

LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES

Elsa Llenderrozas¹

The creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in February 2010 reconfigures a new step in the process of the regional political concert. Resulting from the convergence of many regional instances, especially the Rio Group and the Latin America and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC, initials in Spanish), besides increasing aspirations to cooperate, a new mechanism that aims to overcome the subregional level is created to activate multilevel forums and strengthen the tendency to build multidimensional agendas.

For the first time the thirty-three States of the wide Latin American and Caribbean spectrum agreed to conform a regional entity, which affirms distinct strategic goals: first, the geographic inclusion without restrictions (overcoming the divisions between South America and Central America, strengthening the geopolitics of the Latin American union); second, the partnership and inclusion based on the respect to the political plurality (the political regimes or the ideological orientations of their governments do not matter); third, the acceptance of the economic diversity (disparities in the models and levels of development, and in the different schemes of insertion into the international market). This has created a heterogeneous area in political,

¹ Professor of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA). E-mail: elsallenderrozas@yahoo.com.

economic and strategic terms, which, added to the greatness of its aspirations, put forward questions on its strengths and weaknesses.

This paper is divided in three parts. In the first one, in which the regional representation or interlocution is going to be highlighted, the general objectives of the community will be analyzed; in the second section the thematic agendas will be the subject, along with their potentialities and limits; and in the third part the external axis drawn by the community to this date will be outlined, along with their obstacles and possibilities. The research ends up with some final considerations of prospective character.

Goals and objectives of CELAC

The Cancun Declaration is the constitutive document of CELAC, approved during the Unity Summit, formed by the XXI Rio Group Summit and the II Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC), held on February 23, 2010.

In this constitutive document, two primary objects are mentioned: one is strictly referred to the intraregional links and is condensed in the proposal to build “a mutual place to deepen the integration (political, economic, social and cultural); and to determine effective compromises of joint action for the promotion of development.”

The second objective refers to extra-regional relations, that is to say, the possibility to reach a regional voice, to behave as a political actor in the international scenario and, in a certain way, it indicates the political representation and the construction of regional joint power. Aligned with this objective, the Cancun Declaration stresses the “regional aspiration to reassert its presence in the forums of which it is part and to have a voice on the big themes and developments of the global agenda.”

A third objective related to the instrumental utility of CELAC, not mentioned in the Cancun Declaration but incorporated in the December, 2011 Foundational Summit of CELAC held in Caracas, is the protection of democracy and political stability through crisis management. This role was embodied through the Special Declaration on Defense of Democracy and Constitutional Order, thus adopting a clause of democratic compromise.

Actually, the two first objectives are present since the first Latin American Summit on Integration and Development held in Salvador, state of

Bahia, on December 2008, where the States agreed “to deepen the integration, to determine effective compromises of joint action” and stressed the importance of the integration in order to “interact with the rest of the world.”

The new aspect of this initiative is that, even though the regionalism is a clear goal of the project, the objective to strengthen the links with the international arena is expressed with the same intensity. That is to say, the first guideline points out the international behavior, the group representation and the capacity to articulate a regional position. There are many explicit passages in the Cancun Declaration of the Unity Summit that show the priority for this objective: “to constitute a strengthened instance of political concert that support its international position and that could be translated in fast and efficient actions that promote the Latin American and Caribbean interests in front of the new themes of the international agenda”. In the same direction, it has the objective “to promote and project a unified voice for Latin America and the Caribbean in the discussion of the principal issues, and in the positions of the Region on the relevant global events at international meetings and conferences, as well as in the dialogue with other regions and countries”. It basically aspires “to project the region and increase its influence on the international scenario”.

The ideational structure from which CELAC emerges includes narratives inherited by the Latin American legalistic tradition (sovereign equity of states, non-intervention, territorial integrity) when it comes to principles of democracy and human rights defense, and to goals of autonomy and integrated development. To these are added the general principles that configure CELAC as a regime: the recognition of the solidarity, flexibility, gradualism, plurality, complementary actions and unanimity in the decisions and voluntary participation in initiatives.

There are some points of basic understanding that have been consolidated since the start of the construction process of CELAC: the member states consented on a shared vision about the International System configuration, based on a compromise with multilateralism and the United Nations. As confirmed by the I CELAC Summit, held in Santiago de Chile, multilateralism is considered as the foundation of an efficient international order, which could contribute to peace and global security, and was also

declared the explicit disapproval to the application of unilateral measures with extraterritorial effects contrary to the International Law, threatening multilateralism.

