LATIN AMERICAN MULTIPLICITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REGION’S INTEGRATION PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT
Bearing in mind the multiplicity of integration blocs in Latin America and the lack of a general comparative study between them, the present essay has the objective of comparing the blocs existing in the region – UNASUR, ALBA, Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance – considering its scope, objective and institutional actions. This objective will be reached through an analytical study of the respective constitutive treaty of each bloc and its actions. Our results show that, comparing with past decades, there’s a striving change of focus in the Latin American integration blocs, which confirms the hypothesis that as a result of the political and social changes that region went through, the regional blocs no longer are strictly focused in commercial logics, multiplying its action, with blocs that deal from social issues to political issues, in addition to processes that are based on non-traditional theoretical lines.

KEYWORDS: Integration; ALBA; UNASUR; Mercosur; Pacific Alliance.

RESUMO
Tendo em vista tal pluridade de blocos de integração na América Latina e a falta de um estudo comparativo geral destes, o presente trabalho tem o objetivo de comparar os blocos regionais existentes na região – UNASUL, ALBA, MERCOSUL e Aliança do Pacífico – enquanto o escopo, objetivo e atuação institucional. Para tanto realizaremos um estudo analítico a partir dos dos respectivos tratados constitutivos de cada bloco e da sua atuação. Nossos resultados caminham para a observação de uma mudança de foco nos blocos de integração latino-americanos, em comparação às décadas anteriores, a qual confirma a hipótese de que em função de mudanças políticas e sociais na região os blocos regionais deixaram de ser estritamente focados em lógicas comerciais, multiplicando sua atuação, surgindo blocos que buscam tratar desde do social até o político, além de processos que se baseiam em vertentes teóricas não tradicionais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Integração; ALBA; UNASUL; Mercosul; Aliança do Pacífico.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of regional integration always has always been present on the political and intellectual/academical imaginaries of Latin America. There are many evidences of proto-projects of solidarity and regional integration that can be found from the Bolivarian proposals of constructing a joint American space during the processes of independency, until today. The presence of distinct proposals of regional integration throughout the region’s history may indicate a Latin-American tradition of using the regional integration as a natural instrument to conducing politics in the region.

Taking the above-mentioned into account and the current power dynamics that developed on the region with this newer wave of integration processes in Latin America, this paper has the aim of analyzing the current focus of five different blocs in the region to identify their scope and objectives. The chosen blocs, like Latin American, represent a multitude of points of view, from the more radical ALBA to the US aligning Pacific Alliance.

More than just the historical presence of regional integration, the region presents diverse processes, some with distinct perspectives of operation. In this sense the understanding of these differences and similitudes of the forms of regional integration is of extreme importance for the comprehension of the regional processes.

We start to answer this question from the hypothesis that the Latin-American States search regional integration for two reasons, first the more traditional need to better their insertion into the international stage, where as a group they have a bigger bargain power. The second reason refers to the presence of the United States at the region, and how each different bloc seems to represent their States different responses to this presence. From the search of an own Latin-America identity, separate from the already established American identity as found at the core of ALBA and UNASUR to a more aligned or neutral stance found on the Pacific Alliance.
THE NEW REGIONALISM OF LATIN AMERICA

With a shared history from the times of colonization and the fight for independency, a shared culture and only two languages spoken on the region, the integration of Latin America seems to Schmied (2007, p. 106) like the only natural possible path to be followed. While integration has also been a desire of Latin-American leaders since the times of Simón Bolívar, the region has yet to see a concrete and lasting project. Schmied (2007, p. 110) considers that an absence of a central theme in accordance to current times is the main problem in achieving integration.

This search for a new form of regionalism was already identified by Hurrel (1993, p. 1), who wrote about a new wave that began with the end of the Cold War, which has an essential characteristic, the relation between the regional blocs created around a hegemonic power and the sub-regional groups (or Macro-regionalism and Micro-regionalism). The idea would be that countries should be regionally prepared to deal with an international competition where if it becomes necessary to insert oneself internationally it is better to do it as a group. (LIMA; COUTINHO, 2005, p. 5)

This can be understood on the Latin-American context of the power dynamics between OAS and the other sub-regional groups such as UNASUR. As pointed by Lima; Coutinho (2005, p.5) the creation of UNASUR, then still named CASA, is the search of an alternative that not only raises the relations intra-bloc but also raises the bargain power of the region on the hemispherical and international spheres.

