The Evolution of Mercosur Behaving as an International Coalition, 1991–2012

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Abstract: As is well known, Mercosur was conceived as an economic bloc. However, over time, it has also behaved as an international coalition. This article aims to trace this process in the period 1991 to 2012 via two indicators: the voting behaviour of the four original Mercosur member states in the United Nations General Assembly, and positions adopted on international political issues in the communiques emanating from the bi-annual Mercosur presidential summits. The period under review will be divided into two further periods, namely 1991-2002 and 2003-2012.

Keywords: South American Integration; International Coalitions; South-South Coalitions; Mercosur.

Introduction

Following Balassa (1972), regional economic integration is normally classified in terms of four progressive stages, namely the establishment of a free trade area, a customs union and a common market, followed by full economic and monetary union. Each phase is clearly defined in terms of generally accepted criteria, although there are atypical cases, of which Mercosur is one. However, analysts do not agree on the classification of regional integration schemes with political features.¹ This is probably because of the diverse ways in which political regional integration develops, reflecting the specific logics of international relations in different regions.

According to the global interdependence theorists Keohane and Nye (1989), countries do not embark on regional integration schemes solely to benefit from economies of scale and increase their participation in global markets, but also to expand their role in global governance. As Lima and Coutinho (2006: 6) have remarked, ‘an integrated region has much more weight in world politics than each of the countries that comprise it, in isolation’.

In this sense, it can be observed that some regional economic blocs tend to develop an external dimension, effectively operating as international political coalitions. In other

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words, encouraged by their growing economic co-operation and interdependence, members of regional integration schemes are also likely to act in concert in the multilateral institutions that determine the rules of global governance, thus promoting their common interests. From a constructivist perspective, political convergence may also result from the development of a common regional identity, and the sharing of beliefs.

Mercosur was originally established as an economic bloc only. Article 1 of the founding Treaty of Asunción (1991) states that Mercosur will constitute a common market with a common external tariff, in which macroeconomic and sectoral policies will be co-ordinated, and national laws harmonised.

Although these economic goals have not been fully achieved, Mercosur has also gradually developed a political dimension, thus mirroring other major regional integration projects, notably the European Union (EU). Evidence of this includes the Ushuaia Protocol (1998), which confirms Mercosur’s commitment to democracy, and the Political Declaration of Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace (1999). Later, in 2003, the Buenos Aires Consensus sought to relaunch the regional Mercosur project by giving it an explicit social and political dimension, which was followed by the creation of a number of institutions.

Since 1996, an effort has also been made to institutionalise the operation of the bloc as an international coalition. In 1996, the four original member states (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) established a consultation and political co-ordination mechanism tasked with expanding and systematising political co-operation in the bloc; examining international issues of interest to member states with the aim of co-ordinating their positions; and considering political issues of interest to member states related to third countries, groups of countries, or international organisations.

In 1998, the co-ordination mechanism was converted into the Political Consultation and Coordination Forum (FCCP), an auxiliary organ of the Common Market Council (CMC), comprising senior officials of the foreign ministries of member countries. The forum was tasked with formulating recommendations for consideration by the CMC, which meets on the margins of the bi-annual presidential summits.

However, the joint communiques issued after these summits, particularly after the Buenos Aires Consensus (2003), reflect a recurring frustration with the inability of the FCCP to harmonise the foreign policy positions of member states. According to diplomats involved in the forum, it became apparent that it was pointless to discuss international policy issues, because the professionals involved were not familiar with the practicalities of global politics. By contrast, it emerged that it was easier to develop joint policy positions when these were negotiated by the diplomats of the permanent missions of Mercosur member states to multilateral organisations such as the UN and WTO.

Given its inability to co-ordinate policy, the FCCP gradually began to serve as a consultative body only; it became a forum where member states – and associate members – could consult on and exchange experiences of various aspects domestic politics. It can thus be regarded as a confidence-building tool, used to avoid regional misunderstandings. In any event, it played a significant role in signalling the initial intent of member countries to co-ordinate international relations policies.
Against this background, I will examine empirically the evolution of Mercosur as an international coalition in the period 1991 to 2012, using, as indicators, the voting behaviour of the four original Mercosur members in the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and the joint communiques issued after bi-annual presidential summits. Preliminary research has confirmed that assessing the activities of the FCCP would have little or no value.