In respect to the United Nations, it is stressed the need to create a true reform that guarantees efficiency, transparency, representativeness and democratization inside its main organisms, especially the Security Council. Therefore, it highlights that multilateralism, integral reform of the UN System and democratization of more decisive international instances are the base for regional consensus from which guidelines for external action are fixed, being the axis that promotes global, inclusive and non-discriminatory governance, besides advancing towards a more stable international scenario.

CELAC is viewed as a mechanism to promote the interests of the member countries in multilateral organisms and also as a place where coordinate answers to the principal subjects of the international agenda are facilitated. According to the procedures agreed, CELAC has assumed attributions concerning association and interlocution with other countries and regional blocs, namely: the political dialog with other international intergovernmental actors, organisms and mechanisms; the coordination of common positions in multilateral forums; the impulse for the Latin American and Caribbean agenda in global forums; the regional positioning before relevant events. The *pro tempore* presidency must, particularly, coordinate the annual dialogues with other regional blocs or relevant countries of the international community.

CELAC defines itself as the representative mechanism of Latin America and the Caribbean, and assumes the interlocution with the Latin American and the Caribbean-European Union Summits (EU-LAC) and the Institutionalized Ministerial dialogue between Rio Group and the European Union, as well as the dialogues that Rio Group has maintained with countries or groups in lateral meetings during the UN General Assembly. It will also take charge of the regional representation at other forums that may be created in the future.

Regarding its function of establishing positions and acting coordinately in international meetings, it is interesting to mention the work that has been developed by the Permanent Representatives of the member states of CELAC at the United Nations, where they arranged an internal mechanism of joint

participation in debates of the different commissions where CELAC has presented a consensual position.

The other level of importance in the constitution of CELAC refers to the relation with the other regional initiatives. In this sense, it seeks to consolidate an integrated agenda, based on the Rio Group's legacy and the agreements of the Latin America and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC), as well as on the existing mechanisms and groups related to integration or consultation (like MERCOSUR, CAN, UNASUR, SICA, CARICOM or ACS) considered a valuable regional asset. The scope and limits of this relationship are based on the principle of complementarity, which supposes that CELAC conducts a permanent dialogue, decides and acts, without overlapping or duplicating other regional and subregional experiences or institutions. From the operational point of view, it is believed that CELAC "should not be seen as an entity that competes with other ones, which have specific missions... and that might find in the first a place for aggregation and a forum for the integration of initiatives"(Rojas Aravena 2012, 26).

Strengths and weaknesses

As a political project, CELAC was pushed forward by two regional powers: Brazil and Mexico, being both countries conditioned by their respective geopolitical spaces and international models of international insertion. Brazil deploys its own regional and global projection policies by the simultaneous formation of different subregional (MERCOSUR, UNASUR, CELAC) and extra-regional (BRIC, IBSA, G20, etc.) blocs. Its objectives are oriented towards regional stability and development, and the creation of international coalitions that cater to "strengthen its international profile and presence (...) and to boost systemic changes towards a less unequal pattern of distribution of power" (Costa Vaz 2012, 176). The Brazilian posture combines "benign leadership", incremental strategy of concentric circles (Gratius and Gomes Saraiva 2013), intergovernmentalism, low regional institutionalization and limited engagement to the resources and costs of integration. The country's objectives related to autonomy and development are combined with a geographic projection towards Latin America and Africa.

Meanwhile, Mexico, which aims to overcome its regional bi-identity crisis (Pellicer 2006) – increasingly embedded in the North American space, yet it is historically, culturally and politically Latin American –, is promoting a project that suits multiple purposes: to strengthen its Latin American membership; to correct a declining regional influence, particularly in South America, where it remained excluded from recent advances in regionalism; to diversify its international presence; and reconcile its outward attitude with the profile and attributes of a middle-power, though without the clear aspirations of a regional power. Every country's objective is related to autonomy and trade, here combined with geographic projections towards Latin America and Asia-Pacific.

Thus CELAC can result functional to the interests of the two regional powers in question. And though a more political approach is essential for progress in this new regional space, the political will of both countries, which was necessary, is not sufficient to strengthen CELAC as the new Latin American multilateralism.

