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Rethinking Integration in Latin America: The "Pink Tide" and the Post-Neoliberal Regionalism

Gabriel Fernandes Pimenta

MSc in International Relations

Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais

Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Phone: +55 31 9207 7827

E-mail: pimenta.gabriel@gmail.com

Pedro Casas V M Arantes

MSc in progress in International Relations

Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais

Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Phone: +55 31 9991 9382

E-mail: casasp26@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

This work aims to understand the impact and implications of the Latin America's "left turn", which started in 1998, with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, to the continent and to the regional organizations.

First, we will make a brief presentation and the evolution of the South America's Left Turn, presenting its precedents and causes and pointing out the challenges faced by the new leftist leaders. We shall present the South American context and a timeline comparing the growth of the leftist governments in South America and the institutional evolution of regional organizations.

Next, we will present the history of Integration in the region, since the prehistory of Latin American institutions until the contemporary initiatives of integration, which comprehends our study cases: MERCOSUR, CAN, UNASUR and ALBA-TCP.

Finally, we will analyze our study cases tracing a parallel among the left turn and the impact of these countries and policies towards the regional organizations.

2. PINK TIDE AND THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

In the late 1990's, Latin American politics presented a new trend that was characterized by election of leftist governments in the region. This transformation and the rise of movements, parties and leaders, had a huge implication on political, economic and social agendas and those can be explained by several factors.

The "left turn" occurred in Latin America has been dubbed as "Pink Tide" and, according to Silva (2010a), its uniqueness, due to the large number of countries involved, should be emphasized. Lanzaro (2009) stresses that the movement has the character of a "wave" and its difference from previous experiences is that it is the result of democratic processes.

This rise, on its relative synchrony and regional delimitation, constitutes in itself a unique socio-political process, which can be understood as a whole, [...] coinciding with several features - but with their local specificities (Silva, 2010a, p.1, our translation¹).

¹ Tal ascensão, por sua relativa sincronia e delimitação regional, constitui em si mesma um processo sociopolítico único, que pode ser compreendido em seu conjunto [...] com diversas características coincidentes – mas com suas especificidades locais. (SILVA, 2010a, p.1).

This rise of leftist groups, despite its relative synchrony, it is important to emphasize that it does not comprehend a homogeneous and uniform movement. Both nature and trajectory of these movements are different, and even if there is simultaneity in the events, in each country occurs differently and produces different results, especially regarding structural reforms and the quality of democracy. (LANZARO, 2007; SILVA, 2010a).

A group of factors may explain the Pink Tide in Latin America. According to Silva (2010a), the democratization that took place in the region enabled the processes of "transition" and "consolidation" of Latin American democracies, and even with notable institutional and social limitations, this processes allowed the development of "viable" opposition movements.

The progress of the left in Latin America was also possible due to the end of the Cold War, and thereby, the collapse of "real socialism" as well as the consequent end of the bipolar era. Silva (2010a) stresses that the end of "socialist world" and the crisis of Marxist thought opened up space for the performance of the left in less "blocked" democracies. Therefore, these new forces, which were gaining their space, could run for successive elections, developing and maturing. The arrival of some of these forces to power, especially the left, showed that Latin American democracies had, after all, some vitality.

2.1 South American context

During the 1990s, South American countries were under the precepts of neoliberalism. However, the failure to raise the quality of life of Latin American populations, as well as problems from neoliberal reforms were certainly decisive factors for the rise of parties, leaders and leftist movements on the continent in the late 1990s. As Filgueiras (2002) stresses, the neoliberal heritage, based in a political-economic project with a stabilization plan and inflation control, only intensified the existing inequalities, which had a profound impact on society.

According to Vadell (2011):

The Washington Consensus as a model and as a political program of development for Latin America failed in three fundamental points: first, in the growth rates and social indicators, consolidating social inequality historically present in the region. Second, the failure was evident in the institutional and fiscal collapse of the states of the countries in the region (...). Third, the failure of WC also expressed in the ideational plane. Sustained by liberal ideology (...) the countries of Latin America would finally not only follow the correct path of victorious capitalism of the Cold War, but also to find the path that would lead them to the first world in a faster way, although in certain cases, painfully . (VADELL 2011, p.1, our translation²).

