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Author: Altmann Borbón, Josette

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Summary

The integration of Latin America has been a complex process. It has been characterized as a journey of improvements and setbacks, of sewing and then tearing apart. The main issue has been how to build a strong and cohesive region in a context of strong nation states. The process of independence in the 19th century led to a debate concerning the creation of the Bolivarian inspired “Patria Grande” (“Great Nation”) or the construction of separate states. While the Westphalian model of nation state ultimately triumphed, the yearning for regional integration remained encoded in Latin America’s aspirations. The pull towards integration was dormant following independence, as most countries rejected the goal of institutionalized and supranational associations. This pull regained strength after the turbulent period of both World Wars and the Great Depression, events that led countries to rethink their international insertion strategies.

Integration has two objectives. On the one hand, nations join together to achieve goals and confront issues that countries cannot do individually. On the other hand, regional integration can allow Latin American countries to have a unified—and consequently more powerful—voice in the international system. Integration can be conceptualized as a process and as an end in itself. The process involves gradual trade liberalization, but this is not enough. In order to achieve true integration, this process needs to be accompanied by the establishment of common rules and practices among countries, as well as a joint institutional framework to monitor the agreements between them. True or profound integration is achieved when nation states give up a part of their sovereignty and subject themselves to some form of supranational arrangement.

Most theoretical debates on integration have revolved around two main paradigms: structuralism and liberalism. Structuralism concerns the achievement of a profound integration process through the establishment of strong institutions. These institutions will reduce transaction costs and will accelerate its members’ development. States plan this process, but other actors can collaborate. In contrast, liberalism views integration as a step in a chain of events that begins with tariff reduction, followed by a common market, a customs union, and a last stage of economic, political and social complementation. In this scenario, both the market and the states respond to the demand for integration. This process is driven by a growing aggregate demand and facilitated by geographic proximity. Both of these paradigms have exerted an influence in Latin America. Nonetheless, the region has not totally conformed to either of these.

Another important influence in Latin American integration has been the European Union model. However, Latin America has not mimicked it because the binomial “integration-development” has given a very distinctive character to Latin American integration. This region has conceived integration as a means to achieve development, and the chosen development model in any given period determined different types of integration initiatives. This Latin American trait generated the need for Latin Americans to develop their own models regarding integration. It is no coincidence that the first Latin American theories that specifically address regional integration are the ones that also tackle the question of development. The ideas put forth by Raul Prebisch, Theotonio dos Santos, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto and Rodolfo Stavenhagen formed the basis of the first Latin American theories on regional integration.

Because of the aforementioned features, the integration process in the region has been eclectic and has had diverse practical manifestations that transcend any theoretical debate. Thus, this research is not exclusively focused on theory. It is particularly centred on describing and explaining the various initiatives that compose Latin American integration, which is characterized by a proliferation of different types of initiatives: bilateral, sub regional, and regional. This proliferation is partly due to countries’ differing views on politics, ideology and development models. Furthermore, countries have been unwilling to yield some of their national sovereignty to supranational entities. Moreover, one cannot assume the existence of a one and only model of Latin American integration. Because of this—and for the purposes of this study—the region has been divided into four areas demarcated by identity, political, ideological, and commercial factors: North Latin America, South Latin America, East Latin America and West Latin America. As the different chapters will show, Latin American integration is still an ongoing and unfinished process.

Chapter 1 portrays the theoretical explanations about Latin American integration from the early 1950s onwards, as well as how these theories have manifested in practice. There have been three different stages in Latin American integration: 1) Latin American structuralism (1950-1980), which was driven by Raul Prebisch and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL); 2) Open regionalism (1990-2005), which was focused on increasing the region’s international competitiveness primarily by way of trade liberalization; and 3) A transition stage (2006-present), which has been coined as post-liberal regionalism. This new stage arose from changes in the political cycle of the region and the resulting ideological differences among various countries concerning the best way for international insertion. Post-liberal regionalism is stronger in South America, where some countries want to

advance regional integration under the goals of autonomy, as well as economic, social and cultural development. The quest for peace, political stability and economic competitiveness through integration has marked the history of Latin American integration. More recently, the region is seeking greater power in multilateral forums by strengthening the integration process.