Regarding the reconfiguration of the international order, the general consensus supporting multilateralism cannot hide the nuances. Under the cohesive umbrella implied on the term “multilateralism”, two different models of international insertion can be identified: one is a multilateralism that strengthens the North-South axis (such as trade agreements between Mexico/Central America and the United States, or the progress made in the Alliance of the Pacific and in negotiating the agreements included in the Trans-Pacific Partnership) and the other is a multilateralism that strengthens the South-South axis (mainly led by Brazil in its BRIC and IBSA efforts and summits with Arab countries). Despite the flexibility built into this forum, there are dissents and inconsistencies when externally projecting the region.

The democratization and transparency of United Nations bodies, as well as of other international institutions, finds support in the region, but the reform of the UN Security Council comprehends a key point of regional disagreement. The positions differ and are grouped more or less formally in opposite ad hoc coalitions.

Regional representation is a priority; however, provided that the protection of their own national interests and the dispute over recognition and power could hinder that goal, states have retained the right to nominate

candidates for key positions in the International System whenever CELAC is not able to ratify consensual candidates, making use of flexibility and voluntary participation.

One example of the difficulties concerning regional representation and clashes for leadership underlying this forum is the recent appointment of the Brazilian Roberto Carvalho Azevêdo as Director-General of the World Trade Organization. In the ballot, the candidate defeated the Mexican Herminio Blanco, whom was favored by the European Union. It was certainly a triumph for Brazil, as Azevêdo will be the first Latin American to lead the organization and had the support of 93 among 159 member countries, including the BRICS, major emerging powers. Throughout the voting process, the Brazilian candidate managed to appear as a representative of the South against the North, which would identify with Blanco's profile. Although both candidates were from developing countries, the Mexican is considered one of the architects of NAFTA and is linked with the private sector and liberal positions, supporting bilateral regional agreements, such as the negotiations opened by the European Union, the U.S. and by all Pacific Rim countries, whose rules remain outside WTO. The remarkable thing about the situation is that the selection process had started last December, when nine countries presented their candidacy: South Korea, New Zealand, Jordan, Kenya, Indonesia, Ghana and surprisingly three Latin American candidates: the Minister of Foreign Trade of Costa Rica, Anabel Gonzalez; and the aforementioned Blanco and Azevêdo (El País 2013).

The three candidates from members of CELAC reveal two obstacles: the difficulty to identify which project of reconfiguration of the international organizations represents Latin America and the Caribbean as a region; and, as a second matter, the problems of relinquishing positions in order to strengthen regional representation, making it clear that the associative commitment does not weakens the strife for regional leadership and concentration of power, which may be instrumental to the interests of larger countries.

The principle of regional representation and the steps towards the construction of shared sovereignty are some of the weakest points of this initiative, once the period of socialization, learning and information interchange is not yet consolidated; internalization and compliance of agreements have been rare; and there is a "deficit of certainty regarding the application of the adopted

compromises, which, although binding, are not complied” (Rojas Aravena 2012, 18).

Compared to UNASUR, CELAC presents itself as a further open bet on the international context and oriented towards the external-projection of the region. Though Latin American countries have participated in different biregional dialogue mechanisms, they have so far failed to "articulate a strategic project that allows them to present themselves as an important and united actor on the international stage" (Rojas Aravena 2012, 17) and, bearing in mind the procedures and actions of preexisting forums, it represents a political challenge for the future.

The thematic issues of CELAC

From the point of view of the addressed thematic issues, CELAC is aligned with the multidimensional approach widespread in most recent concepts of regionalism. There are virtually no issues that remain outside the political agenda of CELAC. Their priority action lines are: cooperation between regional and subregional mechanisms of integration (convergence of actions); economic issues (financial crisis, trade, energy, physical infrastructural integration, science and technology); social development (social programs and eradication of hunger and poverty; food security and nutrition; education; health and public services; culture; migration; gender); sustainable development (climate change); natural disasters; human rights; security issues (global drug-related issues, terrorism); and South-South Cooperation.

The action plans reflect the thematic diversity that has characterized integration initiatives of the last decade: on the one hand, they are consistent with the historical legacy inherited from the Rio Group (which throughout its long history has not left any non-discussed subjects); on the other, it becomes a necessary concession to build consensus within a political framework that includes 33 states with different profiles, aspirations and models of integration.

From a broad perspective, the cooperation schemes in South America, such as UNASUR and ALBA-TCP, have been incorporating more social, political aspects than economic and commercial. In contrast, in the initiatives promoted by Mexico and Central America, particularly the Pacific Agreement, the contents of the traditional trade agenda are retaken. Therefore CELAC, as a

place for confluence, must amalgamate expectations, models of integration and different ideas on the priorities of a regional foreign policy.