In section 2, I review the literature on regional economic integration and international political coalitions, with a view to establishing a conceptual framework for my analysis. The empirical analysis follows, in which I divide the 22-year period under review into two further periods.

Section 3 deals with the period from 1991 to 2002, the era of open regionalism and attention to economic and commercial issues, during which intra-zone tariffs were almost entirely abolished and trade and investment flows between member states increased significantly, followed by the international financial crisis of 1997 (Asian) which helped to trigger the Brazilian currency crisis of 1999 and the Argentine political and economic crisis of 1999-2002.

Section 4 deals with the period from 2003 to 2012 during which growing attention was paid to social, political, participatory and distributive integration, with the Buenos Aires Consensus (2003) and Mercosur Work Plan of 2004-2006 the most important building blocks. A conclusion follows in section 5.

Literature review

International coalitions

From the 1950s onwards, and reflecting the dominance of the realist school, IR analysts paid scant attention to international coalitions, focusing instead on the study of military coalitions or military alliances, particularly the bipolar Cold War system as well as the alliances formed during World War One and World War Two.

International coalitions were analysed in terms of ideology, balance of power issues, and the defence of shared interests in the face of common threats. According to analysts, countries formed coalitions to achieve the three interrelated objectives of security, stability, and influence, defined as political and military advantages (Attinà 1998).

In an influential article published in 1964, Deutsch and Singer (1964) set out to provide semi-quantitative arguments why a move from bipolarity to multipolarity could help to create international stability. Snyder (1984) used game theory to analyse the formation and maintenance of military alliances. According to him, alliances among states depended on their previous interests, conflicts and affinities. Once the alliances were formed, new games began inside them with regard to the co-operation among or defection of the participants. Walt (1985) argued that, besides power relations, issues of culture and ideology could bring together or separate countries, and that international aid, whether financial aid or military assistance, further attracted countries to certain alliances.

A vast literature has developed, in political science as well as social psychology, about the conditions under which political coalitions are formed, drawing on the associations
among individuals and the formation of coalitions among domestic political groupings. Based on a study of small groupings of three people, Caplow (1956) argued that the formation of coalitions depended on the initial distribution of power, which made it possible to predict which coalitions would eventually be formed.

Gamson (1961), in turn, proposed a coalition formation theory for groups of any size. He defined four characteristics of situations propitious to the formation of coalitions:

i. a decision has to be made, and more than two social units seek to maximise their benefits as a result;

ii. no alternative would maximise the benefits of all at the same time;

iii. no participant has dictatorial powers, or the resources to control the decision alone; and

iv. no participant has the power of veto over a decision.

According to the author, to predict which players will form alliances in these sorts of situations, one must know: the initial distribution of resources; the payoff for each coalition; the actors’ non-utilitarian strategy preferences; and the minimum resources needed to control the decision.

Riker (1962), one of the main theorists in this area, applied economic principles and game theory to Gamson’s ideas (1961) in order to identify the minimum conditions for establishing a mutually winning political coalition, namely one from which the departure of any member would render the coalition incapable of controlling the outcomes of decisions. In this analysis, unlike Gamson’s, the principle of ‘one person, one vote’ becomes valuable.

Komorita and Chertkoff (1973) turned to an examination of how the process of political bargaining over the formation of coalitions affects their formation and maintenance. They identified a pre-negotiation phase, an initial meeting, and subsequent meetings, each with distinct characteristics and payoffs for the various actors.

In the 1980s, IR analysts began to examine the formation of negotiating coalitions in multilateral arenas. The growth in the literature about international regimes, analysing the role of international institutions in determining the potential for co-operation and conflict, played a major role in the emergence of studies about coalitions of countries aimed at changing the political game in forums in which the rules are clearly defined.

Rothstein (1984) made a major contribution to this literature by drawing attention to the key role of decision-making procedures in the formation of political coalitions, as well as their outcomes. Analysing the failed attempt by the G-77 group of Third World countries to establish a New International Economic Order (NIEO), he demonstrated how the choice of decision-making procedures affected the dynamics of coalition-building and worked to polarise positions rather than harmonise them. He also concluded that groups that shared broad objectives tended to be more stable over time.