The aforementioned power dynamics and search can be exemplified by the March 2014 case where OAS discussed the popular upheaval against the government of the Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro. A case brought forward by the Panamanian delegation with the support of the United States. While at first Venezuela refused to discuss such matters at OAS arguing that this was a case to be discussed at UNASUR, and even when the case ended up being discussed on the OAS scope Venezuela was able to gather the support of almost all of the South American States.
ALBA

Signed in 2006 between the presidents of Bolivia, Venezuela and Cuba the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples’ Trade Treaty (ALBA-PTT) is an attempt to bring a new focus to the regional integration of Latin America.

The second article of the treaty expresses the wish of the member States to elaborate a strategic plan based on rationality, use of advantages already existent, saving of resources, the expansion of jobs and access to markets supported by the solidarity of the member States.

Throughout the rest of its body the People’s Trade Treaty identifies the different duties and rights each Member State has with the others, from commercial matters to social matters. And especially focusing on the development of each other through their own support and taking into consideration each other’s strong and weak points.

MERCOSUR

The oldest of the studied blocs, Mercosur was fruit of an approximation of Argentina and Brazil during the last two decades of the 20th century. At which point the redemocratization and the signature of Tripartite Agreement on Corpus and Itaipu brought awareness to the Argentine and Brazilian leaders of the real gains of cooperation and integration. (OLIVEIRA, 2003, p. 58)

As present in its constitutive treaty the basis set for the creation of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) were “the mutual understanding between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay that regional integration was a fundamental condition to the acceleration of their growth and economic development, a more effective use of their resources tied with environmental protection and finally as an appropriate answer to the consolidation of other great economic spaces in other parts of the world.

Such common market would thus be founded on the principle of reciprocity of rights and obligations and implicates on the free circulation of service goods and other productive factors between the member states, the coordination of
macroeconomic and sectorial politics, the removal of customs restrictions or any other similar measure, the creation of a common tax for products outside the market and the adoption of a common commercial policy in relation to third party states or groups of states.

While the initial four member states were Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, not only does the treaty foresee the adherence of new member states but this event happened with the adherence of Venezuela in 2012 with the suspension of Paraguay, the only member State that had not ratified Venezuela’s entrance to Mercosur. Which the Brazilian ministry of foreign affairs identifies as a shift on the groups strategic positioning and affirms Mercosur as an energetic potency on both the renewable and non-renewable scopes. (ITAMARATY, 2012)

In accordance to its original purpose, the main points of the treaty deal with economic themes that pertain the creation of the Common Market, but it is important to highlight the foreseen dispute settlement, in which the member states should at first attempt to settle any cases with direct negotiation and if that is not possible then with the mediation of the Common Market Group and possible the Council of the Common Group. This already represents an initial attempt to create a new sphere separate from that of the OAS, which usually handles dispute settlements in the Americas.

**UNASUR**

Created with the ideal of taking what went right both with MERCOSUR and the Andean Community (CAN), UNASUR was constructed based on the shared history between the States of Latin America and their determination to create a Latin-American Identity and integrated space on the political, economic, social, environmental, energetic and infrastructural scopes. UNASUR can be considered a fundamentally Brazilian initiative of cooperation with a highly political content that also has the direct involvement of Argentina and Venezuela. (SCHMIED, 2007, p. 110)

From its many specific objectives it is important to highlight the following:
• The strengthening of political dialogue between the member States, both to assist the creation of a strong Latin-American space and its participation on the international stage;
• The development of infrastructure that realizes the interconnection of the region;
• The consolidation of a Latin-American identity through the progressive recognition of the rights of the citizen of one member state in another member state;
• The active citizen participation, through mechanisms of interaction and dialogue between UNASUR and the diverse social actors present in the region.

These few specific objectives found on the UNASUR’s Constitutive treaty serve to illustrate its position as a base of aspiration and political will to accelerate the creation of a common market. (SCHMIED, 2007, p. 119)

PACIFIC ALLIANCE

Created with signature of the Lima Declaration in 2011 by the presidents of Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Panama and taking into account the advances of their countries on matters of development and economic growth, reduction of poverty and strengthening of their democracies, the Pacific Alliance has the objective of being an “area of profound integration through a process of political economic articulation and cooperation and integration at Latin America”. (DECLARACIÓN PRESIDENCIAL SOBRE LA ALIANZA DEL PACÍFICO, 2011, p. 1)

The declaration also clearly defines the choice for integration is seen as an instrument with the objective of improving the socioeconomic development, promote the entrepreneurship and reach an ample space that is more attractive for investments and the goods and services commerce. (DECLARACIÓN PRESIDENCIAL SOBRE LA ALIANZA DEL PACÍFICO, 2011, p. 1)

IDENTITY AND INSERTION
Through the study of the four constituent treaties it is possible to observe a division in two groups based on the two reasons for regional integration mentioned on the introduction of this paper. Both Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance deal with more economic and international insertion matters meanwhile ALBA and UNASUR also include at their core the renewal or construction of a Latin-American identity.