² O Consenso de Washington, como modelo e programa político de desenvolvimento para a América Latina, fracassou em três pontos fundamentais: em primeiro lugar, nos índices de crescimento e nos indicadores sociais,

Despite all the problems identified, it was hard to imagine changes in social and political plans in Latin America. According Panizza (2006), the panorama expressed by a liberal democracy, market reforms and features of integration represented a possibility of development and revealed a considerable consensus among the political elites of the region. However, regarding to that framework of neoliberal governments and liberal structural adjustment, there was a reversal. Thus, from the late 1990s, left-wing governments emerged in the region expressing the pursuit for alternatives to solve the serious social and economic problems in the region, propelled especially after the severe economic crisis that hit some countries of the region after 1998.

This legacy of over a decade of market reforms affected a significant parcel of the Latin American population. Politically, the gap between promises and realities in the context of economic restraint and the deteriorated social conditions provided a space that has been gradually conquered by the emergence of movements and leftist leaders, legitimizing a speech about the failures and implications of neoliberalism (Silva, 2010a). Furthermore, other factors may also explain the Pink Tide in Latin America. According to Silva (2010a), the democratization that took place in the region enabled the processes of "transition" and "consolidation" of Latin American democracies, and even with its notable institutional and social limitations, these processes allowed the emergence of "viable" opposition movements.

The progress of the left in Latin America was also possible due to the Cold War and, thereby, by the collapse of "real socialism" and the consequent end of the bipolar era. Silva (2010a) points out that, with the end of "socialist world" and the crisis of Marxist thought, opened up space for the performance of the left in less "blocked" democracies. Therefore, these new forces could run in successive elections, developing and maturing their parties and ideas. The advent of some of these forces to power, especially the left, displayed that Latin American democracies had, after all, some vitality.

Currently, we must emphasize an important fact in Latin America: the democratic continuity on the continent. Despite some weaknesses, many countries are now under the longest period of democracy in their history and the actors who in the past were against democracy, such as certain economic and military elites, have lost much of their ability to

consolidando ainda mais a desigualdade social historicamente presente na região. Em segundo lugar, o fracasso faz-se evidente no colapso institucional e fiscal dos estados dos países da região (...). Em terceiro lugar, o fracasso do CW manifesta-se também no plano ideacional. Sustentado pela ideologia liberal (...) os países da América Latina iriam finalmente não só seguir a trilha correta do capitalismo vitorioso da Guerra Fria, mas também achar o atalho que os conduziria para o primeiro mundo de uma maneira mais rápida, embora em certos casos dolorosa.

overwhelm democracy (PANIZZA, 2006). According to the author, this democratic continuity strengthened the left, mainly because it allowed a continuous participation into electoral processes in national scenarios and experiences at the local level. Thus, these groups were able to form technical groups and expand its social base.

During this period, these parties and movements set themselves as alternatives within the democratic limits, considering that the neoliberal model, alongside the unfulfilled promises, did not present solutions to the historical problems of the region. However, it is important to note that beyond the similarities within the different parties and leftist movements, there are important differences within this political spectrum.

From this observation, this heterogeneity of left forces, the literature started to develop analysis models and typologies that could classify these leftist governments. Francisco Panizza (2006), for example, points to a growing consensus on the division between two extremes: a social-democratic and a populist³. According to the author, this classification is not only a heuristic function but also normative. The typology, in this sense, not only describes, to some extent, different behavior patterns of leftist governments, but also guides a deeper explanation of each individual pattern.

2.2 The Left-wing Parties and Governments in South America

The difficulty in raising the quality of life in South American populations as well as problems arising from the neoliberal reforms were certainly determining factors for parties, leaders and leftist movements emerged in the continent since the end of the 1990s.

In this sense, one must say that the "Pink Tide" has its beginnings in 1998, when Hugo Chávez won the presidential elections in Venezuela. He was elected by the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), party founded by Chavez in the previous year. According to Silva (2010a), Chavez was elected after the collapse of traditional institutions and parties; two years later, in 2000, Ricardo Lagos, from the Socialist Party, was elected president of Chile, representing a left turn in the Concertación coalition, which governed Chile since the democratic transition in 1990. In 2002, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, was elected in Brazil by the Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*). The following year, 2003, the Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*) in Argentina elected Nestor Kirchner. In 2004, Tabaré Vázquez, from the Broad Front (*Frente*

³ The left represented by the "social-democratic" strand is based on institutionalized parties, while the "populist" is strongly supported in the movements or parties with lesser degrees of institutionalization (Silva, 2010b).

