



**ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ДОСЬЕ:  
Латиноамериканский дискурс идентичности  
и новая региональная интеграционная повестка**

**THEMATIC DOSSIER:  
Latin American Identity Discourse  
and a New Regional Integration Agenda**

DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-3-447-463

*Research article / Научная статья*

**Latin American Integration against the Backdrop of a Conservative Wave:  
Between Irrelevance and the Search for New Meanings**

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**Abstract.** The evolution of regionalism in Latin America has historically been greatly influenced by changes in governments and their ideological programs. In this article, looking at the courses of the administrations of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Ivan Duque in Colombia, Sebastian Piñera (second term, 2018—2022) in Chile, Mario Abdo Benítez in Paraguay, it is proposed to examine transformations in integration against the backdrop of increased influence of right-wing forces in regional alignments in the mid-2010s to the early 2020s. Analyzing foreign policy steps, rhetoric, content of conceptual documents, the authors focus on the peculiarities of the national views of various right forces on integration initiatives. The paper concentrates on the decline of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), creation of Forum for the Progress and Integration of South America (PROSUR) and Lima Group, activities of the Pacific Alliance and Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in the context of the demand for flexible and pragmatic integration “without politicization.” The authors come to several conclusions which show ambiguity of the right turn impact on the integration landscape in Latin America. First, although the rise of liberal-conservative forces has reformatted philosophy, key ideas of integration, participation in multilateral groups remains important for governments that seek to solve pressing problems and expand their own reputational and political capital with its help. Second, despite the fluidity of electoral dynamics, which may soon put an end to the dominance of the right, they have raised a number of issues of long-term relevance in the context of the future path of integration associations in the region. The contribution of the work is explained by its appeal to the very factor of ideology in the development of Latin American integration, detailed analysis of specific country experiences and new conclusions based on it.

**Key words:** integration, Latin America, right turn, liberal-conservative values, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuelan crisis

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**Acknowledgements:** The reported study was funded by RFBR, project number 20-39-90002, “Contemporary Paraguay in the international relations system”, 2020—2022.


**For citation:** Jeifets, V. L., & Konovalova, K. A. (2022). Latin American integration against the backdrop of a conservative wave: Between irrelevance and the search for new meanings. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 22(3), 447—463. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-3-447-463>

## Латиноамериканская интеграция на фоне «правого поворота»: между иррелевантностью и поиском новых смыслов

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**Аннотация.** На эволюцию регионализма в Латинской Америке большое влияние исторически оказывали смены правительств и их идеологических программ. Отталкиваясь от курсов администраций Жаира Болсонару в Бразилии, Ивана Дукэ в Колумбии, второго правительства Себастьяна Пиньеры в Чили и Марио Абдо Бенитеса в Парагвае, рассмотрены трансформации в интеграционных процессах на фоне успехов правых сил в региональной борьбе за власть в середине 2010-х — начале 2020-х гг., более известных как «правый поворот». Анализируя внешнеполитические шаги, риторику и содержание концептуальных документов указанных латиноамериканских стран, авторы фокусируются на особенностях национальных взглядов различных представителей правых сил на региональные интеграционные инициативы. Уделено внимание упадку Союза южноамериканских наций (УНАСУР) и Сообщества стран Латинской Америки и Карибского бассейна (СЕЛАК), созданию Форума для развития Южной Америки (ПРОСУР) и Группы Лимы, деятельности Тихоокеанского альянса и Общего рынка стран Южной Америки (МЕРКОСУР) в контексте запроса на гибкую и прагматичную интеграцию «без политизации» в регионе. Сделаны следующие выводы, показывающие неоднозначность влияния «правого поворота» на интеграционный ландшафт в Латинской Америке. Во-первых, хотя подъем либерально-консервативных сил и переформатировал философию интеграции, участие в многосторонних группах остается важным для правительств, которые стремятся решать за счет них основные проблемы государства и расширять собственный репутационно-политический капитал. Во-вторых, несмотря на подвижность электоральной динамики, которая скоро может положить конец доминированию правых сил, правыми правительствами был поставлен ряд вопросов, имеющих долгосрочное значение в контексте дальнейшего развития интеграционных объединений в регионе. Исследовательский вклад работы объясняется обращением к самому фактору идеологии в развитии латиноамериканской интеграции, детальным разбором конкретных страновых примеров и новыми выводами с учетом данного фактора.

**Ключевые слова:** интеграция, Латинская Америка, правый поворот, либерально-консервативные ценности, Бразилия, Колумбия, Чили, Парагвай, венесуэльский кризис

**Благодарности:** Исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке РФФИ в рамках научного проекта № 20-39-90002 «Современный Парагвай в системе международных отношений», сроки реализации 2020—2022 гг.

**Для цитирования:** Хейфец В.Л., Коновалова К.А. Латиноамериканская интеграция на фоне «правого поворота»: между иррелевантностью и поиском новых смыслов // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2022. Т. 22, № 3. С. 447—463. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-3-447-463>

### Introduction

Latin American integration is currently going through a phase of split and uncertainty. Its essence is the exhaustion of the unifying

impulse of the 2000s — early 2010s, which gave the region several backbone structures for its self-representation in a multipolar world, such as the Community of Latin America and the

Caribbean (CELAC) or the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), focused on social engineering and development, which was embodied in the complication of the scheme and mechanisms of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). At the new stage of integration, marked by polarization around the Venezuelan crisis, attempts to strengthen “trade wing” of multilateralism, and an increase in the conflict potential of US influence on the regional agenda, an important role is played by the rise of right-wing forces.

In the electoral cycles of the last five years, various right-wingers — from traditional neo-liberals to ultra-conservatives have found themselves in power in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, El Salvador. The electoral dynamics is fluid, and the “right turn” is now counterbalanced by the left (center-left) rule in a number of states, but its influence on the regional layouts has not been exhausted. For all its diversity and adaptability, the right turn appear to be the new subjects and bearers of Latin American integration, given its great importance for configuring the region from a geopolitical and geo-economic, even civilizational points of view. While most integration studies still focus on the legacy of the left-dominated era, the role of the right also requires serious scholarly reflection.

This article aims to identify the specifics of integration “from the right,” from the standpoint of the ideas and practices that make it up, based on specific national examples — Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro (elected in 2018), Chile under Sebastian Piñera (administration of 2018—2022), Colombia under Ivan Duque (elected in 2018), Paraguay under Mario Abdo Benítez (elected in 2018).

The choice of countries for analysis is determined by a number of criteria. First of all, each of them is associated with the regional context reformatted in the light of right-wing trends and ideological polarization. At the same time, the selected countries are in different

phases of the “right cycle.” In Colombia and Paraguay, the dominance of the right and the adaptability of their ideological project is a historical reality. After the 2018 elections, Brazil is experiencing a right-wing period, new reality for it in the 21st century, which is turning out traumatic for a large part of society and elites and, therefore, could end soon. With the election of Gabriel Boric in December 2021, Chile has already completed its “right-wing cycle” whilst new government will adjust foreign policy priorities based on the heritage of the conservatives. Thus, the analysis makes it possible not only to trace the features of the integration vision of the right, but also to assess their changes and stability against the backdrop of electoral dynamics. Finally, the selected states represent different and distinctive roles in terms of the integration structuring of Latin America.