Limits and scopes

The first concern arisen is referred to the administration, that is to say, the formulation, determination and implementation of concrete proposals in these areas. The members established as a rule the principle of complementarity, i.e. the specific projects will be developed on a subregional sphere and CELAC would work as a vertex of the regional architecture, connecting initiatives whenever possible. At the moment, it is unclear how this link will be conformed. Despite this functional vacuum, this division of tasks is a coherent principle for two reasons: because the administration at subregional level it is more efficient and effective, and because all the proposals, infrastructural or energetic, which by their own nature involve physical and geographical continuity, require subregional implementation, once the states with greater resources are hardly willing to support projects beyond their own territory.

It is a premature exercise to assess the concrete results achieved so far in this forum. But it seems clear that CELAC has been useful as a sounding bloc and as a space that looks over issues related to the particular interests of states. Some examples may illustrate this trend: Statement in Solidarity with Haiti, Special Declaration about Guatemala, the Declaration on the "Malvinas Islands issue", the Declaration of Support for the Yasuni-ITT of Ecuador, the Declaration on the need of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba, among others.

While CELAC has been the result of a form of collaborative leadership between the two regional powers, Brazil and Mexico, the effectiveness depends on the projection that the rest of the medium-sized countries in the region can generate and the level of associative commitment.

The external axes of CELAC

Since its recent creation, CELAC has launched a series of contacts with organizations and particular states, combining traditional and newer external axes for the region.

The relation with the European Union

The links between Latin American and Caribbean countries and the European Union (EU) have a long history. The bi-regional dialogue reflects guidelines established with base on goals, objectives, activities and expected results. In that sense, it is the most institutionalized and structured channel, which mainly presents progresses in terms of learning and socialization as a result of the negotiations of the successive EU-LAC Summits that have been held since 1999 and more focused initiatives, such as Iberoamerican Summits, organized since 1990.

There is a consolidated agenda that has been built on a long process of negotiations and agreements. At the last summit, held in Santiago (VII LAC-EU Summit and I CELAC-European Union Summit), a work plan for 2013-2015 was agreed, which extends the previous plan that covered the period between 2010 and 2012, including the areas of Gender and Investment & Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development². The dynamics of this bond is conditioned by structural barriers that have been affecting these relations, as well as circumstantial elements associated to the financial and economic crisis faced by the European bloc. In comparative terms, the link with the EU is the axis of the greatest continuity amongst the previous dialogue schemes, and receives a historical collection of rules, standards and procedural guidelines constructed and accepted by the parties. This knowledge strengthens the national capacities for coordination of positions and may shape other regional approaches.

Besides the European Union, during his first year (2012), CELAC conducted an active international agenda. The Ministerial Troika, composed of the foreign ministers of three countries – the present occupant of the pro tempore presidency, the previous and the next ones –, visited India and China in August 2012.

² The list is completed by: science, research, innovation and technology; sustainable development, environment, climate change and biodiversity; energy; regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion; migration; education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion; and the drug-related global issue. See *Plan de Acción 2013-2015* (CELAC-EU).

India

In the visit to New Delhi, the First Ministerial Dialogue between CELAC Troika and India took place. It set as a starting point the definition of common subjects of interest, with the objective to coordinate regional responses, such as the reform of the United Nations, the international financial crisis, climate change and international terrorism. Besides the strictly political issues, the agenda covered issues related to trade, investment, energy, minerals, agriculture, science, technology, culture and education³.

Regarding trade, bearing in mind that trade between India and the region has grown steadily from previous very low levels, it is recognized that opportunities for trade and investment are even greater. In order to seize these opportunities, it was suggested: the participation in trade fairs of each country; the interchange of business delegations; the creation of a regulatory framework; facilitating the flow of goods, services and nationals; and strengthening air connectivity and maritime links. Specifically, they agreed to establish an India-CELAC Business Council and an India-CELAC CEOs Forum, with the intention of keeping regular meetings of these institutional arrangements in order to present recommendations for the deepening of bilateral contacts between India and the region. It was also emphasized the need to conclude bilateral agreements on air services to promote direct air connections between India and CELAC, thus boosting business and tourism.

Regarding energetic security, including renewable energy, India was interested in the mineral endowment of Latin American and Caribbean countries, which could help their growth. On these areas, it was agreed to establish an Energy Forum, which is going to develop strategies to increase the aggregated value of the exchange of raw material through, among other options, the establishment of manufacturing units. The consultation included an offer made by the New Delhi government to provide technical resources for geological study and exploration through the utilization of the Indian satellite technology.