Amplia), was elected president in Uruguay. In 2005, Evo Morales of the Movement For Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*), won the presidential elections at a context of intense crisis in Bolivia. In the following year, 2006, there were five victories of leftist leaders. Hugo Chávez was reelected again; Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva also achieved his reelection. In Chile, Michele Bachelet, of the Socialist Party, was elected as the successor of Ricardo Lagos; Rafael Correa came to power in Ecuador by Movement PAIS Alliance (*Movimiento Alianza PAIS - Patria Altiva I Soberana*), also in a context of intense institutional crisis. Cristina Kirchner, also from Justicialist Party, was elected president of Argentina in 2007, succeeding her husband. In 2008, Fernando Lugo was elected by the coalition Patriotic Alliance for Change (*Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio*). This election was remarkable since it meant the end of 61 year of rule by the conservative Colorado Party. 2009 was an important year for the left on the continent. José Pepe Mujica succeeded Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay and Rafael Correa and Evo Morales were reelected in Ecuador and Bolivia, respectively. Dilma Rousseff was the successor of Lula in Brazil in 2010, being the first female president in the country. Ollanta Humalla, from Peru, was elected in 2011, and in Argentina, Cristina Kirchner was reelected. In 2012, Hugo Chávez was reelected again, defeating the conservative candidate Henrique Capriles, but new elections were necessary after his death in the beginning of 2013. The leftist Nicolás Maduro, Chávez's vice-president in 2012 and former minister of Foreign Affairs, ran as candidate and defeated Capriles. Rafael Correa was reelected as well, and in 2014, Michele Bachelet came to power again in Chile promising structural reforms in education and health. (FERNANDES, 2012; SILVA, 2010a; SILVA, 2010b)

As we can see in the following table (Table 1), between 1998 and 2014, the left won 23 elections in nine different countries, an expressive number if we consider that these movements and parties not only won the elections but made several successors, being an unique characteristic of the Pink Tide.

TABLE 1 - Leftist presidents in South America between 1998 to 2014.

YEAR	PRESIDENT (Party – Country)
1998	Hugo Chávez (MVR-Venezuela)
2000	Hugo Chávez (MVR-Venezuela); Ricardo Lagos (PSCh-Chile)
2002	Lula (PT-Brasil)
2003	Nestor Kirchner (PJ-Argentina)

2004	Tabaré Vázquez (FA-Uruguai)
2005	Evo Morales (MAS-Bolivia)
2006	Hugo Chávez (PSUV-Venezuela); Lula (PT-Brasil); Michele Bachelet (PSCh-Chile); Rafael Correa (PAIS-Ecuador);
2007	Cristina Kirchner (PJ-Argentina)
2008	Fernando Lugo (APC-Paraguai)
2009	José Pepe Mujica (FA-Uruguai); Rafael Correa (PAIS-Ecuador); Evo Morales (MAS-Bolivia)
2010	Dilma Roussef (PT-Brasil)
2011	Ollanta Humala (PNP-Peru); Cristina Kirchner (PJ-Argentina)
2012	Hugo Chávez (PSUV-Venezuela)
2013	Rafael Correa (PAIS-Ecuador); Nicolás Maduro (PSUV-Venezuela)
2014	Michele Bachelet (Coalition Nueva Mayoría - Chile)

Source: Data from the research

This sequence of electoral victories of the South American left is something that draws attention and is a reflection of local dissatisfaction with the old governments under the auspices of the neoliberal system. Clearly, when it comes to these leftist and center-left, there is a great diversity among them. Thus, they are heterogeneous and strictly express national traditions and different representations (PANIZZA, 2006; SILVA, 2010).

In general, one must say that these governments have as defining common feature ample and generous social inclusion policies that link effectively for social investments that certainly had an impact on regional social indicators (LIMA apud SILVA, 2010a). In this sense, so far, all of these countries had positive improvements. As a result, it was observed the reduction in social inequality, as well as the reduction of poverty and other social problems (SILVA, 2010a).

However, as we will see in the next section, even if the idea of an integration project in South America is an old issue, the rise of the left in the region, since the election of Hugo Chavez in 1998, represents a new context and turning point in the politics of the region. In addition to this trend of new governments seen as progressive, we also note new emphases and approaches with regard to regional integration.

At this time, these governments have also allocated significant importance to regional integration, engaging in building organizations, such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance of the

Americas), UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) and, more recently, the CELAC (The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) (SILVA, 2010a).

3. HISTORY OF INTEGRATION

The history of international integration – or the history of the failed attempts of integration - in Latin America stretches back to the beginning of the XIX century. The contemporary phase of regional integration starts after the Second World War, and it's marked by the thickening of initiatives, in tandem with the processes of integration and institutionalization that were taking place in other regions. This section will make a presentation of such a path, focusing in the shifts from one moment to the other, and stressing the institutional development in the last three decades. The option to present matters a Latin American scope, not in a South American one, is due to the intertwined nature of them: to present only the South American institutions and initiatives would be to show an incomplete history, in which some important nexuses would be missing.

