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TC09: Strategic Interaction and Influence between Argentina and Brazil
When: Thursday, July 24, 1:45 PM - 3:30 PM
Where: Room 457, University of Buenos Aires

"Brazil's Strategic Partnerships: Are Venezuela and Argentina Strategically Equals?"

In 1997, Brazil and Argentina initiated an Strategic Alliance that epitomized centuries of foreign affairs in which they traveled from rivalry to friendship and off again, however keeping themselves at the core of both agendas. In 2005, Caracas and Brazil established an initiative that was then dubbed Strategic Alliance, bearing significant rhetorical resemblance to the previous impulse between Menem and Cardoso. The aim of this paper is to address the opportunities both neighbors represent to Brazil's pattern of development and its recent expansion through foreign investments, trade and technical cooperation, willing to underscore whether both South Americans signify similar relevance for Brazil's strategic calculus or if wishful thinking and historical bonds mean more than pragmatism.

Keywords
Agency; Development; Diplomacy; Foreign Policy; Brazil; Argentina; Defense/Military Diplomacy; Developing Countries; Venezuela
1. INTRODUCTION

In 1997, Brazil and Argentina initiated a Strategic Alliance that epitomized centuries of foreign affairs in which they traveled from rivalry to friendship and off again, however keeping themselves at the core of both agendas (CANDEAS, 2010). In 2005, Caracas and Brazil established an initiative that was then equally dubbed Strategic Alliance, bearing significant rhetorical resemblance to the previous impulse between Menem and Cardoso (Comunicado Conjunto/Aliança Estratégica Brasil-Venezuela e Declaração dos Governos do Brasil e da Venezuela/ Implementação da Aliança Estratégica). The aim of this paper is to address the opportunities both neighbors represent to Brazil's pattern of development and its recent expansion through foreign investments, trade and technical cooperation, willing to underscore whether both South Americans signify similar relevance for Brazil's strategic calculus or if wishful thinking and historical bonds mean more than pragmatism.

1.1 PREMISES

As Weber (2010) points out, every theory or concept carry a cultural narrative that, via myths, tend to universalize local ideas, values and ideologies. Lessa & Oliveira (2013) establish a pattern for Brazil's Strategic Partnerships under which:

a) Until 2003, Brazil would chose to elevate its bilateral relations to a level of Strategic Partnership based on the partner’s historic relevance in the country’s agenda;

b) Thenceforth 2003, Brazil would embed its choice of Strategic Partner placing the general aim to diversify partnerships over the historic presence of the partner in the country's political mindset;

c) There would be three criteria that would underpin the choice of a country as a Strategic Partner:
   i) Relevance in economics, investments & trade;
   ii) Relevance in politics & diplomacy;
   iii) Relevance in security & defense.

d) Moreover, Brazil would have developed a paradigm in establishing Strategic Partnerships under which three dimensions are to be found:
   i) The regional dimension: in this sphere, not only would the partner be singularly considered, in its absolute attributes according to the three previously mentioned relevance systematizations, but would it also and foremost be taken into consideration according to a South
American sub-system dynamic and the region’s importance to Brazil’s place in World Politics;

ii) The extra-regional dimension;

iii) The systemic dimension: the impact of a certain partnership to Brazil’s position especially in multilateral arrays.

After a careful analysis of literature that aims at understanding and systematizing Brazil’s Strategic Partnership initiatives, both authors excel for their perceptions, although it’s not overtly recognized, seem to stem from an analysis of Brazil’s official Strategic Partnerships, alongside with less objective considerations regarding what Brazil may or may not find strategic in its relations with the several nations that compose the International System. Thus, in order to analyze this new practice among States, the Strategic Partnerships, it is to be considered the countries’ actual capital-lettered Partnerships, what is not frequently done by other scholars who wish to describe (or even systematize) Brazil’s.