³ See *Declaración de la Primera Reunión Conjunta India-Troika CELAC*, New Delhi, August 07, 2012.

Food security was another issue of common agenda. In addition to the general idea of deepening the cooperation through the establishment of a mutually beneficial partnership in agriculture and food processing, it was examined the possibility of jointly work in agricultural research through institutional linkages. In this regard, the creation of an Agricultural Expert Group was agreed, whose mission will focus on advising Ministers.

On the other hand, the establishment of a Scientific Forum was also concerted, with a joint research program related to medicine, agriculture, agronomy, astronomy, information technology and renewable energy, specifically regarding biofuels and solar, wind and hydroelectric energy. For its part, India offered support for CELAC countries to launch low-cost satellites for communications and weather service. Other projects included areas of tele-education, e-governance and telemedicine. They also agreed on strengthening the cultural and academic links, including Indian Diplomatic Institutes and the counterparts of CELAC members.

In respect to the multilateral agenda, the countries stressed cooperation in the UN and other multilateral forums where they have identified broad common interests. In particular, they strongly rejected terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and agreed to cooperate on the challenge of eliminating the threat of international terrorism, calling the international community for the adoption of a comprehensive agreement on international terrorism as soon as possible. Regarding the climate change issues, the countries highlighted the efforts made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) to renew political commitment to Sustainable Development and achieve poverty eradication through a balanced integration of economic, social and environmental aspects.

As for the mode of coordination and cooperation, the foreign ministers agreed to deepen the exchange of visits at all levels – including the possibility of a summit meeting – with the aim to create a "Strategic Alliance" between India and CELAC. In this regard, the possibility of alternating annual meetings in India and the country holding the pro-tempore presidency of CELAC was proposed as a guideline.

China

The first visit of CELAC representatives to Beijing was carried on

August 9, 2012. At the meeting, the Ministerial Troika and the Chinese Foreign Ministry agreed on establishing CELAC relations with the Popular Republic of China, constituting a dialogue mechanism at ministerial level to be held once a year in China, in the country of the pro-tempore president of CELAC or in New York, at the UN headquarters⁴, and also concerted to study the possibility of creating a Cooperation Forum in order to boost ties in commercial, energetic, infrastructure and natural resources areas.

The political dialogue follows other channels that have been developed, such as the China-Latin America Business Summits, which organizes its seventh edition this year in Costa Rica. Although China has sought economic agreements with a few individual countries rather than blocs (Malamud and Gardini 2012, 129), the region has a special political importance in its diplomatic dispute with Taiwan, and this is the reason why China has deployed a long-term strategy, which is the cause behind the Chinese participation in IDB, and as a permanent observer in OAS, ALADI and the Latin American Parliament. Though not very active recently, China also maintains dialogue mechanisms with MERCOSUR, the Andean Community and CARICOM (Cornejo and Navarro García 2010, 86).

The importance of China in shaping the international trade matrix of the region has been widely highlighted. However, this process begun in the early 1990s with very low levels of trade exchange, reached the top positions of commercial partnership in Latin America, mainly in South America, with an asymmetric impact, generating different perceptions in the region. Latin America and the Caribbean, as a whole, maintain a negative balance in the trade with China due to the increasing trade deficit of Mexico and Central America. In contrast, the South American national economies displayed fairly even trade balances over the past ten years (Rosales and Kuwayama 2012, 87). The strong commercial concentration in a few countries, the differences in terms of trade balance and the effect of "reprimarization" of the exports sector in the region outline the chiaroscuro of the relations with China.

⁴ See *Comunicado de Prensa de Primera Reunión de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de La República Popular China y Troika CELAC*. Beijing, August 09, 2012.

Contacts with other countries and regions

The international dialogues continued through meetings between the Ministerial Troika and foreign ministers of the Republic of Korea, Republic of China, the Russian Federation and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, all made in New York during the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly, and meetings organized by CELAC Troika at national coordinators level with high representatives from New Zealand, Australia and Norway, held in Santiago.

All these meetings have launched dialogues with countries or groups of countries, taking the first steps in the exercise of the CELAC function of concerting the international position of the region on issues of interest to its members. Undoubtedly, this function requires improving mechanisms and developing coordination skills within CELAC member countries to move towards a more effective articulation of the regional interests.