3.1 The prehistory of Latin American institutions

The two first decades of the XIXth century are marked by the political independence of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the American continent. The process of separation from their colonial centers arose from the combination of the eruption of a series of tensions between local elites and the foreign decisions and the conjectural affairs of Europe. The French expansion headed by Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Bourbon royalty from Spain and would do the same to the Portuguese monarchy, if they weren't able to escape to Brazil with British help. The changes triggered national movements of assertion, contrarily to the expectations of the French occupiers of Spain, who hoped exactly the opposite – to avoid popular republican revolutions, local élites were supposed to support the new emperor. The local élites (the *criollos*), instead of maintaining the *status quo*, preferred to change the local power distribution in their favor, abolishing the political ties with their metropolis and installing themselves into the political command. If in 1800, Latin America was a full colonized continent, by 1825 Portugal had lost all of its possessions, and Spain kept only the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico, a rather small reminiscence of its immense empire (DONGHI, 1975; WADDELL, 2008).

The process of Latin American independence did not occur without quarrels. The tensions between centralization in the political centers built during the colonial period and the decentralization asked by local chiefs, especially the ones from dynamic economic centers associated with foreign commerce. Perceiving the risks that fragmentation could pose to the survival of independent Latin America, one of the leaders of liberation movements, Simón Bolívar, intended to promote the strengthening of the ties between the region's units. He planned the Congress of Panama, also known as the Amphictyonic Congress, in order to debate the possibilities of Latin American action against the threat of new colonial endeavors – the measures ranged from a common policy of the new States towards European powers to the political unification of the whole continent. The meeting, held in 1826, was the first attempt to build a supranational structure in the Latin American space, and presented two traces that would be present throughout the trajectory of integration and institution-building attempts: firstly, the essentially intergovernmental nature of the process in the region; secondly, the profound divisions that limited the achievements of the congress. Even though all countries of the region were invited, divergences among them led to the low level of attendance – Argentina and Chile, for instance, mistrusted Bolívar intentions, and Brazil, the sole American monarchy, feared to be attacked by its republican neighbors (REZA, 2013; BOLÍVAR, 1992; WADDELL, 1985).

After the demise of Bolívar's project, the nineteenth century continued without major happenings in Latin American attempts on integration or regional institution building. There were three Latin American meetings – Lima, 1848; Santiago, 1856; Lima, 1865 – in which the talks concerned intergovernmental arrangements, aimed to punctual situations. At the last two decades of that period, the United States planned an American Conference, which fitted the policy of expanding its spheres of influence to the continental neighborhood. The initial intention was to promote an encounter in the beginning of the 1880 decade, but after changes related to internal politics, the first meeting took place in the end of 1889. The works of the conference ended in 1890, and they established a commercial office of continental range under the auspices of the Department of State. Even though this wasn't a Latin American initiative nor did it result in the formation a Latin American institution, the conference is worth mentioning exactly due to the virtual absence of Latin American states in the process – they participated in the office with financial contributions and accredited envoys, but weren't responsible for its functioning. (SANTOS, 2004; SMITH, 1986) The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a few more Latin American gatherings, connected essentially with the positivation of regional uses, as the 1930 Interamerican Meeting. Until the end of Second World War, Latin American integration remained thin, based on ideas of a possible political

union or coordination, but empty of practical measures. This was caused not only because of the preeminence of foreign powers over regional affairs – as the United States over Central America and, sometimes, South America, and the United Kingdom and its ‘informal empire’ – but also because those states were still in a process of conformation to the modern State patterns and, therefore, weren’t able to surpass a sovereignty they hadn’t already achieved.

3.2 Contemporary integration in Latin America

The start of the modern phase of integration and regional institution-building can be identified in the years immediately after Second World War. The economic modernization brought by the incipient industrialization triggered a series of transformations in society, and two among them were pivotal to the subject of this article. The first was the development of the Dependence Theory, the second, the creation of United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (in Spanish, the *Comisión Económica para América Latina y Caribe*, CEPAL⁴) in 1948. Even though they’re separated events, their paths are closely connected, and this intermeshing is directly linked to the growth of regionalism in Latin America: after its creation by the United Nations General Assembly, to serve as a kind of a region-specific think tank, CEPAL ended up as a hotbed to scholars who were processing the changes of their countries into the Dependence Theory, and the theory served as a headlight to the studies conducted by CEPAL. (PHILIPS, 2004) The writings of thinkers as Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado in the 1950 decade, and in latter phases, Enzo Faletto, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Andre Gunder Frank had considerable influence over the political acts concerning integration at the time.