More recently, following the emergence of new global players and their increasingly significant association in multilateral mechanisms, renewed attention has been paid to international coalitions in a context marked by the redistribution of economic power. Building on the study by Narlikar and Tussie (2003) of the G-20 Ministerial Conference...
on agriculture in Cancun under the Doha Round of the WTO, Narlikar (2010) developed a comprehensive theoretical model for defining these new coalitions of developing countries. Concerned with the emergence of these powers in the international system, the author analysed the negotiating strategies of Brazil, India and China, including their use of coalitions as a strategy for achieving their goals. She defines a coalition as a group of states that have united in pursuit of a common goal, and identifies two types: blocs, formed by states united by a common identity or shared beliefs, which adopt collective positions on a wide range of subject areas; and alliances, which are formed for instrumental reasons only, focus on a particular and immediate problem, and therefore tend to dissipate more easily (Narlikar 2010: 10).

Lima (2010: 164) drew a distinction between co-operative arrangements and coalitions, arguing that: ‘A cooperative arrangement involves the exchange between the parties of material, symbolic and ideational goods. A coalition implies the coordination of common positions in negotiating arenas at the global or regional level.’ In this sense, Lima’s conception of coalitions resembles Narlikar’s conception of alliances. She also drew attention to the fact that coalitions of emerging countries present a variable geometry ‘according to the theme and the international regime on the agenda’ (Lima 2010: 167).

In this article, drawing on the work of Narlikar and Lima, I will seek to develop a comprehensive definition of international coalitions as the formation of groups of two or more countries aimed at co-ordinating their policy positions and working together in the multilateral mechanisms which negotiate the rules guiding global governance, and to increase their power and hence their ability to defend their common interests in the short to medium term.

**Regional integration**

Regional integration processes started in the 19th century (with German unification a notable example), but assumed greater prominence in the second half of the 20th century, due mainly to European economic co-operation agreements in the wake of World War Two. In this ‘old regionalism’ (or first wave of regionalism), states played central roles in forming regional organisations, and shaping their outcomes. While they were largely concerned with economic co-operation, issues of enhanced security also played a role (Fawcett 2012: 3).

The end of the Cold War and the advent of globalisation led to a ‘new regionalism’, ‘open regionalism’, or second wave of regionalism in which regional integration schemes proliferated throughout the world. In Latin America, unlike other integration schemes of the mid-20th century, they took the form of economic blocs, based on the argument that this was the only way in which countries could prepare themselves for the global competition that would arise from multilateral economic liberalisation (Lima and Coutinho 2005).

Following the evident failure of the neoliberal integration model by the end of the millennium (resulting in higher levels of external debt, increased social inequality, and lower levels of economic growth), Latin American countries re-examined their regional integration model in order to provide it with a stronger social and political component.
Developed countries also did this, motivated by the security issues the USA placed on the international agenda following the attacks of 11 September 2001. Indeed, due to the War on Terror, the USA did not object to this change in Latin American regionalism, in the hope that this would help to increase the institutional and political capabilities of developing regions (Lima and Coutinho 2006).

Given its growth, and partial success, many analysts have sought to explain the phenomenon of regionalism, and evaluate various regional integration schemes. From the 1950s onwards, two broad schools of thought emerged: one focusing on the political aspects of regional integration, notably its institutional and regulatory dimensions, and its role in ensuring peace; and the other focusing on the economic aspects, notably the creation of economies of scale, and alteration of terms of trade (Mattli 1999). Hurrell (1995) listed eight different political perspectives: two focusing on the global international system; three focusing on regional systems; and three more focusing on the domestic politics of participating countries.

As regards the global system, structural realists such as Waltz (1979) argue that regional integration is essentially prompted by the desire to forge military alliances. The reasons for doing so have already been surveyed. By contrast, members of the complex interdependence school argue that, with the advent of globalisation, the collective management of common regional problems has become increasingly viable as well as advantageous. Given that global competition promotes the formation of ever larger units in order to achieve not only economies of scale, but also increased power to influence the rules and institutions of global governance, integration in regions is an effective response to the challenge of globalisation (Hurrell 1995).

As regards regional systems, neo-functionalists such as Haas (2004) have proposed the concept of functional spillover in terms of which integration begins with co-operation on technical issues, thus lessening the potential for political disputes, leading to growing collaboration on various levels that eventually spills over into unintended areas not initially earmarked for regional collaboration. In this model, regional integration gradually gains its own logic and momentum, making the process robust and cohesive. In this approach, then, regional integration is understood as the result of an initial process of co-operation.

