remain a substantial threat. Lastly chapter seven has suggest that this twofold political and economic reliance on the "continuation in power of one party in one key member state, thanks to the price of one volatile commodity, represents a grave failure to institutionalised meaningful participation from ALBA's wider membership"(Cusack, 2018a).

In the final section of chapter seven, ALBA's specific brand of 'post-neoliberal' regionalism was explored. The chapter argued that ALBA, rather than being distinctive and transformative or in any way representative of a 'post' neoliberal model, it portrays a model on the brink of failing. It has argued that ALBA slow deterioration, supports the idea that Latin American regionalism as essentially intergovernmental or interpresidential. It has suggested that while ALBA's 'move away' from open regionalism towards a political concentration of autonomous, resurgent, developmentalist states (Cusack, 2018a), its failure to deliver on its early

promises raises questions about the real impact and distinctiveness of its model of regionalism.

Rather than creating a model that has the capacity to undermine or even potentially replace open regionalism, with an alternative governance structure that confronts and contests various neoliberal processes across various domains. In reality, ALBA's uneven implementation, Venezuelan centrism, and "bottom-up" development model has hampered its developments and its future potential. Chapter seven has also argued that the Latin American region as a whole is going through somewhat of political transformation currently. The rise of the right in Argentina, Chile and Brazil has begun to reshape the Latin American political environment. It has argued that the idea of the 'pink tide' and Chávez's Bolivarian revolution lives on in the hands of a sole handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro. Considering the state of Venezuelan affairs, its diminishing economy and abysmal democratic institutions, it is evident that it can no longer be seen as a poster boy for the left or as an aspiring model. Regionally, chapter seven has argued, discontent brought about by economic turmoil has been a driving force for the turn right in Latin America. It has been suggested in chapter seven that this discontent is principally a consequence of a slowdown of economic growth in which began in 2012, leading to regional economic underperformance and with the case of Brazil, severe economic recession. This downturn led to a reduction in public spending, which as a consequence has resulted in the diminished popularity of the left. Leading in some instances to the right gaining power, as was the case in Brazil, Chile and Argentina and in other instances, a retreat of radical or far-left politics, as was the case with Ecuador. Chapter seven has argued that in the Ecuadorian case, Lenin Moreno's moderate left stance boded well amongst the masses but severely

hampered its relationship with former president Correa, along with Venezuela and ALBA. This loss of solidarity with Venezuela but more specifically with ALBA has cumulated in Ecuador's withdrawal from the regional project. This withdrawal signifies the changing nature of leftist politics in the region. Chapter seven has suggested that Moreno's active disassociation with ALBA and with the far or radical left more broadly, can be understood by three important aspects. Firstly, ALBA as a 'brand' of regionalism has become fatally toxic. This is as a result of Venezuelan centralism to the regional project. Secondly, the shifting tide of politics in Latin America from left to right and from far left to moderate, represents a changing sentiment amongst the masses and within the wider international community, this in turn has informed the direction of governments' projected ideology and political, regional and economic affiliations. For Ecuador, due to a repositioning of ideology, membership of ALBA is no longer a viable option. Lastly, Latin America is a region like no other, in as much as regional organisations are plentiful. Essentially, their very existence can be seen as a product of a particular time and as a result, regional projects often become redundant with changes in state ideological positioning. Just as it was the case with CAN, Mercosur and to a large extent UNASUR, it seems that ALBA now has lost its shine. ALBA's specific brand of regionalism or indeed its leftist ideological core, while initially grew in popularity as it represented for many, a regional ideological alignment that could potentially restructure or revolutionize the regional space, is now, as chapter seven has argued, as an obsolete and redundant project with very little to offer.

In the last part of chapter seven, an overview of three potential future scenarios in relation to the ALBA were outlined. The first being dismantlement. However, this future outcome as chapter seven has suggested is highly unlikely as it would run

against Latin American tradition if one considers that no Latin American regional integration project, to date, has ever been officially declared dead. The second possibility is a reboot. Potentially, the signing of a new treaty or important declaration could possibly breathe new life into the Alliance and trigger a renewed activation. This reboot, according to chapter seven, could be motivated by a diplomatic offensive from the Pacific Alliance group for instance, which is always seeking to expand the reach of its free trade agreements. However, chapter seven has suggested that this possibility also seems highly unlikely, as opposition to free trade has waned in recent years. Furthermore, Venezuela's internal economic and political problems have led to an evident lack of strong leadership within ALBA and with Cuba's attention turned towards mending US relation, no other ALBA member states seem up to the task of leading the Alliance through this reboot.

The third and, the most likely scenario for ALBA as chapter seven has suggested is a stalemate and indifference. The chapter has argued that a 'zone of indifference', where regional actors are tolerated within the broader region as long as they do not impose new costs, seems the most likely future scenarios for ALBA. The chapter uses the example of the Andean Community to illustrate its point, and argued that if one considers how incapable the Andean Community's has been at transitioning out of the this 'zone of indifference' despite having a large regional bureaucracy, it makes it even more likely that the Alliance, a poorly institutionalised grouping, will remain in deadlock.