Chapter 2 presents the main thesis of this investigation, the idea that the various regional integration initiatives have been determined by Latin America's chosen development model during each historical period. The chapter is divided into four sections: 1) Post World War Latin America, a time in which integration was framed under the industrialization and endogenous development model; 2) The "lost decade" in Latin America during the 1980s, a paradoxical period of economic hardship and democratic restoration. Regional integration during this period was influenced by neoliberal ideas and the countries focused on bilateral and sub-regional integration; 3) The post September 11 period that was characterized by a growing neglect from Washington DC, which strengthened the region's autonomy and its relationships with other international actors; and 4) The emergence of new integration initiatives such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The last period is still an ongoing process. It is focused on traditional economic and trade objectives, but it is also concerned with political, environmental, social and cultural issues.

Since the 1950s, Latin American integration has been composed of multiple integration initiatives. Chapter 3 addresses three specific cases: the Rio Group, the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The Rio Group has been the most successful and politically legitimate consultation mechanism in the region. Its main objective is that Latin American countries will find their own solutions to the region's problems. The Central American Integration System (SICA) played a major role during the democratic transition in the nineties, successfully accomplishing reconciliation and disarmament processes (Esquipulas II, 1987). It also contributed to the normalization of economic and political relationships within Central America and between this sub region and other international actors. SICA itself experienced important changes during the nineties. The creation of the Alliance for Social Issues and Sustainable Development (ALIDES) in 1994 was one of these changes. Finally, UNASUR's creation was determined by external and internal factors. The external factors were related with the configuration of a new world order post September 11 and with changing cycles in the world economy. The internal factors were determined by changes

in priorities in several South American countries. This new type of integration stresses the importance of the political aspects of integration and it is concerned with strengthening their countries' sovereignty by distancing themselves from the United States.

In contrast to the three aforementioned initiatives that focused on the political dimensions of integration, chapter 4 focuses on the role of ideology and cooperation in shaping regional integration. It covers the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA). The ACS's objective was to overcome the ideological, political, and geographic diversity that characterizes the Caribbean islands. To do so, they created the "Great Caribbean" concept, which appealed to their common social, cultural, and economic roots. The ACS focuses on cooperation, trade, transportation, sustainable tourism and disaster prevention. ALBA describes itself as an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist initiative that is fixated on the self-determination, autonomy and sovereignty of the peoples in the Americas. Despite its strong ideological component, ALBA has acted in a pragmatic manner in its relationship with the United States. Finally, the OTCA was created in 1978 by Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela. These countries wanted to reaffirm their sovereignty over the Amazon Basin, protect the environment, and promote Amazonian sustainable development. The study of these three initiatives shows that although ideologies are an essential part of integration, it is often necessary to give up ideologies in order to adapt to the fluctuating nature of the international system.

Chapter 5 examines the gap between rhetoric and reality in Latin American integration, specifically the many contradictions that underlie the process. The chapter is divided into five sections. First, it depicts the most important global changes during the past decades, and their impact on the region's integration initiatives. The second section describes the current state of affairs of Latin American integration. The third section analyzes the contradictions that characterize 21st century Latin America: stronger democracies, but growing discontent with current governments; greater economic growth and increased trade that has not translated into effective integration; greater economic growth, and greater inequality; and stronger integrationist discourses that are overshadowed by national interests. Finally, the chapter reflects on the "Latin American Decade" (2003-2013) concept used to describe the current economic "boom" in the region. This affluence has mostly favored some South American countries due to the increasing demand of commodities. This boom, however, has not solved endemic problems such as poverty, inequality, asymmetries

within and between countries, and violence. This decade has also seen a fissure between Pacific and Atlantic countries. While the former have diversified, dynamic and open economies, protectionist and bureaucratic tendencies have characterized the latter. The dissimilarities are not only commercial, but rather they reflect the existence of two very different development models in the region.