As noted by a number of experts (Kheifets & Konovalova, 2019; Borzova & Maricheva, 2018; Pereyra Doval, 2014; Serbín, 2014), integration initiatives appear to be associated with a redistribution of influence and leadership in the region, and, to use the terminology of neorealism, emergence of new structural restrictions for states belonging to the Latin American (South American) subsystems. For Brazil, the role of leading state and integrator of South America is associated with the imperative of becoming a great power (Kheifets & Konovalova, 2019, pp. 223—224; Pereyra Doval, 2014, pp. 160—167), but with Bolsonaro coming to power, this linkage is broken. Colombia and Chile have traditionally been “second tier” players, middle powers in Latin American affairs,<sup>1</sup> but in the presidencies of Duque and Piñera they acted as locomotives of integration formats associated with the rise of the right. Both countries were the ideological inspirers of new structures such as Lima Group (LG, founded in 2017) or the Forum for the

<sup>1</sup> Ardila M. Potencias regionales secundarias en Suramérica: los casos de Chile y Colombia // Congreso de ISA-FLACSO, Buenos Aires. 23—25 de Julio de 2014. URL: <http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/FLACSO-ISA%20BuenosAires%202014/Archive/461790c0-b507-4944-bdde-4d5de940e847.pdf> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

Progress and Development of South America (PROSUR, established in 2019). Simultaneously, they remained committed to the idea of Pacific Alliance (PA), which, having originated in the midst of left-wing integration experiences, could be interpreted as based on neoliberal philosophy, but at the same time it is a multifunctional initiative that includes not only trade and economic, but also social, institutional, and environmental components (Pravdyuk, 2021, pp. 20—23). Paraguay, on the other hand, is an example of a small player for whom regional integration is both a powerful factor in the international environment, represented by the asymmetric relations with prevailing neighbors Argentina and Brazil, and a source of opportunities to leverage these relations. When building a regional course, the historically dominant right in Paraguay takes into account the all-time importance of integration for the nation and also gives it meanings according to their ideological credo.

### **Ideology and Integration in Latin America**

In its genesis, integration in Latin America differs from other regions. Firstly, the unifying processes here have always been proceeding “from top to bottom,” induced, first of all, by national governments, and not by economic entities or civil society.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the choice and development of certain integration formats has been influenced by the rooted culture of presidentialism (Gomes Saraiva & Granja Hernández, 2019, pp. 165—174). In light of this, the factor of national political programs is of paramount importance for direction of the integration process, providing the very impetus for integration and choice of its models. This prompts to pay attention to the ideology, which builds the worldview of politicians in specific historical conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> Multilateralismo e Integración en América Latina. Universidad Externado de Colombia — El blog de la Escuela de Relaciones Internacionales // FIGRI. 28.08.2020. URL: <https://coordenadas-mundiales.uexternado.edu.co/multilateralismo-e-integracion-en-america-latina/> (accessed: 01.02.2022).

The applicability of the “left — right” coordinates to the assessments of ideologies remains subject of scientific discussions. As part of our work, we adhere to the classical point of view presented, for example, by famous Italian political scientist Norberto Bobbio (1996, pp. 89—99) and Spanish scholar Manuel Saez Alcantara (1991). They suppose this dyad can serve starting point for analysis, if the ‘shades’ of the ideological spectrum are taken into account and insofar as it allows disclosing the political polarization.

In analyzing ideology as a factor of integration dynamics in the Latin American region, we could identify two key perspectives.

The first is the perception of ideology as a source of integration designs. In this sense, the intersections in discussions about the historical stages of the development of integration and spread of ideological traditions — “left” and “right turns” in Latin America are indicative. At the suggestion of Jose Briceño Ruiz (2017), Pia Rigirozzi and Diana Tussie (2012), the integration “boom” of the 2000s and early 2010s was labeled “post-liberal.” This definition, for one thing, points to the meanings of integration in such period — criticism of the free trade, rise in attention to the development and independence of Latin American players in the face of globalization/westernization. In addition, it refers to the ideological landmarks of the region associated with social democrats and socialists, left-wing populists coming to power and often characterized by revisionist attitude towards such liberal universals as the primacy of political freedoms, “small” state, and inviolability of the alternation of power. Against this background, when defining the nature of the current crisis cycle of regionalism, researchers (Benzi & Narea, 2018; Caetano & Pose, 2020, pp. 12—17; Valdivieso, Camelo & García, 2021, pp. 275—280), on the one hand, focus on the decline of left-sovereignist projects and return to the forefront of political conservatives and economic liberals. On the other hand, particular attention has been paid to the impact that globalization disruptions inherent in the entire

Western world are having on Latin American multilateralism (Benzi & Narea, 2018, pp. 119—120; Sanahuja & López Burián, 2020). With regard to the new right, Camilo Lopez Burian and Jose Antonio Sanahuja use the category of “neopatriotism,” behind which are not so much truly nationalistic attitudes, but rather a decrease in the importance of cooperation among developing countries, an appeal to the traditional values of the West (Sanahuja & López Burián, 2020). In this context, the ideals of the Latin American self-consciousness are fading away, free trade aspirations are returning, special attention is paid to political democracy and actors that embody it, primarily the USA. At the same time, the phenomenon of Donald Trump has contributed to the undermining of Washington’s moral leadership in Latin America and crisis of pan-Americanism (Eremin, 2022), stimulating the right-wing forces of the region to step up their own solidifying efforts.

The second perspective is related to the “ideology — pragmatism” opposition in the foreign policy of Latin American countries, and, as a result, to the destiny of multilateral structures they have created. As Gino Gardini (2011, pp. 17—23), Miriam Gomes Saraiva and Lorena Granja Hernandez (Gomes Saraiva & Granja Hernández, 2019), Detlef Nolte and Victor Mijares<sup>3</sup> show, ideologized and pragmatic approaches towards integration are opposed only in theory, in reality, their relationship is dialectical. If a multilateral group is based on the ideological consensus of governments and does not have a developed supranational bureaucracy, it becomes a hostage to the results of elections, which has been proved by the slowdown of CELAC or collapse of UNASUR.<sup>4</sup> But at the same time, ideological consensus is the engine of any deep integration, because only in this case

<sup>3</sup> Nolte D., Mijares V.M. La crisis de Unasur y la deconstrucción de Sudamérica // *El Espectador*. 24.04.2018. URL: <https://www.elespectador.com/mundo/america/la-crisis-de-unasur-y-la-deconstruccion-de-sudamerica-article-751730/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

national governments are ready to delegate part of its power to multilateral institutions. Areas such as security or democracy protection (Gomes Saraiva & Granja Hernández, 2019, p. 176) are highly sensitive to the ideological and political consensus of governments. The Colombian experts Martha Ardila and Rafael Piñeros,<sup>5</sup> as well as researchers from the ILA RAS rightly point out using the example of Brazil (Simonova et al., 2019, pp. 63—74) that combining both idealistic (ideological) and pragmatic motives is a linchpin for a leadership of individual nations in multilateral groups, which is a necessary condition for their progress.