However, Lessa & Oliveira (2013) do not consider less traditional elements of the States’ decision-making, nor does Vaz (1999), one of the only authors who has actually presented an empirical or historical analysis that follows conceptual considerations regarding Brazil’s strategic partnership – although Vaz (1999) finds Brazil’s rising universalism (or its embryo: a selective universalism) as a value that underpins several impulses concerning the country’s Strategic Partnerships (Lessa, 1998 apud Vaz, 1999). Having relatively neglected the importance of coincidental values, ideologies and other facets of an strategic evaluation, in the same volume they present their paradigms, the organizers give voice to Becard (2013), who jumps at a more conceptual discussion surrounding the issue:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Consonant Relations</th>
<th>Antagonistic Relations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Strategic Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies</td>
<td>Cooperative Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Partners</td>
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<td>Opponents</td>
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<td>Competitors &amp; rivals</td>
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Becard (2013), hence, completes Lessa & Oliveira’s (2013) input on Brazil’s Strategic Partnerships when she discusses the meaning of alliances and adds considerations that qualify, characterize an alliance. According to Renard, 2010 apud Becard, 2013, an ally can be:
a) An essential partner: one without whom it would be impossible to solve a common problem within a global, regional or national level;
b) A pivot: a partner who could shift the regional balance for or against a third country, be it for its abundant capabilities or special attributes that make it a deal breaker/maker in international politics;
c) A natural partner: one with whom the other shares visions and values concerning a common history from which a considerable experience in cooperating on international issues has risen.

Therefore, the premises of this paper are those thusly presented, stemming from a cultural narrative that places Brazil in the pragmatic spectrum of International Politics, according to a positivist intake on how States could maximize their gains. Appealing to myths that rationalize and verbalize Brazil’s pattern regarding Strategic Partnerships in the ways namely Lessa & Oliveira (2013) established, these covert fables help shaping and underscoring a political reality that then appears to be a material reality, a normal fact.

The following analysis is aware of its implications in terms of constructing and entering a debate where patterns are still being set, although certain premises have already come out ahead. Nonetheless, contributing to the debate, while underlining the premises that underpin it, would be a manner to overcome such little reflexive way of analyzing international politics.

2. BRAZIL’S STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: ARGENTINA & VENEZUELA’S EQUAL DESIGNATION

This part’s goal is to present data concerning what was presented in both Strategic Alliances, entailing a discussion on the reasons that took Brazil to place Venezuela in the same lexical position as Argentina according to its Strategic Partnerships’ patterns of behavior. The following table is to be afterwards analyzed:

<table>
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<th>1997, Strategic Alliance</th>
<th>i) Strategic Alliance - Mechanisms:</th>
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Iguaçu + 20 – Acordo de Brasília, Acordo-quadro em Defesa, etc;
- 2006: Mechanism for Bilateral Consultations and Coordination.
- 2007-2008: Brasil-Argentina Bilateral Mechanism (MICBA), which includes:
  a) Economics, productivity, science & technology;
  b) Energy, Transportation and infrastructure;
  c) Defense & Security;

Between 2003 and 2012, bilateral trade practically increased four times, Brazil’s FDIs in Argentina grew by 16.6% and, in 2012, the Argentineans in Brazil increased 3 times. Argentina’s exports to Brazil used the Local Currency System and doubled in value in 2012. Argentina is the third largest trade partner for Brazil and the main destination of Brazil’s exports of industrialized goods. [2013 data]