8.3 Research limitations and recommended avenues for further research

This thesis has been empirically enriched by direct consultations and correspondence with ALBA's political elites. This approach to understanding ALBA,

its viability and potential future was an essential part of this research. The chosen methodology allowed this thesis to explore ALBA beneath its surface. Considering the lack of available current research, the work produced in this thesis has added value to this field of study, in relation to ALBA, the nature of counter-hegemony and neo-Gramscian studies more generally. By framing ALBA within a counter-hegemonic context, placing it within the neo-Gramscian school of thought, the thesis was able to assess the regional movement through a lens of analysis, which allowed for thorough exploration. Previous ALBA studies that have utilised this approach have produced work that has painted a positive picture of the regional movement and its potential, however, earlier research conducted, encapsulated a regional movement that was in its embryonic stage. Its momentum had not yet slowed nor had the Venezuelan political or economic situation reached a point where it had altered or hampered ALBA's development or future prospects. The work produced in this thesis provided an up-to-date account of ALBA's current form and investigated the ways in which the regional movement has evolved since its creation. It specifically looked at how the current political and economic situation in Venezuela as well as the Latin American left more widely, has affected ALBA's counter-hegemonic potential. The use of semi-structured interviews for ALBA's political elite offered a unique perspective not only in relation to how the regional movement operates but also because it gave an insight into the evolution of the movement. Essentially, it offered a completely new avenue to explore the inner workings of the regional movement. By conducting interviews in this way, valuable insight into the internal workings of the regional movement has been gained, which has aided this work in determining the extent of the gap between ALBA's aspirations and the reality of where the movement actually is.

By accessing ALBA through a neo-Gramscian framework via counter-hegemony, this thesis was able to track ALBA's evolution from its promising early stages of development, to its current demise. This very targeted analysis allowed for an expanded understanding of both counter-hegemony and regionalism within the wider context of the Latin American region. Specifically, this thesis looked at the idea of post-neoliberal regionalism, and how ALBA has been used to understand this construction within its early years of development. This thesis has argued that since ALBA's evident deterioration this concept has become void. This work's analysis of ALBA's structural makeup and internal workings presents a clear contrast to this concept. Rather than a post-neoliberal regional movement that operates outside the remit of neoliberalism, ALBA as this thesis understands it, represents a regional movement like every other – one that despite its ideology and somewhat alternative structure still relies on the same internal and global system to operate in. Likewise, the concept of counter-hegemony, which has been used numerous times to understand ALBA, both within academic literature and from the perspective of ALBA members themselves, to a large extent has been misplaced, if ALBA's current situation and potential future are taken into account. Although it is evident that ALBA does present a form of counter-hegemonic form of resistance, its current state and likely future represent a regional project on the verge of collapse. Regardless of its anti-neoliberal ideology, its dysfunctional internal hierarchal structure and dependence on an unstable state to fund and guide the regional movement, has meant that its survival is dependent on the Venezuelan economy's ability to stay afloat.

A severe lack of available data has limited this research's scope. While official ALBA declarations make up the bulk of the available resources, even those have become

sparse in recent years. Statistics produced by the ALBA Bank along with trade flow figures from the SUCRE, tend to be out-dated and to a large extent, unreliable due to the political position of these Venezuelan financed programmes. This evident lack of accurate and current created an obstacle for evaluating the regional movement, thus limiting the scope of the research. Secondary sources were relied on heavily to provide an account of ALBA development and progression. Lack of coherency in relation to GNEs and GNPs in relation to official ALBA declarations and reports limited this thesis's ability to fully evaluate their effectiveness and progression. Overall the severe lack of transparency with various ALBA initiatives stunted this research's ability for exploration. However, the aforementioned challenged allowed for an alternative investigative approach to ALBA. Using semi-structured political elite interviews and the application of critical IPE, this research was able to effectively evaluate the extent of the gap between ALBA's ideology and its reality on the ground. Within the wider context, this thesis as a result has opened a variety of potential avenues for further research. As cited in this thesis Latin America is a region like no other, in as much as regional projects are plentiful. Essentially, their very existence can be seen as a product of a particular time and as a result, regional projects often become redundant with changes in state ideological positioning. The exploration into the wider dynamics of Latin American realism would make an interesting case for analysis. While, this research has touched on this wider context, briefly in chapter eight, with a limited investigation into the changing political dynamics of Latin American regionalism, with the decline of the left, further research is needed. This decline signifies a loss of solidarity with an ideology over twenty years in the making. An investigation into this shift and its effect on regionalism, specifically on the leftist style brand of regionalism would

make an interesting case for analysis. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of factors, which have led to the repositioning of the left, as has been the case with Ecuador. It follows therefore, that an investigation into the repositioning of the left and what this means for leftist inspired forms of regionalism, constitutes a further recommendation for further research.

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