In our study we are following the steps of aforementioned debates, developing them in relation to the specific integration approaches of the ruling right-wing forces in Brazil, Colombia and Chile, Paraguay. Firstly, we identify the features of the “right-wing” integration vision, and secondly, we pay attention to the correlation between ideological and pragmatic motives, which makes it possible for the governments to rely on integration to realize national interests. The methodological tools of the paper are induction and case study method, with the help of which national views on integration and specifics of their practical implementation are analyzed, and a number of generalizations are made regarding the influence of modern right-wing forces on Latin American regionalism. To consider the symbolic basis of approaches to integration, discourse analysis is also involved. The authors strive to fit the observed changes into the broader framework of regional dynamics, which makes it necessary to use a system-historical approach.

### Integration in Jair Bolsonaro’s Policy

In our view, when assessing the foreign policy of J. Bolsonaro, in general, it is important

<sup>5</sup> *Multilateralismo e Integración en América Latina*. Universidad Externado de Colombia — El blog de la Escuela de Relaciones Internacionales // FIGRI. 28.08.2020. URL: <https://coordinadas-mundiales.uexternado.edu.co/multilateralismo-e-integracion-en-america-latina/> (accessed: 01.02.2022).

to proceed from the experience of the crisis of international identity in today's Brazil. This crisis crystallized in the presidency of Michel Temer (2016—2018) and turned out to be linked to the contradictions between ambitions of Brazil as a great power, which were cultivated by the governments of the Workers' Party in 2003—2016 and the persistent reality of a global South state, where elites are disorganized and corrupt, and the economy is very vulnerable to conjuncture moments. Conservative-populist expressive rhetoric and fanatical following of the US under Donald Trump and other "anti-globalist democracies" have been presented by J. Bolsonaro as a recipe for overcoming this crisis. But in fact, all this just points to continuing frustration about Brazil's path in the region and the world.

Bolsonaro's integration guidelines, first of all, have been a vivid reflection of the anti-systemic role that the president's team chose for itself. The head of Brazil, as well as such key personalities for his project as the Minister of Foreign Affairs (until March 2021) Ernesto Araujo, Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes, approached regionalism with a specific reading of the opposition between ideology and pragmatism, tied to antipetism (Okuneva, 2018, p. 32) and in general anti-left views. Experiencing their heyday under the administrations of Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva (2003—2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011—2016), Mercosur, UNASUR and CELAC, have been labeled as "ideologized,"<sup>6</sup> born by a "vicious" leftist experiment, "whose time is gone."<sup>7</sup> These formats were opposed to

<sup>6</sup> See: Hessel R. Brasil defenderá extinção da Unasul e criação de bloco sem a Venezuela // *Correio Braziliense*. 20.03.2019. URL: [https://www.correio braziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2019/03/20/interna\\_mundo,744189/brasil-defendera-extincao-de-unasul-e-criacao-de-bloco-sem-venezuela.shtml](https://www.correio braziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2019/03/20/interna_mundo,744189/brasil-defendera-extincao-de-unasul-e-criacao-de-bloco-sem-venezuela.shtml) (accessed: 20.02.2022); Soares J. Paulo Guedes diz que 'Mercosul não será prioridade' em governo Bolsonaro // *O Globo*. 28.10.2018. URL: <https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/paulo-guedes-diz-que-mercossul-nao-sera-prioridade-em-governo-bolsonaro-23194734> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>7</sup> See: Fuentes F. Jair Bolsonaro: "El ciclo de la izquierda en la región se agotó, la respuesta está frente a

participation in PROSUR with its "watchdog" attitude towards democracy, ideas of cutting down Mercosur to a virtual free trade zone. These steps represented the "right choice"<sup>8</sup> in favor of "practically oriented and flexible" integration, "openness to the world."<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Bolsonaro's commitment to "fighting Marxism," the transnational right-wing movement began to receive special attention. But the formats of Brazil's participation in it forced to perceive the country as an agent of influence of the global right in Latin America, rather than an independent center of gravity of them in the region. Thus, the initiative of the Conservative Summit of the Americas, which had matured in the president's surrounding, a kind of antithesis to the Sao Paulo Forum, did not receive much impetus after the debut summit in 2018, when J. Bolsonaro had just been elected. Since 2019, however, Brazil has been the site of the annual international Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), a congress of right-wing activists

nosotros" // *La Tercera*. 22.03.2019. URL: <https://www.latercera.com/mundo/noticia/jair-bolsonaro-ciclo-la-izquierda-la-region-se-agoto-la-respuesta-esta-frente/583109/> (accessed 20.02.2022); Ceyhan F. O ministro das Relações Exteriores, Ernesto Araújo, disse que os países devem deixar a União de Nações Sul-Americanas (Unasul) // *Brasília in Foco*. 21.03.2019. URL: <https://brasilinainfoco.com/o-ministro-das-relacoes-exteriores-ernesto-araujo-disse-que-os-paises-devem-deixar-a-uniao-de-nacoes-sul-americanas-unasul/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>8</sup> Hessel R. Brasil defenderá extinção da Unasul e criação de bloco sem a Venezuela // *Correio Braziliense*. 20.03.2019. URL: [https://www.correio braziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2019/03/20/interna\\_mundo,744189/brasil-defendera-extincao-de-unasul-e-criacao-de-bloco-sem-venezuela.shtml](https://www.correio braziliense.com.br/app/noticia/mundo/2019/03/20/interna_mundo,744189/brasil-defendera-extincao-de-unasul-e-criacao-de-bloco-sem-venezuela.shtml) (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>9</sup> See: Peduzzi P. Bolsonaro: El Mercosur necesita conquistar nuevos mercados // *Agência Brasil*. 09.07.2021. URL: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/es/politica/noticia/2021-07/bolsonaro-el-mercossur-necesita-conquistar-nuevos-mercados+%&cd=7&hl=es&ct=clnk&gl=ru> (accessed: 20.02.2022); Fuentes F. Jair Bolsonaro: "El ciclo de la izquierda en la región se agotó, la respuesta está frente a nosotros" // *La Tercera*. 22.03.2019. URL: <https://www.latercera.com/mundo/noticia/jair-bolsonaro-ciclo-la-izquierda-la-region-se-agoto-la-respuesta-esta-frente/583109/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

organized by the American Conservative Union.<sup>10</sup>

Another distinctive feature is Brazil's unwillingness to bear the costs of building and maintaining regional consensus. This turns into a reactive position in South American and Latin American affairs, desire to choose the least "costly" options in them: to rely on bilateral agreements instead of multilateral ones,<sup>11</sup> to follow the United States as the "gendarme" of the region (Sanahuja & López Burián, 2020, p. 55), not to assume the role of coordinating a common response to acute challenges, whether it be the coronavirus pandemic or degradation of the Amazon, while appealing to sovereign choice.<sup>12</sup> From a political point of view, Bolsonaro's line on the Venezuelan crisis speaks eloquently about the minimization of regional obligations, where tough statements about the need to pressure the "Maduro dictatorship" are combined with inaction in supporting a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. The material "cost" of the leading status in integration is also being reassessed. So, in December 2021, Paulo Guedes's office prepared a report stating that Brazil had accumulated too many liabilities in "unprofitable" multilateral bodies, and recommended refusing to invest in the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund (Focem) and the Plata Basin Financial Development Fund

(Fonplata).<sup>13</sup> Such have not yet been implemented.