The institutional neoliberalism approach deals with regionalisation in the same way as international co-operation, and the role of institutions in facilitating it. Thus, in terms of this approach, countries engage in regional integration in order to reduce transaction costs and diminish information asymmetry, aimed in turn at facilitating co-operation in various areas in which they are interdependent, and in which it is rational to collaborate (Hurrell 1995).

Finally, the constructivist school regards regional values and regional collective identities as the driving force behind regionalism (or resulting from it). In these analyses, the identification of regional principles and values, the accumulation of regional interests, the formation of a regional identity, and the cultural dynamics that shape those interests receive detailed attention (Hurrell 1995).
Work on economic integration falls into two main schools of thought, the liberal and developmentalist schools, both incorporating subsidiary theoretical models which share some analytical assumptions (Teixeira and Desidera 2012).

The liberal vision of regionalism is based on Adam Smith’s classic critique of mercantilism, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), and the notion of comparative advantage introduced by David Ricardo in *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817).

Another major contribution was the concepts of trade creation and trade diversion developed by Jacob Viner (1950, 1953). In his model, regional trade agreements could lead to trade creation among members, but could also lead to trade diversion – i.e., substituting more efficient imports from third party countries with less efficient imports from members of the regional bloc.

Therefore, members of the liberal school do not regard regional economic integration in positive terms but as a ‘second-best’ option to unrestricted multilateral trade and open economies in which trade gains would be fully maximised. This vision is consistent with the open regionalism promoted in Latin America in the 1990s.

There are other elements that characterise this liberal vision of regionalism. Thus Celso Furtado argued that:

(…) in the study of development, it is appropriate to consider foreign trade from three different angles: a) as a factor in raising economic productivity, through the expansion of markets and specialization; b) as a driving force capable of provoking structural changes; and, c) as the conduit for technological progress ( [1967] 1985: 165).

According to Furtado, the orthodox theory of international trade deals with only one aspect of development, leaving aside the other two. Thus another key feature of the liberal view of regionalism is that it only highlights trading gains (whether derived from economies of scale or comparative advantages), paying little or no attention to the role of structural economic changes and technological progress.

The developmentalist school, prominently represented by Prebisch, started in the 19th century with the work of Friedrich List, notably *The National System of Political Economics* (1841), as a means of dealing with the integration of late developing capitalist countries, such as the unification of Germany and Italy. Influenced by Alexander Hamilton, List regarded regional integration as a strategy for promoting the economic development of countries that were struggling to compete against countries in more advanced stages of capitalist development. Referring to the classical school of trade, List argued that

(…) the school did not realize that in a regime of full and free competition, with more advanced manufacturing nations, a less advanced nation, although well equipped for manufacture, will never succeed in achieving a perfectly developed manufacturing strength, nor in achieving its complete national independence, if it does not resort to the protectionist system. (…) The popular school seeks to cite the benefits of free internal trade as proof that nations can only achieve
the highest degree of prosperity and power inside a regime of absolute freedom of international trade, when the story everywhere always points to the contrary ([1841] 1985: 213).

In the 1950s and 1960s, during the debate in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) about overcoming underdevelopment in Latin America, the theme of regional integration was seen as fundamental. In a seminal ECLAC text (1959), Prebisch advocated the establishment of a common market, arguing that economic integration was vital for the region's development.

The Prebisch proposals were aimed at meeting two major requirements of Latin American development, namely industrialisation, and the need to reduce the vulnerability of countries in the region to external economic and financial forces (ECLAC 1959: 330). Put differently, it was aimed at strengthening a group of peripheral economies and promoting their integration into the world economy, in order, ultimately, to preserve their autonomy as national states. Industrialisation was promoted by means of import substitution, stimulating the regional manufacturing sectors and reducing its external vulnerability at the same time.

This approach (ECLAC 1959) constitutes a form of economic co-operation that amounts to free trade in the liberal mould. In this model, regional integration involves mechanisms for reducing asymmetries with no requirement for reciprocity, so that countries in surplus are able to lower their trade barriers as soon as possible, while countries in deficit may do so more slowly.