The first attempt in which the CEPAL thought became evident was the Latin American Free Trade Area (or *Area Latinoamericana de Libre Comercio*, ALALC), created en 1960, whose objective was to diminish the level of tariffs on the commerce among member-states. The measure was in tandem with the conclusions developed by CEPAL, which identified the need to enhance local development through the import substitution industrialization model (ISI). Lifting inner barriers to trade could improve Latin American economies as a whole. However, the gains were limited, given the small size of the markets, the perpetuation of the dependence on foreign capital and the maintenance of the agricultural sector as the dynamic one (*idem, ibidem*). The ALALC was the most important organization of the first wave of Latin American integration, a movement that was marked by agreements in which political measures

⁴ Nowadays the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

drove economic integration, implementing not only liberalization measures, but also choosing which sectors would receive special treatment (DABÈNE, 2009)

The same decade witnessed the creation of the first exclusively South American international institution, the Andean Pact, originally composed by Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The Andean Pact, signed in 1969, had the goal to enhance the economic integration of its member-states, and can be classified as a more specific institution inside the first wave of Latin American integration. The organization still exists, although it was subject to many moments of crises motivated by political reasons, as the exit of Chile from the bloc in 1977. The Andean Pact suffered from the same problems which hampered the ALALC development, in this case deepened by the homogeneity of the productive structures of the Andean countries, economies majorly dependent on primary exports, a trace that shortened the possibilities of economic complementarity that could lead to gains of scale.

The Latin American Integration Association (or *Asociación Lationamericana de Integración*, ALADI) was a reformulation of the ALALC, refurbished given the small achievements of its predecessor, especially during the 1970 decade, “a decade of crisis and stalemate” (DABÈNE, 2009, p. 3). Instead of focusing in direct negotiations, the ALADI gave preference to broad agreements, as the regional tariff preferences, to be implemented during a larger temporal scope. Its results were also limited, essentially due to the crisis provoked by the augmentation of the interest tax in the United States and the subsequent inflation and foreign debt default in Latin American countries. The crisis not only posed limitations to the possible gains of economic integration, but mainly signaled the exhaustion the ISI model, the framework that sustained the CEPAL oriented institutionalization.

The 1980 decade was a time of restructuration of Latin American integration. The end of the military regimes and the rebuilding of democracy gave political impetus to the initiatives that had solely political intentions in its initial phase, as the Argentina-Brazil rapprochement after 1985 exemplifies. The need to consolidate the democratic regimes and the perception that the geopolitical rivalry kept until the last decade could worsen the already fragile national situations impelled both countries to establish confidence-building treaties in strategic areas as the nuclear research, as well as cooperation mechanisms in the economic realm (OELSNER, 2013). At the same time, the 1980 decade was also the decade in which two major changes in global level were on their run: the demise of the military and geostrategic bipolarity and the replacement of the welfare state model by the neoliberal one. If the first process wasn't directly connected to the changes in Latin American integration, the second was central in the consolidation of the contemporary status of South American international institutions.

The readings on the relation between the Common Market of the South (in Spanish, Mercado Común del Sur, Mercosur) and neoliberalism are divergent. One side of the arguments, summarized by Phillips (2004), the rationale under the transformation of the Brazil-Argentina cooperation treaties into the Mercosur was the one of a lock-in of neoliberal principles. Guaranteeing the establishment of neoliberal markets and institutions would be the ultimate goal of the movement, and would ensure the proper insertion of the Southern Cone in the context of a neoliberal globalized economy. The other line of thought, exposed by Dabène (2009) and Oelsner (2013), identify in the Mercosur an attempt to mitigate the possible pernicious effects of the neoliberal globalization over the region. 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.

Independently of interpretations of the causal factors of the Mercosur creation, the block registered a rise on the economic interdependence of its members after the Assunción Treaty in 1991, when the model of a customs union was established, until 1999. The eight years of that interval were also the institutional period of consolidation of Mercosur, when it assumed an international juridical personality through the Ouro Preto Treaty of 1994 and consolidated its democratic credentials in the Ushuaia Protocol of 1998 (MALAMUD, 2008).