Finally, Bolsonaro's presidency has been marked by a general deconstruction of the country's regional identity. These changes are noticeable, firstly, in the language of strategic documents. For the first time in many years<sup>14</sup> the National Defense White Paper of 2020 does not mention the South American and Latin American international security regimes that are significant for Brazil, and the region is more presented as a space of instability and threats.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, the changes are visible in concrete foreign policy steps. For example, the Bolsonaro government has broken with the tradition of inviting neighbors to the BRICS summits, which previously reinforced its role as a "guide" of Latin America to global structures of influence (Jeifets & Jubran, 2020, pp. 317—318). Unwilling to make efforts to consolidate Brazil's ties with its regional neighbours, Bolsonaro has sought to emphasize its presence in the Pan-American system and globally. This can be seen in the unprecedented decision of Brazil's leadership to withdraw from CELAC, but to participate in the Summit of Democracies in December 2021, convened by Washington. Nevertheless, Bolsonaro's radicalism contributes to the reduction of the country's symbolic weight in the world community. A striking example is the stalling of the Mercosur — EU agreement, which the president himself had high hopes for and presented as a "triumph of a pragmatic view of integration,"<sup>16</sup> due to the negative attitude of

<sup>10</sup> Eduardo Bolsonaro tenta trazer ao Brasil maior evento conservador do mundo // Poder360. 18.05.2019. URL: <https://www.poder360.com.br/governo/eduardo-bolsonaro-tenta-trazer-ao-brasil-maior-evento-conservador-do-mundo/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>11</sup> Verdélio A. Bolsonaro acredita que quadro político na Argentina pode ser revertido // Agência Brasil. 21.08.2019. URL: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2019-08/bolsonaro-acredita-que-quadro-politico-na-argentina-pode-ser-revertido> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>12</sup> Discurso do Presidente da República, Jair Bolsonaro, na abertura da 75ª Assembleia Geral da Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) // Gabinete de Segurança Institucional da Presidência da República. 22.09.2020. URL: <https://www.gov.br/gsi/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/videos/colecao-2020/discurso-do-presidente-jair-bolsonaro-na-75a-assembleia-geral-das-nacoes-unidas-onu> (accessed: 10.02.2022).

<sup>13</sup> Brasil avalia deixar órgãos multilaterais de economia por falta de dinheiro // Folha do São Paulo. 26.12.2021. URL: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2021/12/brasil-avalia-deixar-orgaos-multilaterais-de-economia-por-falta-de-dinheiro.shtml> (accessed: 14.02.2022).

<sup>14</sup> The tradition of issuing such documents — at first, national defense strategies, later white papers, — was laid by L.I. Lula da Silva in 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Livro Branco de Defesa Nacional // Governo do Brasil. 2020. URL: [https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/copy\\_of\\_estado-e-defesa/livro\\_branco\\_congresso\\_nacional.pdf](https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/copy_of_estado-e-defesa/livro_branco_congresso_nacional.pdf) (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>16</sup> See: Jair M. Bolsonaro // Twitter. June 28, 2019. URL: <https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro/status/11446564599>

Europeans towards the Brazilian government, especially its anti-environmentalism.

Bolsonaro's foreign policy project has undergone certain transformations as he has been in power, due to his desire to remain in big politics as the next election approaches. In March 2021, the main Bolsonarist "ideologist" E. Araujo was fired under high public pressure. The new head of the Foreign Ministry became Carlos Antonio França, seen as a compromise figure, belonging to the establishment. C.A. França has immediately changed his tone regarding multilateralism. In his first speeches, the diplomat pointed out its constructive role<sup>17</sup> and that it could also be a channel for the "manifestation of sovereignty."<sup>18</sup> At the same time, França declared the importance of fueling relations with neighbors and a universalist foreign policy,<sup>19</sup> which in the history of Brazil is understood as equal priority relations with the global South and North. There have also been some practical attempts to "win back" Brazil's

reactivity in the regional scene. For example, following the PROSUR Summit in January 2022, the new foreign minister indicated his country's readiness to become a leader in the Forum's collective efforts to combat COVID-19, contributing to promising pharmaceutical developments and the availability of vaccines for nations in need.<sup>20</sup> C.A. França's approaches hint at the fact that the Brazil's authorities are reassessing vector of pragmatism, no longer equating it so much with opposing the left, but rather relating it to the use of integration as a resource for their country's international positioning.

### Integration Strategies of Ivan Duque and Sebastian Piñera

Retreat of Brazil under J. Bolsonaro to the periphery of Latin American regionalism has expanded the possibilities for its structuring for other representatives of the "right flank." For a number of reasons, Colombia under Ivan Duque and Chile under Sebastian Piñera looked the most proactive. First, these actors have already taken part in the Pacific Alliance, the main viable pro-market initiative in the face of the decline of UNASUR, ALBA, CELAC and stagnation of Mercosur, where the left was in favor of industrial integration and protectionism (Briceño Ruiz, 2017, pp. 40—42). Second, the administrations of Duque and Piñera have had the necessary political will to make their nations to become reference figures of the integration process. In its formation, apart from the personalities and ambitions of the presidents, long-term national foreign policy attitudes and the situation favorable for their implementation played a role.

In the foreign policy credo of the Colombian right, since Juan Manuel Santos (2010—2018), the expansion of the country's

69572864?ref\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetem bed%7Ctwterm%5E1144656459969572864%7Ctwgr%5Ehb\_1\_8%7Ctwcon%5Es1\_&ref\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fportuguese%2Fbrasil-4880651 (accessed: 20.02.2022); Bolsonaro destaca histórico acordo entre Mercosul e UE assinado em Bruxelas // EFE. 28.06.2019. URL: <https://www.efe.com/efe/brasil/mundo/bolsonaro-destaca-historico-acordo-entre-mercosul-e-ue-assinado-em-bruxelas/50000243-4011822> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>17</sup> Intervenção do Ministro Carlos França na primeira sessão de trabalho da Reunião de Chanceleres e Ministros de Desenvolvimento do G20: Multilateralismo e governança global — Itália // Governo do Brasil. 29.06.2021. URL: <https://www.gov.br/mre/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/publicacoes/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas/ministro-das-relacoes-exteriores/discursos-mre/intervencao-do-ministro-carlos-franca-na-primeira-sessao-de-trabalho-da-reuniao-de-chanceleres-e-ministros-de-desenvolvimento-do-g20-multilateralismo-e-governanca-global-2013-italia-29-06-2021> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>18</sup> Discurso de posse do senhor Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores, Embaixador Carlos Alberto Franco França — Brasília // Governo do Brasil. 06.04.2021. URL: <https://www.gov.br/mre/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/publicacoes/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas/ministro-das-relacoes-exteriores/discursos-mre/discorso-de-posse-do-senhor-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores-embaixador-carlos-alberto-franco-franca-2013-brasilia-06-04-2021> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Brazil's Leadership in Vaccines Shall Benefit Neighboring Countries // Agência Brasil. January 27, 2022. URL: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/internacional/noticia/2022-01/brazils-leadership-vaccines-will-benefit-neighbors-says-minister&hl=ru&gl=ru&strip=1&vwsr=0> (accessed: 15.02.2022).