In the context of differing views among countries and due to the existence of multiple integration initiatives, the region recently committed to the creation of one forum for political dialogue, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). CELAC is the focus of chapter 6. It was created with the hope that Latin American countries will act as a unified front in the international arena. It arose due to internal and external factors. The internal factors are related with Latin America's search for greater autonomy, the search for more independence from the United States, the rise of progressive governments, the gradual erosion of the open regionalism model, and the emergence of new political leaderships. The external factors are the declining influence of the United States in the region, a weaker presence of the European Union, the occurrence of new actors such as China, Iran and Turkey, and the weakening of traditional multilateral instances. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first one addresses the role of Latin America in a multipolar world, specifically its relationships with the United States, the European Union and the Asia-Pacific region. The second section recounts the Rio Group legacy and its contribution to CELAC, as well as the short history of CELAC so far. Finally, the third section focuses on CELAC's strengths and challenges. The main challenge is internal: the increasingly heterogeneous Latin America needs to overcome regional governance issues. Still, CELAC represents an important opportunity to generate a strong, unified voice.

All the aforementioned chapters support the idea that regional integration is in permanent construction. This is due to both internal and external reasons. Internally, integration is a process that takes time to build, especially the creation of supranational institutions. The process is slower if nation states are not willing to surrender a part of their sovereignty. Externally, the current context of globalization is characterized by rapid and dynamic changes. Integration initiatives have to adapt to these changes in order to survive.

The analyses provided in this thesis point towards three major challenges in Latin America's future. First, as the rest of the world is coming together in mega-regions, the consolidation of Latin American integration is essential. Nation states are not capable of solving serious problems by themselves. Even the most powerful countries cannot individually confront global threats

such as pandemics, organized crime, and climate change, among other risks. Moreover, the globalization of the economy calls into question the very concept of “national economy”. This situation has contributed to the failure of the welfare state since states are no longer capable of determining their own social and economic policies. Second, Latin American countries need to build a regional project that achieves “unity in diversity”. To do this, they have to take into account their past mistakes and successes, and generate a project that will be socially inclusive. Third, Latin American countries need to overcome the ups and downs, advances and crises, and coordination and fragmentation that have characterized the integration process. They should commit to building strong and, most importantly, sustainable alliances that will achieve the greatest welfare for the people of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This investigation revealed the absence of a global theoretical model regarding integration. The above-mentioned analyses of several integration initiatives confirmed the difficulties in creating a single theory. The models that do exist refer to development and to the political processes that support it. Up until now, Latin American integration has been a process of advances and setbacks: On the one hand, prevailing national interests are detrimental to the creation of a commercial and economic unification, which in turn, creates fractures within and between countries. National sovereignty and supra-nationality are seen as mutually exclusive. On the other hand, political dialogue effectively strengthens democratic governance in the region and facilitates integration.

The binomial integration-development has characterized the history of Latin America. In contrast, the European experience has been defined by the trinomial war-integration-development. Latin America is currently undergoing a transition period in regards to countries’ development model of choice, which is why regional integration is still under construction. This investigation was based on the notion that countries cooperate based on shared interests and motivated by changes in the international system. The theoretical approach towards understanding integration processes in the region goes through at least four schools of thought (constructivism, liberalism, structuralism, political process theories). These schools are focused on different indicators regarding power, interests, identity, and cooperation. Additionally, interdependence, multi-polarity, democracy, and complementation are various ways in which nations establish relationships.

The academic outlook, as regional integration in Latin America, has cycles. All seven study cases: Rio Group, SICA, UNASUR, ALBA, ACS, OTCA and CELAC, with its variable geometry and differentiated multilateral and bilateral cooperation patterns, gave me the opportunity to analyze them under the

optic of these theories. The Liberal theory sustain that self-interested states engage in cooperation when it is in their interest to do so, driven by mutually rewarding exchanges. In analyzing Latin American's restoration to democracy, institutional cooperation and economic interdependency this theory was very helpful in the approach to these concepts, as well as the political theories help understanding the soft power of diplomatic and cultural variables in CELAC. From an analytical perspective, in terms of regional identity as a social construct, the constructivism approach to cooperation, interconnectedness, institutional dimension, interstate peace and the well-being was very helpful. Finally, as I stated before, structuralism concerns in the achievement of a profound integration process through strong institutions, help with the economic and political analysis. The existence of these variables in Latin America allowed me to use the four schools in this study. All aided my explanation of Latin American integration's cycles of expansion and crisis.