i) 2005, Strategic Alliance – terms and mechanisms:
Vast common borders, valuable energetic sources, human potential that throughout history expressed themselves in the scopes of science, economic, political and social thinking, rich cultural creations, vast territorial portions intertwined with important Rivers, natural resources, vast oceans that open up for communications, stable climates, and an entire sum of possibilities for the prosperity of our peoples. This is our Great Nation. Contrastingly, such impressive material and human potential serves nowadays as the background for the poverty that afflicts our peoples. This is the main challenge for our nations and for our leaderships. The way to successfully face it is to integrate our strengths to overcome and tackle such needs in a path that aims at union and prosperity.
Common and fundamental goal: to eliminate poverty
  a) Strategies
Cooperation among the public and private sectors to maximize our national productive forces; UNASUR as an essential pillar for regional integration; The Amazon and the OTCA as keys to a sustainable development; coordination within international organizations
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Strategic Alliance</th>
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<tr>
<td>VENEZUELA</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>globally and regionally – for that matter, periodic meetings among the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Venezuela recognizes and supports Brazil’s aspirations to become a permanent member in the United Nations Security Council; Venezuela supports Azevedo’s bid to the WTO; b) Mechanisms Energy: oil &amp; gas – agreements, amongst others, on biofuels and between PDVSA and PETROBRAS; Mining – the creation of Carbosuramerica, to promote the mining of coal; Taxing and Customs – amongst others, treaty to eliminate bitaxation; Financing – to increase the usage of the system of Reciprocal Credit Compensation in the scope of ALADI, etc; Industry and commerce – fora gathering businessmen from both countries, binational business rounds, etc; Family farming and Land Reform – technical cooperation; Technical cooperation – enhancing binational meetings adding other sectors such as Turism, Aquaculture and Fishing; C&amp;T – treaty for cooperation in communications; Military Cooperation: bilateral meetings between both ministers of defense, the project of a treaty for technical and industrial cooperation leading to the development of an aircraft to surveil the Amazon; International Humanitary Fund – Chavez’s idea with which Brazil compromises to contribute; Social Charter of the Americas – willing to establish conditions for the consolidation of democracies and fulfilling social demands; Energetic Integration: Brazil supports the Enesul/Petrosul initiative; Southern Development Bank: Brasil supports the initiative; Telesur: aware of the decisive influence communications share in the cultural level, as well as of its relevance among the public opinion, both countries agree to continue efforts to strengthen cooperation in matters of radio &amp; tv in compliance with regional processes of integration.</td>
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Venezuela is among Brazil’s major commercial partners in South America. In the past 10 years, bilateral trade increased by 585%, going from US$883 millions in 2003 to US$6,06 bi in 2012. Brazil’s industrialized exports to Venezuela increased by 30% in 2012, reaching 65% of the entire export basket. Venezuela’s economy grew by 5.5% in 2012.

Sources: Candeas, 2010; Comunicado Conjunto/Aliança Estratégica Brasil-Venezuela e Declaração dos Governos do Brasil e da Venezuela/ Implementação da Aliança Estratégica; Fontes obtidas por correio eletrônico com o Ministério das Relações Exteriores a respeito do MICBA e das relações bilaterais entre Brasil e Argentina; Ministério das Relações Exteriores, Brasil – ABC (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação), Projetos – Argentina.

Although in 2013 Brazil and Argentina shifted the title of their Strategic Partnership to a Dialogue for Strategic Integration, this paper focuses on why and how Brazil and its partners firstly dubbed equal their bilateral relations as a Strategic Alliance (Nota no 50, 2013).

Belonging to the regional dimension, Argentina and Venezuela, as it can be checked at the previous table, carry both absolute and relative appeals to Brazil’s Foreign Policy considerations over economics, trade & investments; politics & diplomacy; security & defense (Lessa & Oliveira, 2013). Moreover, whilst Argentina is a historic partner in Brazil’s international relations, Venezuela does have its perks when it comes to diversifying partnerships not only in terms of economics, trade & investments, but also and especially regarding politics & diplomacy, plus security & defense, and here lies the heart of a possible explanation on the reasons it took Brazil’s decision-makers to face when dubbing Venezuela’s Strategic Partnerships the same way Argentina’s was previously named.

Indeed, Brazil’s Labor Party (PT) placed certain people at the highest commands in the country’s Foreign Policy who were not only admirers of Chavez ideas, but also had personal relations with Caracas’ Chief of State. A personalistic analysis would encounter a profitable landscape in Brazil’s international politics and economy, since Venezuela’s booming but not that much industrialized economy welcomed Brazil’s the interests of a Brazilian economic elite that would otherwise not even dream of supporting those Chavez-friendly Foreign Policy decision-makers. Political and economic systems, hence, have been an important aspect of Brazil’s and Venezuela’s decision to forge a Strategic Alliance, having even calmed down social and political strata in Brazil’s society that resist any approximation with Bolivarianism, such as the military.