presence in Latin American affairs and its profile in integration has been combined with strategic partnership with the United States. Under Duque, these priorities became even more accentuated. On the one hand, the conceptual principles of Colombia's foreign policy directly proclaimed the need to move towards the country's leadership role in the new regional context after the denunciation of the UNASUR founding treaty and against the backdrop of the Venezuelan crisis.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the "National Strategy for International Cooperation 2019—2022" positions Colombia as an active participant in the "triangular" formats of cooperation, which has made it possible to match regional activity with strong ties with the Organization of American States (OAS), the USA, European and Asian actors.<sup>22</sup> Regional approaches under Duque began to focus around democracy as a threatened political value. The Venezuelan crisis was seen as the main source of threat (Valdivieso, Camelo & García, 2021, pp. 271—272), which deeply affected the situation in Colombia itself, at least due to the influx of refugees and political opponents of Maduro, who became an energetic lobby in the neighboring country. The securitization of democracy and the Venezuelan issue was also facilitated by the line of Bogotá's strategic partner, the United States.

Chile's attention to regional affairs has increased throughout the 21st century, but this happened from the standpoint of open regionalism and search for pragmatic options — increasing complex exports, participating in big infrastructure initiatives, and enhancing the country's image as a development donor

(Anis'kevich, 2019). Against this background, high politicization and desire of singling out within the paradigm of the Global South, characteristic of UNASUR, ALBA, CELAC, constrained Chile, forcing it to adhere to the compromise line of "rapprochement in the face of differences" ("la convergencia en la diversidad") (Bartesaghi, 2019, p. 8). The second term of S. Piñera fell on truly unique historical conditions, when the decline of the left-wing patriotic wave and the ideals of Latin Americanism, Brazil and Venezuela's step back from the scene, could allow Chile to promote the strategy of open regionalism and increase its own weight in the region. For Chile's regional proactivity, democracy and human rights agenda<sup>23</sup> has also acted as a motor. At the same time, systemic circumstances played a significant role.

The card of regional unity in defense of democracy and fight against the "Maduro's dictatorship" began to be played out by Duque and Piñera in the Lima Group. Both administrations took the lead in giving this forum greater symbolic significance and international legitimacy. With Duque's instigation, LG became the front line of an international "diplomatic siege" ("cerco diplomático") of the dictatorship in Venezuela, led by Colombia.<sup>24</sup> Solidarity with the LG's decisions, such as non-recognition of the Maduro's government and support for the self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido, sanctions against Bolivarian officials, was announced at various times not only by Latin American neighbors, but also by the United States and Canada, a number of European states, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Thus, the anti-Bolivarian Lima Group has become a specific example of

<sup>21</sup> Principios y lineamientos de la política exterior Colombiana 2018—2022 // Portal Único del Estado Colombiano. URL: <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/principios-y-lineamientos-la-politica-exterior-colombiana> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>22</sup> Estrategia Nacional de Cooperación Internacional, 2019—2022 // Agencia Presidencial de Cooperación Internacional de Colombia. URL: <https://www.apccolombia.gov.co/sites/default/files/2021-01/Documento%20ENCI%20espan%CC%83ol.pdf> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>23</sup> Prioridades de la Política Exterior // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. URL: <https://minrel.gob.cl/minrel/politica-exterior/prioridades-de-la-politica-exterior> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>24</sup> Londoño Niño E. A. Iván Duque y la búsqueda errática de liderazgo regional // Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica. 07.10.2019. URL: <https://revistafal.com/ivan-duque-y-la-busqueda-erratica-de-liderazgo-regional/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

Duque's "triangular cooperation." Chile acted not only as a Latin American activist of the Group, but also as a mediator of its global relations, in particular, with the international contact group on Venezuela, where the leading positions belonged to the European Union.<sup>25</sup> Duque and Piñera were noted as the initiators of a resonant international action to transfer humanitarian supplies to needy Venezuelans in the city of Cucuta in February 2019.<sup>26</sup> This step was intended to strengthen the moral weight of the LG, showing that the authors of the "diplomatic siege" were not indifferent to the suffering of ordinary people. In addition, the diplomats of Colombia and Chile attempted to expand the Group's sphere of responsibility beyond the Venezuelan agenda, exerting pressure from its rostrum on other centers of socialist influence in the region — Nicaragua<sup>27</sup> and Cuba.<sup>28</sup> Thus, this mechanism could also be considered in the broader context of the marginalization of the project of Latin American left.

PROSUR became directly Colombian-Chilean initiative "on the ruins" of UNASUR,

<sup>25</sup> See: Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Chilean Foreign Minister Roberto Ampuero // U.S. Embassy in Chile. April 12, 2019. URL: <https://cl.usembassy.gov/secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo-and-chilean-foreign-minister-roberto-ampuero/> (accessed: 20.02.2022); Grupo de Lima mandata a Chile para dialogar con Grupo de Contacto // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. 03.05.2019. URL: <https://minrel.gob.cl/minrel/noticias-antiores/grupo-de-lima-mandata-a-chile-para-dialogar-con-grupo-de-contacto> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>26</sup> Presidente chileno Sebastián Piñera: La dictadura de Maduro tiene sus días contados // Analítica. 22.02.2019. URL: <https://www.analitica.com/actualidad-internacional/presidente-de-paraguay-viajo-a-cucuta-para-entrega-de-ayuda-humanitaria/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>27</sup> Discuten medias por crisis de Nicaragua en Grupo de Lima // El Nuevo Diario. 04.01.2019. URL: <https://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/482650-grupo-lima-discute-medidas-tesis-nicaragua/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>28</sup> Brasil não consegue incluir censura a Cuba em declaração do Grupo de Lima // Folha de S.Paulo. 08.11.2019. URL: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2019/11/brasil-nao-consegue-incluir-censura-a-cuba-em-declaracao-do-grupo-de-lima.shtml> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

accused of "aiding the dictatorship in Venezuela"<sup>29</sup> or at least "being paralyzed"<sup>30</sup> in the face of the crisis in that country. In turn, the spirit of the first meeting of the Forum participants in Santiago and the content of the founding declaration, which spoke of commitments to protect democracy and human rights as membership criteria, represented PROSUR as a pillar of the liberal-conservative and anti-Bolivarian consensus in the region (Pyatakov, 2020, pp. 21—23). Experts view the PROSUR initiative rather skeptically, as dividing and polarizing the region, as well as repeating the mistake of UNASUR or ALBA — high dependence on temporary political alignments.<sup>31</sup> However, recognizing that PROSUR is first and foremost an institution for securing right-wing influence in the region, it is worth considering a certain internal evolution that the group has undergone since its establishment. During 2019—2021, with Chile and Colombia as interim chairs of the Forum, PROSUR gained structure, developed a thematic portfolio of areas of responsibility, covering defense and security, infrastructure construction, energy and environment (the latter is particularly symptomatic against the backdrop of Brazil's blindness under Bolsonaro to environmental issues). In all these sectors, discussions of politicians and officials prevail over concrete initiatives, but the bloc has already established links with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to support and finance its projects.