From 1999 to 2002, MERCOSUR was almost frozen due to the effects of the Brazilian financial crisis of 1999, followed by the Argentinian economic and political crisis of 2001. The commercial and financial initiatives taken during that period had the purpose to enhance internal and external trade, as well as to avoid the deepening of the harming effects of the crises – in 2002 the bloc agreed to support Argentina in the country's negotiation of the terms of its foreign debt. In 2003, after the Brasília Meeting, the bloc assumed another nature in its official announcements, giving prominence to the political aspects of the union. “The MERCOSUR is also a political project, that must count on the broadest participation of all the parts of the country-members societies’, today represented in the Foro Consultivo Económico y Social [Social and Economic Consultant Forum]” (MERCOSUR *apud* CAETANO, 2011, p. 42).

The most significant turn towards the expression of a social sphere inside MERCOSUR, however, occurred one year later, along the works of the group in 2004. The meeting of ministers of the social development held in that year resulted in the decision to consolidate social representation inside the bloc's framework, together with the institutionalization of spaces oriented to the coordination of social policies and to popular participation. (VASQUEZ,

2011). Until then, the sole space for the social agenda and non-governmental entities inside the MERCOSUR was a working group dedicated to labor relations. The decision, expressed in the Acta No. 2, decided to agree in a formal obligation to build institutions to MERCOSUR Social, to seek for financing its actions in international funds and to build national networks of support to the *pro tempore* presidency of the group, in order to keep up the pace of work in the area.

In 2005, the results of such a turn began to appear. The Asunción Protocol on the Commitment with the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was approved and the Programa SOMOS MERCOSUR, which seeks to create a space of dialogue among social organizations and governments inside the institutional structure of the bloc, was started. In 2006, there were the first talks about the creation of the Instituto MERCOSUR Social, and for the first time, the meeting of the ministers of social development of the bloc was open to civilian society entities (CAETANO, 2011; VASQUEZ, 2011). The Instituto MERCOSUR Social was established in the next year, and consists on a technical stance that studies and develops social policies, aiming to reinforce the social axis as an essential axis of the Southern Cone integration. One important aspect of the institute is its semi-autonomous status: the members of the Director Board can decide, together with the ministers of the social area, the guidelines for action. This is an important step given the fact that much of the integration process of MERCOSUR until now is being supported on an intergovernmental basis. The institute is now the provider of the topics that must be discussed in the social agenda of the ministers and heads of state meetings.

The major initiative in which consisted the Instituto MERCOSUR Social was followed by other smaller, albeit important, decisions regarding the construction of institutions and bureaucracies oriented towards the social area. Under the umbrella of the Fondo de Convergencia Estructural del Mercosur (FOCEM, Structural Convergence Fund of the Mercosur), funds for family agriculture and small and medium enterprises were created, in tandem with initiatives taken by the MERCOSUR governments previously. After 2008, the proliferation of initiatives was replaced by the consolidation of the new institutions and the efforts to coordinate national measures inside the organization's framework.

The MERCOSUR, therefore, entered the Pink Tide alongside its members, given that 2004 – after the election of leftist governments in Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina – marked the acceleration of the social initiatives. After one period of frantic activity and creation of arenas, after 2008 the group started its “normalization” after the initial cumulative spread: the refinement of the structures created, in order to accommodate them inside the organizational outline (VASQUEZ, 2011).

The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) showed a different path of the one trailed by MERCOSUR. During the decade of 1990, the group veered towards the deepening of its commercial ties, consisting in an economic bloc, rather than a full integration one. The trend was maintained after the beginning of the Pink Tide, when countries as Peru and Colombia signed Free Trade Agreements with the United States. The tendency to alignment with the United States caused a major rupture inside the bloc: Venezuela, after years of leftist orientation under the Chavez government, quitted CAN in 2006. This was seen as a logical effect of the incompatibility of the Bolivarian movement and the economic integration goals, free-trade oriented, of the CAN (SAAVEDRA, 2008). It must be noted that, notwithstanding this incompatibility, Bolivia remained, what can be explained by the deeper dependency that this country has regarding the CAN partners.

The economic nature of the CAN, however, didn't remain immune to some effects of the Pink Tide, albeit only discursively. In 2010, when revising the goals and strategies of the group, its leaders adopted a framework of non-conflictive integration, which means working over themes considered consensual. In the "Principios orientadores y la Agenda Estratégica Andina" document, the social development is listed as one of the main areas of action – until now, there are no relevant policy coordination or implementation in the area inside the CAN framework (COMUNIDAD ANDINA, 2010; DUARTE, 2012)

The constitution of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was in May of 2008. Composed by all of the South American countries, and differently from the previous examples, this International Organization, according to Miriam Saraiva (2010), resembles an instrument of regional governance, giving them a distinct profile. Besides, the member states aim to establish a permanent structure to promote political dialogue and to coordinate policies in different areas in the region (SANAHUJA, 2012).