Therefore, Venezuela had absolute capabilities that brought the Brazilian State and elites closer to Caracas. In relative terms, it also appeared rather relevant for Brasilia’s regional position, especially when the South American giant was simultaneously negotiating a Strategic Partnership with the United States. After 2003, South America saw the rise of several leftish governments that in different scales
questioned Washington’s hegemony. Although Brazil can be said one of the least revisionist Foreign Policies among South Americans, if Bolivarianism and Kirchnerism are on the table, it is inevitable to weigh PT’s leftish trends and a historic construction of an over autonomy regarding DC – one that may even shock with reality, in order to affirm an old but gold unwritten alliance (BURNS, 1966).

Then, a Strategic Alliance with Venezuela that received the highest rank within Brazil’s pattern could have been designed to leave no doubts concerning Brazil’s Strategic Alliance with DC, one that would be relevant, but not threatening to the country’s autonomy and rising position in the International System having the legitimacy conferred by South Americans, including one of Washington’s geographically closest Achilles Ankle - suffice it to realize the weight Caracas and Brasília placed in cooperation on multilateral spheres, one that contrasts with the emphasis the Brazilian-Argentinean placed on security & defense and, afterwards, on sectors complementary to those within economics, investments & trade and politics & diplomacy, which became clearer when they constituted MICBA.

Therefore, Brazil’s and Venezuela’s Strategic Alliance would have followed all steps recognized but Lessa & Oliveira’s (2013) scheme, falling, furthermore, under what Becard (2013) brought to the analysis: the concept of a pivot. In 2005, Caracas was treated as a Strategic Partner that carried all three individual capabilities that had drawn the attention of Brazil’s political and economic elites, carrying the role of an actor that could help withholding the South American balance of power, in spite of Brazil’s upcoming Strategic Alliance with the United States, plus injecting more legitimacy in Brazil’s systemic projections following Venezuela’s explicit support to certain bids rather cherished in Brasília – and somewhat overlooked by DC.

3. CONCLUSION

One of the conclusions that could be drawn from this preliminary analysis is that even though Brazil and Argentina shifted and relatively elevated their Strategic Alliance in 2013, the previous coincidence between the former designation with that offered to Venezuela’s Strategic Partnership with Brasília was not necessarily a Foreign Policy wishful thinking based on the concurring whims of PT’s foreign policy clique and Brazil’s economic elites. Instead, it would have been a product of a calculus that in light of the general aim of diversifying partnerships saw Venezuela as a pivot, an opportunity to forge an alliance with a country that would play a stabilizing role in the balance of power.

Therefore, albeit historical and unequivocal, Brazil’s and Argentina’s Strategic Partnership would follow the importance of Buenos Aires as a natural ally whose
essentiality varies according to the level of asymmetries between both nations’, especially economically, but historically remains at a reasonably stable level.

The relevance Brazil and Argentina placed in security & defense, on one hand, would result from a pattern established by both countries since the 1980’s. While MERCOSUR stems from Brazil’s and Argentina’s approximation in the lost decade, the approximation itself rose from their mutual recognition in high politics, as the 1980 nuclear treaty inaugurated a new era in their relations (Vaz, 1999). The emphasis, thus, would harbinger further cooperation in other sectors, which indeed took place, in spite of Argentina’s economic debacle in the beginning of the following decade. Brazil’s and Venezuela’s Strategic recognition on security & defense issues, on the other hand, would reflect Venezuela’s pivotal position in Brazil’s mindset, representing a mean to help stabilizing the regional balance of power, be related to Brazil’s and Argentina’s prominence in the issue or Colombia’s cooperation with the United States under the Plan Colombia.

It seems therefore evident that although Brazil conferred Venezuela and Argentina the same lexical level of priority under Brasília’s Strategic Partnerships strategy, the Northern and Southern neighbors carried different characteristics in their protagonist placements.¹

4. REFERENCES


¹ This analysis relied on specific premises. Having resorted to data, nevertheless, it did not intend to necessarily verify them, as to understand if they are indeed a product of empirical analysis, for only a relatively small part of the literature does so (Vaz, 1999; Lessa & Oliveira, 2013).