Furtado also calls for regional integration from the perspective of planning the economic development of underdeveloped nations and reducing regional inequalities, highlighting the need for co-operation and the co-ordination of development policies:

(...) the theory of integration is a higher stage of development theory, and the policy of integration an advanced form of development policy. The planning of integration emerges, also, as a more complex form of the technique of coordination of economic decisions. In the case of underdeveloped economies, unplanned integration leads necessarily to the worsening of regional imbalances, namely the geographic concentration of income ([1967] 1985: 234).

In short, developmental regionalism does not ignore the existence of trade gains from the specialisation advocated by orthodox theory, but does not consider it to be the only link between trade and development, because as Furtado ([1967] 1985) noted, gains from the structural change and dissemination of technological progress should be considered.

Another fundamental difference between developmental and liberal regionalism is the importance of intervention by national states in the regional integration process. Contrary to liberal regionalism, developmental regionalism does not seek to reduce the role of states in regional economies, but to co-ordinate their development policies in order to foster the development of the region as a whole. In the developmental perspective, regional integration does not deal merely with reducing tariffs and barriers to trade, but
extends to industrial policy, productive integration, infrastructure and energy, social policies, and so on.

Above all, as Fawcett (2012: 6) states, ‘regionalism is far from being a linear or uniform process; on the contrary, it has developed in stages, shaped by a variety of external and internal factors’. Seen from this perspective, regional integration processes may also differ in the degree to which the countries involved transfer part of their sovereignty to the supranational level.

At this point, it may be observed that Mercosur embodies a jointly structured and coherent set of activities encompassing a wide range of international co-operation. It therefore makes sense, from a theoretical point of view, to analyse its function as an international coalition, since this is a specific expression of international co-operation, and therefore forms part of the spectrum of possible activities in a regional integration process.

**Political co-ordination in Mercosur, 1991–2002**

In the mid-1980s, the continuing democratisation of the neighbouring states of Argentina and Brazil led to a growing rapprochement between them. Following mutual requests, they embarked on a process of integration in a changing international context due to the end of the Cold War and the consequent surge in economic globalisation. The resolution of the Itaipu–Corpus Issue, and the easing of the nationalist suspicions present on both sides during the preceding military dictatorships, especially in respect of their nuclear programmes, created space for embarking on common development projects.

From the politico-strategic point of view, it was important for both nations to regain their credibility with the major western powers by jointly guaranteeing their renewed commitment to peace, democracy, and market economics. Given the external debt crises in Latin American countries, it was also necessary to act in concert in order to restructure their debt agreements with private creditors.

In 1990, Argentina and Brazil signed the Buenos Aires Act, committing them to establishing a common market by end 1994. Clearly, the main thrust of this initiative was an economic one. A schedule of tariff reductions was adopted in terms of which reductions would occur in a linear and automatic way. The main strategic goal of these measures was to prepare productive sectors in the domestic economies for participation in the multilateral trading system. In 1991, these two countries and also Paraguay and Uruguay signed the Treaty of Asunción, keeping the same schedule.

Even though the focus was an economic one, the importance of the four countries acting in concert was kept. The 1990 launch, by US President George H Bush, of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, aimed at establishing a free trade zone throughout the southern hemisphere, further prompted the Mercosur countries to co-ordinate their activities. In 1991, the Mercosur countries and the United States signed the 4+1 Agreement which defined that both trade and investment aspects of the hemispheric zone would be negotiated in bloc by Mercosur countries.
The period 1991-1994 was designated by the Treaty of Asuncion as the ‘transition period’, the term for the full conformation of the common market in the customs territory of the bloc. Even if the goal was not completely reached, the tasks have been focused on the economic field over the years.

This is the reason why communiques issued after the bi-annual presidential summits from 1991 to 1994, extending into 1995, largely deal with the inner workings of Mercosur. Opportunities to issue joint statements about Mercosur’s external policies are very rare. When they do occur, they tend to be restricted to economic and trade issues, such as support to strengthen the multilateral free trade system, and issues surrounding the 4+1 Agreement itself.

In 1996, after years of negotiations, Chile and then Bolivia signed trade agreements with Mercosur. In the same year, as noted earlier, a mechanism was set up for consultation and political co-ordination. This became the FCCP which, from its outset, included the two Andean countries. These two events contributed to the emergence of Mercosur’s external political dimension.