The relation with the United States

The axis of the relationship with the United States is a naturally divisive element between states of CELAC. History, geography and the position of U.S. power within the global political structure have been shaping that link. During the past decade, debates concerning the decline of U.S. power and conditions for hegemony recovery have dominated the domestic and regional levels. However, there are structural conditions that should be considered from the point of view of the outlines of Latin American foreign policy: the United States will remain the most important external actor for all Latin American countries, although their relative importance and relevance vary, depending on geographical location and the contents of their bilateral agenda (Russell and Tokatlian 2009).

The peak of integration initiatives responded in part to the low priority corresponded to Latin America in the United States foreign policy and the autonomous impulses generated by this fact. Washington has not prompted a renewal of hemispheric multilateralism that unfolds within traditional structures and initiatives of the 1990s, such as the Summits of the Americas (SOAs). By contrast, bilateralism and selective preference have been characterizing U.S. foreign policy towards Latin American countries in the last decade. But a shift towards a more active profile in the region, as recently

announced by President Obama, might mean an increase in relations with Latin America and sharpen the differences within CELAC.

Meanwhile, the countries of the region have changed their relationship with the United States according to conditions of the international system, hemispheric trends and features of Latin American governments themselves. The strategic options were not reduced to pure alignment or confrontation with U.S. interests, but have revolved around five models of foreign policy: engaging, accommodation, limited opposition, challenge and isolation (Russell and Tokatlian 2009). This diversity of approaches, which reflects their own economic and political interests of states, will shape the trajectory of CELAC. As a result, we expect a moderate position that neutralizes both "counter-hegemonic" as the "pro-American" positions, if the forum is to survive and gain some relevance.

The ability to materialize a link CELAC-U.S. is low or none. So far, the region has continued dialogue as part of institutionalized spaces such as the OAS and the Summits of the Americas. On the other hand, there is little reference in Washington and the North American political and academic circles about Latin American integration processes underway⁵ and the general attitude towards these processes has been of indifference. Nevertheless, Latin American countries can aspire to selectively deploy collaborative strategies, bounded containment and binding multilateralism (Russell and Tokatlian 2009), which, responding to common interests, allow the increase of autonomy, the restriction of North American power and the creation of opportunities for cooperation in the hemisphere in order to achieve development. CELAC can provide a space for the building of minimum consensus that help policy coordination between Latin American countries and facilitate those goals of autonomy, development, diversification and restriction of hegemonic power.

⁵ Though CELAC is the most ambitious initiative in terms of articulation and expression of regional autonomy, there are no mentions by the North American think tanks to this organization since 2010, except for the Inter-American Dialogue and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Ayerbe 2013, 12).

The relation with OAS

At the same time that new instances of regional integration in Latin America were created, criticism on the role of OAS and its operation also increased. However, this criticism and the questions about TIAR (Rio Treaty or Rio Pact) are different from country to country, where diverse degrees of recognition and legitimacy are expressed. In this context, since the creation of CELAC a question referring to the relationship with the OAS and the possible competition that would arise between the two organizations has been posed. The initial vision that CELAC could replace OAS has been dismissed, and the position that both institutions have different roles and vary in their membership, the type of cooperation, the structure and the organizational framework has been affirmed (Rojas Aravena 2012, 26).

In spite of that, the balance between the two forums has not yet been tested. There is no consensus on the role to be given to OAS in crisis management policies or institutional breakdowns, but the most extreme positions, that affirm CELAC as a replacement for OAS, have not been finding support. This hemispheric organization may be starting its own process of change, particularly by the impulse of some countries in the region, but this also reflects different views from South and Central Americas and even sub-spaces within. In general terms and nuances, in the first region, based on the performance of UNASUR, there is the perception that institutional crises or political tensions between states can be resolved through mediation and efforts promoted by the entity as a bloc, although some have been made with concurrent efforts of the General Secretariat of the OAS (as in Colombia-Ecuador, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc.) In Central America, however, probably because of the greater influence of the United States and the relative weakness of subregional institutions, OAS remains a relevant political reference at times of political crises (as was the case of Honduras) and its role in the organization of electoral observer missions is still valued. About this last point there are also differences regarding South America, where UNASUR has gained a major role and legitimacy in monitoring the elections of the region (such as recently in Venezuela).

The introduction of the democratic clause as one of the axes of CELAC creates scenarios of possible overlapping and superposition with OAS, and an

adequate consensus on this case is yet to be achieved, with ad hoc solutions solving particular problems with their own peculiarities.