The project of UNASUR started yet under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002), with the aim of creating a South American community. However, as highlighted by Saraiva (2010), it was under Luis Inacio Lula da Silva mandate (2003-2010) that the Brazilian government was more active in order to undertake efforts toward its institutionalization. Moreover, two other aspects related to South America's geopolitics and Brazilian Foreign Policy have to be emphasized: "its search for autonomy and willingness to become a regional and global power (SANAHUJA, 2012, p.8).

According to UNASUR Constitutive Treaty⁵, four different organs compose it and the objective of the Organization is:

to set up, in a participatory, agreed manner, a space for integration and union among its peoples in the cultural, social, economic and political fields, prioritizing political dialogue, social policies education, energy, infrastructure, financing and the environment, among others, with a view to eliminating socio-economic inequality, in order to achieve social inclusion and citizen participation, strengthen democracy and reduce asymmetries within the framework of bolstering the sovereignty and independence of the States (UNASUR, 2008, p.3).

Furthermore, UNASUR counts on twelve Sectoral Councils: 1) Energy; 2) Defense; 3) Health; 4) Social Development; 5) Infrastructure and Planning; 6) Global Drug Problem; 7) Economy and Finance; 8) Electoral; 9) Education; 10) Culture; 11) Science, Technology and Innovation; 12) Public Security, Justice and Coordination on Actions Against Transnational Delinquencies (CONSEJOS SECTORIALES, 2014). Thus, we can realize a prominent political profile of this Organization. They have been active since its institutionalization and intervened in several crises⁶, giving UNASUR a relevant role in the region, and the social and development focus of UNASUR can be linked to the emergence of leftist governments in South America (SANAHUJA, 2012).

Another important organism in the region is ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas), known as a pillar of the Venezuelan foreign policy, it was founded in 2004 (MUHR, 2010). Established from the 2000 Cuba-Venezuela Integral Cooperation Agreement and formalized by 2004 ALBA Integration Agreement, the project was formulated as an alternative to free trade area proposed by the U.S. in the region and can be identified as counter-hegemonic. In the later years, other 8 countries have joined ALBA as full members: Bolivia (2006), Nicaragua (2007); Dominica (2008); Honduras⁷ (2008), Ecuador (2009); St Vincent & The Grenadines (2009); Antigua & Barbuda (2009) and Santa Lucia (2013) (MUHR, 2010; ALBA-TCP, 2014). In 2006, after Bolivia's incorporation, ALBA approved the proposal of Peoples' Trade Treaty (PTA). According to Muhr (2010), the PTA "is defined as a "fair trade" alternative to the US-promoted bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) (MUHR, 2010, p. 3). So, ALBA-PTA's "proposal is to form an identity between countries that share ideals and political

⁵ South American Union of Nations Constitutive Treaty:

<http://www.unasursg.org/uploads/0c/c7/0cc721468628d65c3c510a577e54519d/Tratado-constitutivo-english-version.pdf>

⁶ We can mention here the Bolivian Crisis in 2008; Honduran Coup in 2009; the Ecuadorian police uprising in 2010 (SANAHUHA, 2010)

⁷ After the Coup d'état in September of 2009, Honduras withdrew from ALBA (SANTOS, 2010)

strategies for economic development, primarily anti-liberal” (SARAIVA, 2010, p.3, our translation⁸). Differently from MERCOSUR, CAN and UNASUR, ALBA-TCP is not only South-America or Latin-America-oriented; but due to Venezuelan location and geopolitics, ALBA can be understood also as Caribbean-oriented.

ALBA has presented important contribution to social and development agenda in the region. The Social Council, one of the four councils of this regional organization, is responsible for defining the strategies and planning social policies to ALBA-TCP. Besides, it acts in several fields, such as education, health, employment, culture, sports, among others. The organization has achieved important goals on these areas. We can mention “The Literacy and Post-literacy program”, which has a great outcome for the eradication of illiteracy. Four countries of ALBA-TCP have been declared “illiteracy-Free Territories” by UNESCO: Venezuela (2005), Bolivia (2008), Nicaragua (2009) and Ecuador (2009). (ALBA-TCP, 2014). ALBA is definitely a result of the emergence of leftist governments and the Pink Tide in Latin America. It has in its core a common ideology that rejects the liberalism and its prescriptions, a huge confrontation with United States and as an integration project ALBA-TCP differs a lot from the previous cases.