In 2019—2021, in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru, left-wing forces came to power, causing

<sup>29</sup> Colombia oficializó su retiro de Unasur // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia. 27.08.2018. URL: <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/colombia-oficializo-su-retiro-unasur> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>30</sup> Sebastian Piñera // Twitter. February 18, 2019. URL: <https://twitter.com/sebastianpinera/status/1097508516569509888> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>31</sup> Londoño Niño E. A. Iván Duque y la búsqueda errática de liderazgo regional // Foreign Affairs Latinoamerica. 07.10.2019. URL: <https://revistafal.com/ivan-duque-y-la-busqueda-erratica-de-liderazgo-regional/> (accessed: 20.02.2022). See also: (Pyatakov, 2020; Valdivieso, Camelo & García, 2021, pp. 281—283).

countries to leave the LG. At the same time, Bolivia retained observer status in PROSUR, while Argentina and Peru retained the membership. This, at the very least, may indicate an expectation that the new block could be used in addressing pressing regional concerns. In the face of the spread of COVID-19, the alliance managed to find its functional niche. As shown by the Russian researcher D.A. Pravdyuk (2021, p. 24), members of the Pacific Alliance began to use this platform to coordinate anti-epidemic measures. Not having specific working groups on public health the Pacific Alliance concentrated on coping with the economic damage of the pandemic. At the Third PROSUR Summit in Cartagena de las Indias, S. Piñera pointed out that by focusing on pandemic containment, PROSUR had proved its value.<sup>32</sup>

The new conditions in the region have generally boosted the “morale strength” of the Pacific Alliance, which was originally positioned as an example of pragmatic integration focused on concrete results — from linking national stock exchanges to facilitating student mobility. It is not usual for PA to come out with a unanimous opinion on political issues, and against the backdrop of the Venezuelan issue, it remained neutral. At the same time, when UNASUR was blocked by disagreements over what was happening in the Bolivarian Republic, the Chilean Foreign Minister did not fail to compare its “bad experience” with the PA’s “successful one.”<sup>33</sup>

According to some researchers (Pravdyuk, 2021; Pastrana Buelvas & Castro Alegría, 2020, pp. 3—4), the open integration model of the PA

<sup>32</sup> Presidente Piñera destaca la importancia de PROSUR para enfrentar los desafíos del futuro en la región: “Ha demostrado que es necesario, que es útil y es una institución que tiene que continuar” // Dirección de prensa, Presidencia de la República de Chile. 27.01.2022. URL: <https://prensa.presidencia.cl/comunicado.aspx?id=185807> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>33</sup> Roberto Ampuero: ‘La Unasur es un cadáver y no cumple sus objetivos’ // El Comercio. 01.09.2018. URL: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/politica/robertoampuero-unasur-cadaver-objetivo-chile.html> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

traditionally has two features: predominance of the bloc’s external links as Latin America’s “window” to Asia over internal ones, and choice in favor of the so-called “cross-regionalism,” which implies free trade agreements with a wide range of global and regional partners. Under Duque and Piñera, these trends were fully preserved. Thus, during the interim presidency of Colombia in the Pacific Alliance in 2021, Singapore received the status of the first associate member of the Alliance, which was regarded as a historical milestone in the life of the bloc and cooperation with Asian markets.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Colombia under Duque became a subversive of intra-zone trade due to protectionist measures imposed in response to the pandemic and US tariffs. The administration of Piñera was more focused on developing contacts with partners from Mercosur. In this logic, a major agreement was signed with Brazil in 2018, which entered into force in January 2022,<sup>35</sup> expanding the economic complementarity arrangements that already existed between Brazil and Chile, as an associated member of Mercosur since the 1990s, to the areas of services, public procurement, communications, intercompany and customs cooperation.

In 2021, agreements were reached with Argentina on infrastructure cooperation and facilitation of cross-border mobility of citizens,<sup>36</sup> and plans were agreed to sign a free

<sup>34</sup> Iván Duque: Llegada de Singapur marca un hito histórico para la Alianza del Pacífico // El Universo. 26.01.2022. URL: <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/internacional/ivan-duque-llegada-de-singapur-marca-un-hito-historico-para-la-alianza-del-pacifico-nota/> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>35</sup> Entra en vigor Acuerdo de Libre Comercio entre Chile y Brasil // Subsecretaría de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. 25.01.2022. URL: <https://www.subrei.gob.cl/sala-de-prensa/noticias/detalle-noticias/2022/01/25/entra-en-vigor-acuerdo-de-libre-comercio-entre-chile-y-brasil> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>36</sup> Chile y Argentina firman importantes acuerdos bilaterales en el marco de la Visita de Estado de mandatario argentino // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. 26.01.2021. URL: <https://minrel.gob.cl/noticias-antiores/chile-y-argentina-firman-importantes-acuerdos-bilaterales-en-el-marco-de> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

trade agreement with Paraguay.<sup>37</sup> Forcing the rapprochement with Mercosur has made pragmatic sense, as it reinforced Chile's participation in strategic infrastructure projects such as the Bio-Ocean Transport Corridor.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, there was also a symbolic meaning. The convergence of Mercosur and Pacific Alliance, which received impetus after the signing in July 2018 by the two associations of the "Action Plan"<sup>39</sup> for the counter elimination of non-tariff barriers, simplification of foreign trade procedures, integration of production chains, has long been discussed in political circles. It is sometimes seen as the only possible way out from the stagnation and identity crisis of the Southern Common Market in which it has found itself since the mid-2010s (Bartesaghi, 2019). By pursuing this option, Chile has showed the benefits of open integration, presented itself as a constructive actor, able of uniting the region.