Final considerations

In CELAC, multiple strategic interests overlap: to create a forum able to build a common identity concerning Latin America and the Caribbean; to consolidate a South-South space of belonging and cooperation; to renew existing forums to launch a space with bigger political weight and visibility; and to build a strategic project that, from the heterogeneity, seizes the opportunities of cooperation through the convergence of different integrating schemes.

As a regime, CELAC reduces transaction costs, increases information and decreases uncertainty among members, conditions that aim to achieve concrete agreements, though they should include guidelines and mechanisms to raise the threshold of fulfillment of commitments. Progress on specific cooperation agreements will be in those areas where the density of subjects is higher and where issues identifying shared benefits are easier, probably in areas such as infrastructure, energy and physical interconnection. Unlike the above, foreign policy is a dimension of a strong heterogeneity in terms of aspirations, strategic interests and models of international integration, where the values of identity and sovereignty play a role.

It is useful and necessary for Latin America and the Caribbean to consolidate a space for dialogue and to seek to project itself as an international player, but the meanings of general guidelines, such as the promotion of multilateralism and the reform of the UN Security Council are confusing. In respect to these points, there is still no clear understanding, and there is also no agreement to act as a forum that seeks to delegitimize OAS, or to be used as a platform to confront the United States. It can be interpreted as a space for interaction more balanced with Washington, but there is no consensus to adopt challenging, confrontational or isolationist strategies. It is not among the objectives to be a space of counter-hegemonic inspiration. The overlap or superposition with OAS is not going to mean a breakpoint too. It is more likely that the discussion of these issues in initial stages of the process might generate stagnation or paralysis. Regional representation may involve high costs in the

short term as long as progress in identifying consensual positions does not advance.

The objective is to build an instance of convergence and coordination of other subregional processes, but so far there is no institutional design to ensure that the coordination process is feasible. Inwards these subregional agreements there are also different political perspectives, which preclude the identification of a common strategic vision. In practical terms, mechanisms for proper articulation between the various subregional levels have not been defined. For now, progress in physical interconnection projects will be produced at the subregional level, where the larger countries in terms of resources and leadership have priority strategic interests (such as Mexico with Mesoamerica Project and Brazil with IRSA-UNASUR).

The intergovernmental design may also hinder the articulation of a consensual external strategy, since it is linked to ever-changing political will and national politicization processes. Still, agreements on specific issues that reflect common goals can be achieved.

However, the prerequisite for cooperation is that governments of the region identify a base of converging interests. This definition of convergence of interests is not objective, but rather responds to the perceptions of the governments (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991, 23). The decision of when and in what extent there is a convergence of interests is formed domestically, and because of the lack of significant pressures from non-governmental actors it remains in the hands of governments⁶. Therefore, these preferences can be modified in the processes of negotiation and dialogue in a framework of policy consultation, where common positions can be identified and joint actions consented.

The consolidated regionalisms can change the preferences and perceptions of states, but in the case of CELAC it is too soon for changing the rooted ones, and the impact of institutions in terms of rules and regulations on

⁶ States are more reluctant to cooperate in foreign policy than in other areas because of the different role played by non-governmental actors and the type of interests. Governments suffer less pressure on foreign policy issues because the costs and potential benefits to groups of interest are vague and uncertain. Only occasionally specific groups or the public opinion influence topics of foreign policy. This makes the government positions reflect more its ideologies and the domestic commitments of its leaders and traditional conceptions of national interest (Solomon 1999; Moravcsik 1993, 488-496).

the behavior of states is very low, so it is necessary to correct the shortfall in implementation of agreements and to strengthen the widespread commitment⁷. Moreover, the decision process remains under consensus rule and, although the principle of flexibility and voluntary participation was included, the possibility of adopting majority decision rules cannot be foreseen in the short run.

CELAC faces the same difficulties of recent regionalisms: how to solve the old dilemma of the "institutionalization level" suitable for regional integration experiences in Latin America (Llenderrozas 2012). Without being restricted by the most excessive bureaucratic structures, CELAC bet in low institutionalization levels, forming a "pro tempore multilateralism, without a permanent secretariat with effective power and own resources, preserving some level of supranationality and allowing creating institutional memory" (Legler 2010). They are all necessary elements to strengthen and ensure an own dynamic for the process at moments when originated by the political will of regional leaderships may decline.

In the discussion about foreign policy, the main interests at stake include the preservation of identity and sovereignty. There is an enormous tension between the impulse to cooperate and the perceived need for each state to maintain its own exterior profile, so it is generally an area of regionalism in which the interests of states converge in a lesser extent than in other areas. The mechanism of foreign policy coordination that is consolidated within CELAC must ensure flexibility, gradualism, complementarity of actions and voluntary participation in the initiatives, and it cannot be developed at the expense of national foreign policies. This is the big challenge ahead.