4. Final remarks

As we can see, in the four case studies, it is possible to see a relationship and influence between left governments inserted in the Pink Tide and the Regional Organizations. It is evident that the effect is more palpable in some than in others. Among the examples, two organizations existed before 1998, the date that marks the beginning of Pink Tide from the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela: MERCOSUR and CAN, both characterized by the idea of open regionalism at that time.

Unlike the previous examples, both UNASUR and ALBA were created in the 2000s, which means that the influence of Pink Tide is even more evident, since there is strong convergence of countries' policies and the agenda of such organizations, which can be perceived by the growing emphasis on social and development issues, key points in the agenda of the left-wing parties and considered fundamental for the reduction of inequalities, social development, search for autonomy and social inclusion policies.

⁸ Sua proposta é de formar uma identidade entre países que partilham ideais políticos e estratégias de desenvolvimento econômico, prioritariamente antiliberais.

When analyzing MERCOSUR, we can see three phases, which are directly linked to different contexts. The first is characterized by the institutionalization process, which runs from 1991 to 1998. This phase is characterized by the liberalization of the economy and can be understood as the result of the international environment and the dynamics of the early 1990s, marked by globalization and interdependence. The second phase, marked by the stagnation of the block, is the product of strong crisis that Brazil and Argentina have passed. Finally, the third phase, which had its beginning from 2003, is marked by the insertion of new topics, especially social ones, which are directly associated to the leftist governments and the Pink Tide. Furthermore, it is important to note that not only themes emerged, but also new organs such as the Instituto MERCOSUR Social and FOCEM. The importance of these new instances is that the subject or themes are now included in the agenda of MERCOSUL, regardless the government that is in power.

The Andean Community of Nations, known by its commercial emphasis, suffered little influence from the Pink Tide, since some countries have signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the United States, such as Peru and Colombia. There was the withdrawal of Venezuela from the Economic Bloc, and despite not being immune to the effects of left turn, so far, no concrete results, nor coordinating policies, were achieved.

Despite the embryonic project of UNASUR has as its start during the Cardoso administration, it was only in 2008 that there was some progress to its institutionalization. Regarding the Pink Tide and its effects, as already mentioned, we can see a strong influence on the Organization's agenda and even in their organs, which can be perceived by the little emphasis in economic matters as well as the introduction of new features, such as the Council of the South American Defense, an important organ for defense and military issues in the region.

Finally, ALBA-TCP, established in 2004 through the initiative of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, is an alternative to projects related to neoliberalism. According to Flores & Kfoury (2011), the initiative represents a new model of regional integration with major concern for social justice, strong rejection of the neoliberal structure and centrality of the population excluded by the results and implications of the neoliberal political-economic project and by the elites of the region that prevailed in the region in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s. Therefore, we can say that the ALBA-TCP was conceived under the influence of the Pink Tide from a progressive agenda, and whose social results are broadly positive. Although it is incontestable that it presents some challenges, such as the personalism of neo-populist leaders and strong pressure from those who do not share with the ideas of 21st century socialism.

We emphasize here that the shift and rotation in the Latin American political axis produced impacts to the region and to those organisms. Despite the introduction of new subjects, yet there were no major advances in social issues in CAN. When it comes to Mercosur, despite economic continuity, we saw the incorporation of new themes, especially taking into account the context marked by the outcomes and sequels of neoliberalism, such as low economic growth, unemployment and increased poverty and inequality.

UNASUR and ALBA have a robust political character and as well as some points in common, such as a progressive agenda with emphasis on development and social themes, distancing of neoliberal policies characterized by open regionalism whose focus relies on trade liberalization, and the detachment of the United States and its policies directed to the continent. It is also important to note the concern for social justice directly linked to the reduction of poverty and inequalities (SANAHUJA, 2012).

About the last two integration projects mentioned, it is important to note that one of the key point is that, as pointed Grugel & Riggirozzi (2012), alongside all the reforms of social and economic developments that are in process in the region, there is a very pragmatic approach anchored in a vision of remodeling the institutions.

According to Saraiva (2010), the processes of regional integration "have taken different formats based on political perceptions that have been consolidated in the region in the 2000s, incorporating other dimensions and priorities (p. 15)". It leads us to think on the idea of a post-neoliberal regionalism, whose roots are given exactly from the contestatory movements of those neoliberal policies, since, as noted on these essay, did not reach expectations of the populations.

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