### **Regionalism and the Agenda of Contemporary Colorados in Paraguay**

Since the democratic transition, in general, all political forces of Paraguay began to perceive participation in the integration processes within the region as a necessity. From a pragmatic point of view, integration serves as a channel of resources for development, overcoming the costs of inland position, and

<sup>37</sup> Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile y Paraguay firman Acuerdo de Libre Comercio entre ambos países // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. 01.12.2021. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20211202101536/https://www.subrei.gob.cl/sala-de-prensa/noticias/detalle-noticias/2021/12/01/ministros-de-relaciones-exteriores-de-chile-y-paraguay-firman-acuerdo-de-libre-comercio-entre-ambos-pa%C3%ADses> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>38</sup> The Bi-Oceanic Corridor: A New Railroad to Rival Maritime Freight? // Railway Technology. April 30, 2018. URL: <https://www.railway-technology.com/analysis/the-bi-oceanic-corridor-a-new-railroad-to-rival-maritime-freight/> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>39</sup> Alianza del Pacífico y Mercosur definen Plan de Acción para fortalecer vínculos entre los dos bloques // Alianza del Pacífico. 24.07.2018. URL: <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/alianza-del-pacifico-y-mercursosur-definen-plan-de-accion-para-fortalecer-vinculos-entre-los-dos-bloques/> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

improving the country's international image. At the same time, with its help, the asymmetry of power in relations with Paraguay's most important partners — Argentina and Brazil — can be partially mitigated through integration.

On the other hand, Asuncion's regional agenda is set in the context of the historical dominance of right-wing forces in the country — the National Republican Association — Colorado Party. In pursuit of electoral success in the 21st century, Colorado is constantly expanding and transforming its ideological project, supplementing it with the themes of social justice, economic modernization, a multi-vector and diversified line in the foreign arena. But liberal-conservative priorities, such as free market and absolute political democracy, remain at the core (Konoválova, 2020). Another constant of Paraguay's approach, as a historical right-winger in Latin America, is alignment with the US and its allies, including Taiwan. All this also limits Asuncion's course in regional multilateral structures. It becomes problematic to engage in deep integration with political overtones associated with a special Latin American identity, as well as relations with China, which relied on CELAC to consolidate its presence in the region and is actively operating in the Mercosur zone.

The Venezuelan issue in regional affairs has been a painful one for the Paraguayan authorities since the country's only Social Democrat president Fernando Lugo (2008—2012) was ousted by impeachment, and the rest of Mercosur, led by Lugo's ideologically friendly governments, suspended Paraguay's membership and incorporated the Bolivarian Republic into the grouping. Not only Colorado, but also their opponents from the nation's other largest and oldest right-wing force, the Authentic Liberal Radical Party, formed a critical attitude towards Venezuela as a violator of the bloc's democratic clause and their own dangerous ideological adversary due to the connections between the Bolivarians and Lugo's entourage (Kudeyarova, 2013, pp. 12—15). This was superimposed on the

general rejection of the left courses in integration. With Mario Abdo Benítez and his nationalist-conservative faction “Authentic Colorados” coming to power in 2018, this line was reinforced. Its consolidation was also facilitated by the change in Paraguay’s inner circle, where the tone was first set by the right-centrists, such as Michel Temer (2016—2018) in Brazil and Mauricio Macri (2015—2019) in Argentina, and then, with the election of Jair Bolsonaro, radicals appeared. Paraguay’s neighbors gave Mercosur, from which Venezuela was expelled in December 2016, an anti-Bolivarian vector, and this was chronologically the first step towards the marginalization of Bolivarians in the region from the position of “defending democracy.” Thus, the government of Abdo Benítez sees the anti-Bolivarian consensus as both an opportunity to express the ideals of the Colorado Party and a systemic circumstance.

Abdo Benítez turned out to be one of the brightest figures at the CELAC summit in Mexico City in September 2021. He began his speech with sharp remarks about the non-recognition of Maduro as president and his government as dictatorial. The issue of protecting democracy and institutions was first of all touched upon by the head of Paraguay, while the health crisis, economic recovery after the pandemic and the fight against poverty were mentioned afterwards in his speech. The issue of democracy was raised by Abdo Benítez with explicit references to the Venezuelan situation, as he spoke about violating the autonomy of the branches of government and manipulating the judiciary to persecute political opponents.<sup>40</sup>

The reaction to such a line was very distinctive: oppositionists from Venezuela and Cuba on social media rated Paraguay as a “small but brave country” ready to “fight

against the tyranny of Maduro.”<sup>41</sup> As can be seen, the level of pan-Latin American integration is used by the Paraguayan leadership to express primarily political and ideological positions, as well as to win image points amidst the excitement around the Venezuelan issue.

Like Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, Paraguay broke with UNASUR, citing its “ideological bias” and opting for PROSUR as a “new scheme” of integration that would “promote full respect for human rights, rule of law and democracy” as a kind of universal values needed by “states, not just governments.”<sup>42</sup> As for the functionality of PROSUR for Asuncion, there is a noticeable interest in sharing the best practices on resilience to natural risks and disasters,<sup>43</sup> anti-pandemic coordination. In 2021, the most difficult year for the fight against COVID-19, the Paraguayan authorities tried to use the PROSUR meetings as a “mouthpiece” for their rhetoric for the availability of vaccines for underdeveloped countries. In 2022, Paraguay takes over the interim presidency of PROSUR. This suggests that active work to keep the Forum relevant to regional affairs will continue.

The imperative of “getting MERCOSUR back to basics,” emphasizing its tasks as a trading bloc, characteristic of the Colorado Party, was articulated during the administration of Horacio Cartes (2013—2018).<sup>44</sup> At present,

<sup>41</sup> “Cachetada” diplomática de Abdo Benítez a Nicolás Maduro en México // *La Nación*. 18.09.2021. URL: <https://www.lanacion.com.py/politica/2021/09/18/cachetada-diplomatica-de-abdo-benitez-a-nicolas-maduro-en-mexico/> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>42</sup> Paraguay asume la titularidad pro t mpore del Prosur // *Ultima Hora*. 27.01.2022. URL: <https://www.ultimahora.com/paraguay-asume-la-titularidad-pro-tempore-del-prosur-n2983891.html> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>43</sup> Abordan curso acci n de Paraguay en PROSUR // *Secretaria de Emergencia Nacional*. URL: <https://www.sen.gov.py/index.php/noticias/abordan-curso-accion-de-paraguay-en-prosur> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>44</sup> Gustavo Leite: MERCOSUR debe volver a su origen de integraci n econ mica // *Sistema Econ mico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (SELA)*. URL: <http://www.sela.org/es/imprimir/?n=21627> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>40</sup> Intervenci n del presidente de Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benitez, en la VI Cumbre de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribe nos (CELAC) // *Youtube*. September 19, 2021. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyyM7Su0FvY> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

as shown by the Paraguayan agenda during the interim presidencies of the Southern Common Market in 2019—2020 and early 2022, the conceptual guidelines of the “National Development Plan: Paraguay 2030,”<sup>45</sup> the strategy of “economic diplomacy”<sup>46</sup> formulated by the country’s Foreign Ministry, two directions of further bloc’s evolution are of fundamental importance for Asuncion. On the one hand, Asuncion wants customs “disarmament” and disclosure of Mercosur to the Pacific Alliance, the EU and Eurasian actors, because it would benefit Paraguayan agricultural products to foreign markets and increase the availability of imports of consumer and technological goods. On the other hand, Asuncion is interested in preserving industrial integration and institutions such as Focem, as they solve the problem of smoothing asymmetric relations with neighbors and support the modernization of Paraguay, the infrastructural improvements necessary to neutralize the drawbacks of the landlockedness. Nowadays the question of the future path of Mercosur has confronted virtually all of its members against each other, and Paraguayan motives put the country, by and large, in the position of the only compromise player, which at the same time is a small weight of the association and is forced to maneuver between its own and others’ interests. Thus, being close to the views of the economic liberals J. Bolsonaro in Brazil and Luis Lacalle Pou in Uruguay, the government of Abdo Benítez supports the idea of reducing the single external tariff, changing the rules of origin, and

developing the bloc’s external relations in every possible way.