⁷ By "widespread commitment" it is understood the idea that supporting the regime will present better results than self-reliance in the long run (Keohane 1982).

REFERENCES

- Ayerbe, Luis. 2013. "La profusión de mecanismos de integración latinoamericanos y su impacto en la seguridad hemisférica. Visiones desde think tanks estadounidenses de diversos espectros políticos y partidarios". *Instituto de Estudos Econômicos e Internacionais*. Ensaio do IEEI 15.
- Cornejo, Romer; and Abraham Navarro García. 2010. "China y América Latina: recursos, mercados y poder global" *Nueva Sociedad* 228: 79-99
- Costa Vaz, Alcides. 2012. "Coaliciones internacionales en la política exterior brasileña: seguridad y reforma de la gobernanza" *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 97-98: 175-187
- El País. 2013. "El brasileño Azevêdo dirigirá la OMC", May 07.
- Gratius, Susanne; and Miriam Gomes Saraiva. 2013. "Continental Regionalism: Brazil's prominent role in the Americas". *CEPS Working Document* 374.
- Keohane, Robert. 1982. "The Demand of International Regimes". *International Organization* 36 (2): 325-355.
- Keohane, Robert; and Stanley Hoffmann. 1991. "Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s." In *The New European Community: Decision-making and Institutional Change*, edited by Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann, 1-39. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Legler, Thomas. 2010. "Multilateralism and regional governance in the Americas". *Latin American Multilateralism: New Directions*. FOCAL.
- Llenderozas, Elsa. 2012. "Diálogo y concertación política en América Latina: Los alcances de las propuestas regionales". In *El regionalismo "post-liberal" en América Latina y el Caribe: nuevos actores, nuevos temas, nuevos desafíos*, compiled by Andrés Serbín, Laneydi Martínez and Haroldo Ramanzini Junior, 153-175. Buenos Aires: CRIES.
- Malamud, Andrés; and Gian Luca Gardini. 2013. "Has Regionalism Peaked? The Latin American Quagmire and its Lessons". In *Regionalism in a Changing World: Comparative Perspectives in the New Global Order*, edited by Lorenzo Fioramonti, 116-132. London: Routledge.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. 1993. "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach". *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31 (4): 473-524.

- Pellicer, Olga. 2006. "New Powers in Global Change. Mexico – a Reluctant Middle Power?" *Dialogue on Globalization: Briefing Papers*.
- Rojas Aravena, Francisco. 2012. "La Celac y la integración latinoamericana y caribeña. Principales claves y desafíos". *Nueva Sociedad* 240: 16-27.
- Rosales, Osvaldo; and Mikio Kuwayama. 2012. *China y América Latina y el Caribe hacia una relación económica y comercial estratégica*. Santiago: CEPAL.
- Russell, Roberto; and Juan G. Tokatlian. 2009. "Modelos de política exterior y opciones estratégicas. El caso de América Latina frente a Estados Unidos". *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 85-86: 211-249
- Salomón, Mónica. 1999. "La PESC y las teorías de la integración europea: las aportaciones de los "nuevos intergubernamentalismos". *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 45-46: 197-221.
- Serbin, Andrés; Laneydi Martínez; and Haroldo Ramanzini Junior. 2012. *El regionalismo "post-liberal" en América Latina y el Caribe: nuevos actores, nuevos temas, nuevos desafíos*. Buenos Aires: CRIES.

ABSTRACT

The creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in February 2010 reconfigures a new step in the process of regional political concert. As a result of the convergence of many regional instances, especially the Group Rio and the Latin America and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC), besides increasing aspirations to cooperate, a new mechanism that aims to overcome the subregional plan is created to activate multilevel forums and strengthen the tendency to build multidimensional agendas.

This paper is divided in three parts. In the first one, in which the regional representation or interlocution is going to be highlighted, the general objectives of the community will be analyzed; in the second section the thematic agendas will be the subject, along with their potentialities and limits; and in the third part the external axis drawn by the community to this date will be outlined, along with their obstacles and possibilities. The research ends up with some final considerations of prospective character.

KEYWORDS

CELAC; Latin America; Regional Integration.

Received on July 05, 2013.

Approved on July 30, 2013.

Translated by Maíra Baé Vieira e Pedro Alt