As defined beforehand one of the most important reasons for a region to begin an integration process is the expansion of its international visibility and insertion. A factor considered in most of the studied treaties: the Pacific Alliance refers to it as reaching a “more attractive space for investment and commerce” (PACIFIC ALLIANCE, 2011, p. 1), the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty mentions on its third article “the straightening of the (...) dialogue between the Member States to reinforce (...) the participation of UNASUR in the international stage” as one of its specific objectives and the Treaty of Asuncion that mentions in its preamble that its creation takes “into account (...) the importance of achieving a proper international insertion for the Member States”. With ALBA being the only exemption, its constituent treaty makes no direct reference to international insertion.

It is possible to infer that the regional integration blocs in Latin America that belong to the so called new wave of regionalism have as a main characteristic the reaffirmation of the Latin-American identity and history. This can be highlighted by article 10 of the ALBA’s constituent treaty that states:

The Governments will promote the development of joint cultural plans which keep into account the particular characteristics of the different regions and the cultural identity of the peoples. (ALBA, 2006, p. 4)

And it is also present at UNASUR’s constitutive treaty’s preamble that states:

Based on the shared history, marked by solidarity of our multiethnic, plurilingual and multicultural nations, which have fought for the emancipation and unity of South America, honouring the vision of those who forged our independence and freedom in favour of that union and the building of a common future; where the creation of a common identity is established as goals for the process. (UNASUR, 2008, p. 1)

This historical search for a Latin-American identity in detriment to a general American identity mainly reflects the historical dissatisfaction of the Latin-American governments with the of visibility of the region on the United States foreign affairs policy, especially after the end of the cold war where the South American states expected closer ties with the government of the United States. (HURREL, 1994, p. 5)
This clearly illustrates that one of the main reasons for Latin American integration is the construction of an own international body capable of rulings and debate that leave the United States sphere of influence. It does not equal a complete turn against the North-American government but more a search for real independency and capability to act for their selves that is a more than appropriate response of decades of abandon by its own hegemon.

CONCLUSION

As much in the same way Schmied (2007, p. 107) reminds us there are multiple Latin Americas, with diversity being present in the region, from the size of the States to their levels of development, political points of view and means with which the States insert themselves on the globalized world, the same is true for the integration processes found here.

The Latin American multiplicity remains in existence, with not one bloc being completely equal to the next. Even when there are cases like UNASUR, which has the objective of rising from CAN and Mercosur, its experiences and raison d’être vary from the ones it was based on. Both CAN and Mercosur had commercial and economical aspirations, meanwhile UNASUR seems to wish to encompass every aspect of regional integration.

It is possible to find similarities on more traditional aspects of integration, such as its use as an instrument of international insertion, which is a characteristic present in three of the studied blocs and its constant appearance is no surprise since bargain power and space on the international stage are important aspirations for every State.

Another aspect in which the diversity of the region is present is its relations with the United States, considered the global potency of the Americas. While its position on Latin America is still one of importance, both politically and commercially, the United States seems to neglect the region, firstly after the fall of the USSR and again with the events of September 11th. The integration blocs seem to deal with this neglect in different ways, the Pacific Alliance aims for the promotion of its space on the international stage as a prime choice for investments and meanwhile ALBA aims
to create a space where the members themselves can mutually help each other with a focus on their social needs.

UNASUR is a process that deserves to be highlighted for its aim of creating a concise South American bloc that is fully capable of answering for its Member States on the international stage as much as the European Union does for its member states. This comes with the rejection or a non-alignment with the general guidelines prescribed by the United States to these States and therefore represents an attempt to dismiss the North American leadership in favor of a South American consensus.

The construction of a strong and lasting South American space is goal that always had multiple possible paths, but while in the past this characteristic equaled to a lack of direction or drive, between the four analyzed blocs it is possible to see four different, strong paths to be followed which in conjunction will allow Latin America to continue being multiple even with a new role on the international stage.
REFERENCES