However it is not ready to risk the integrity of the Common Market, as well as the principle of consensus in decision-making,<sup>47</sup> which brings it closer to Argentina of Alberto Fernandez. With regard to the tactics chosen by Uruguay for separate negotiations on a free trade zone with China, Asuncion takes an evasive position: it does not reject the importance of contacts with China and at the same time insists on the principle of bloc-based negotiations. It is clear that while the Colorado is being pressured by businesses to expand and formalize ties with China, politicians intend to delay the decision as long as possible, not wanting to jeopardize contacts with Taiwan and US goodwill, and also perceiving a turn towards China as undermining their pro-democracy creed. The future of Mercosur, even as a purely economic bloc, is a strategic issue for Paraguay, clashing its pragmatic needs and ideological motives.

### **The Right and Latin American Regionalism: Some Conclusions**

As we have seen, the right-wing forces turned out to be the overthrowers of the meanings of regionalism that emerged in the past decade and the authors a number of new ones. Key under them were the sharpening of the value of political democracy, which should be protected by integration, the prioritization of economic issues and the transfer of regionalism to the rails of solving “concrete problems,” where the response to the challenge of COVID-19 is of particular urgency. There is a marked irrelevance of identity-forming ideas, pan-Latin American and pan-South American ideas that would promote the autonomy and the particular way of the region, as it was during the left-wing patriotic uprising.

<sup>45</sup> Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Paraguay 2030 // Observatorio Regional de Planificación para el Desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe. URL: <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/planes/plan-nacional-de-desarrollo-paraguay-2030> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>46</sup> Cancillería y STP presentan lineamientos y objetivos del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2030 que orientarán la política diplomática y consular // Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Paraguay. 08.07.2020. URL: <https://www.mre.gov.py/index.php/noticias-de-embajadas-y-consulados/cancilleria-y-stp-presentan-lineamientos-y-objetivos-del-plan-nacional-de-desarrollo-2030-que-orientaran-la-politica-diplomatica> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

<sup>47</sup> Mario Abdo: “Somos 4 miembros. No queremos un Mercosur de 3 o 2 países” // La Nación. 08.07.2021. URL: <https://www.lanacion.com.py/politica/2021/07/08/mario-abdo-somos-4-miembros-no-queremos-un-mercosur-de-3-o-2-paises/> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

At the same time, the right-wing experience shows that integration processes are the “norm” of life in the region and ideologies do not prevent using integration as a resource for resolving the problems the countries face, for raising the political points of this or that government. Evidence of the universality of the request for integration is, in particular, the imminent creation of PROSUR in place of the blocked UNASUR, the correction of the Brazilian leadership’s view of regionalism after the resignation of E. Araujo, the great attention paid to integration by Paraguayan leaders from the Colorado Party.

Noticing the persistence of the demand for integration in the period of dominance of right-wing forces, it seems important to take into account the multidimensionality of the consensus that is emerging around unifying tendencies. On the one hand, it is a political consensus. It is also significant here that right-wing leaders coexist with very influential, albeit in opposition, left-wing parties and forces that have promoted and continue to promote the priority of integration dialogue with their neighbors. On the other hand, Latin American societies themselves are in favor of regional integration,<sup>48</sup> i.e. ordinary voters are supporters of its development.

As for the factor of political polarization, its connection to the integration intentions of right-wing forces is contradictory. On the one hand, general pro-integration attitudes with an emphasis on pragmatism create the possibility to mitigate this factor. However, on the other hand, the right-wing approaches in many respects only contribute to splits and divisions in the region, which is vividly illustrated by the current attitude

<sup>48</sup> For example, according to Latinobarómetro, in 2020, about 80% of citizens surveyed in 18 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean supported the integration of their country with other regional neighbors. See: A favor o en contra de la integración de su país con los otros países de América Latina // Corporación Latinobarómetro. URL: <https://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

of most integration groups to the Venezuelan events.

Traditionally, the process of Latin American integration goes along the path of overlapping of different formats that are born, fade away, and re-actualize. The prospects for adjusting the domestic political landscape in 2022—2023 following the next presidential elections, which are most clearly visible in Brazil and Colombia, will inevitably have an impact on the countries’ integration agendas. However, we see at least two reasons that may point to the long-term significance of the latest “right turn” experiments.

First, the period of the “right turn” saw the denouement of the intra-Venezuelan conflict, with its very serious international consequences for the whole of Latin America. Therefore, in general, the experience of right-wing integration building turned out to be closely linked to the task of developing and institutionalizing a multilateral response to the crisis, which continues to destabilize the region. Of course, the approaches of the right have been highly politicized, but they raise important questions that will clearly have to be asked by the next leaders of Latin American nations: To what extent is the solidary political and diplomatic pressure on Maduro from the regional community justified? Can the democratic clauses of the multilateral groupings be effective in normalizing the situation in Venezuela?

One can already find some “hints” that today’s left forces regaining their influence are problematizing what is happening in Venezuela. It is negative attitude towards the authorities of Venezuela, the reluctance of the elected head of Chile, G. Borich, to associate himself with N. Maduro, and the central figure in the camp of the Colombian left and the candidate for the presidency in 2022, Gustavo Petro. Thus, the anti-Bolivarian Latin American consensus built by the right may be, to some extent, a stable reality to be reckoned with. Thus, the anti-Bolivarian Latin American consensus built by

the right could turn out to be, to a certain extent, a stable reality to be reckoned with.

Secondly, the “right turn” raised the question of the viability of strategies aimed at “cleansing” integration from politics and making it more functional. A striking example is provided by Mercosur, which needs to be restructured for an adequate external economic positioning of all its members, but at the same time not to lose the integrity and already built internal ties. As we have seen, Brazil under Bolsonaro, Paraguay under Abdo Benítez, Chile under Piñera, who promoted the convergence of the Southern Common Market and the Pacific Alliance in the spirit of the philosophy of open regionalism, each approach the Mercosur’s

problems from different angles. The further fate of the “substitute” for UNASUR — PROSUR — directly depends on its potential to be strengthened in the role of an association helping countries to solve specific problems.

The right-wingers have once again highlighted the problem of dialectical relations between ideology and pragmatism in Latin American regionalism. They have persistently appealed to pragmatically oriented integration, the demand for which grew with the exhaustion of the legacy of so-called Latin America’s “Golden decade,” but in reality they could not avoid building their projects around a new ideological consensus.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 12.03.2022

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 23.05.2022

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 27.06.2022

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