This was evidenced in 1996 when, for the first time, member states confirmed their support for Argentina in its sovereignty dispute with the UK over the Malvinas Islands.7

In late 1997, Chile was incorporated into Mercosur as an associate member, participating in several meetings of its main institutions, namely the Common Market Council (CMC) and Common Market Group (CMG).8 Since then, two joint communiqués have been released after the bi-annual presidential summits forming part of CMC meetings: one by the four full member states, which tends to deal with internal issues; and the other by the four member states plus Bolivia and Chile, which often deal with broader issues, including political ones.

In 1998, the six Mercosur members reaffirmed their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, and adopted the Proclamation of Rio de Janeiro, which reaffirms human rights and fundamental freedoms as fundamental features of their societies. In 2000, representatives of the Mercosur countries, Bolivia and Chile met to affirm policies and co-ordinate initiatives in this thematic area, especially in international multilateral arenas.

In 1999, in the run-up to the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Mercosur began to demand the elimination of agricultural subsidies in the multilateral trading system. Subsequently, complaints about these subsidies were repeated every year, with the subsidies characterised as ‘barriers to agricultural trade’. Finally, in 2002, the six countries committed themselves to the Doha development agenda, which provides developing countries with access to markets in developed countries.

In 2000, Mercosur reaffirmed its commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the importance of an integrated vision for the use of nuclear energy in the region that would promote security, growth and development.

In 2000, Mercosur also commented briefly on the fight against racism; drug abuse, drug trafficking and related crimes; elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; and terrorism. It also undertook to collaborate on the nominations of candidates...
for key positions in international organisations, in order to achieve a stronger presence in the international environment.

Finally, in the joint communique following the presidential summit held in Brasilia in December 2002, the four member states, plus Bolivia and Chile, recognised the importance of multilateralism and co-ordination in various multilateral fora; expressed their satisfaction with results already achieved, particularly in the UN General Assembly; and affirmed their commitment to deepen and broaden such activity in this and other fora, ‘in favour of a greater presence on the international stage’ (Mercosur 2002).

Indeed, as shown by Table 1 and Figure 1, the convergence among the four member states in voting on UNGA resolutions in 1991-2002 jumped from 59% to 76%.9

Table 1: Voting behaviour of Mercosur member states in the UNGA, 1991–2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Convergent</th>
<th>Divergent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Convergence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991–2002</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.
The data reveals three marked changes in voting behaviour: in 1995-6, 1997-8; and 1999-2001. For each turnaround, there are different explanations.

The increased convergence between 1995 and 1996 is due almost exclusively to the resolution of disagreements about the theme of colonialism. From the end of the Malvinas War in 1982 until 1995, Argentina abstained from voting on resolutions about granting independence to colonial countries and to people in territories under colonial domination, while other Mercosur members and developing countries in general voted in favour. The defence of the ‘inalienable rights of peoples of such territories to self-determination, including independence,’ in accordance with UNGA resolution 50/38, displeased Argentina because of its resistance to the idea that the population of the Malvinas Islands should decide their own political status.

Since 1996, however, these resolutions have diminished. Argentina has supported those that have been tabled, largely because they have been general in character and also because of the support it had gained from Mercosur partners in respect of the Islands. In other words, having secured the support of its partners in respect of the Malvinas, it felt more comfortable about supporting those sorts of resolutions, thereby demonstrating the benefits of a process of regional understanding.

The marked increase in convergence in 1997-8 was not due to a specific theme or country, but occurred diffusely. It reflected a growing understanding, among others, about human rights, the Palestinian question, and arms control. Moreover, all four countries changed their previous voting patterns in order to align themselves with the others.

Finally, the increase and subsequent decrease in convergence in 1999-2001 happened because the international agenda favoured momentary convergences among the four countries. In 2000, most of the differences appeared to be resolved because some resolu-
Box 1: The UN General Assembly during the Cold War and after

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is a plural body comprising all UN member states. Since 1945, when it met for the first time, it has debated various issues relating to international peace and security, as provided for in Article 11 of the UN Charter. It also promotes studies and recommendations with a view to fostering international co-operation at the political level and in the economic, social, cultural, educational and health areas, in accordance with Article 13 of the Charter.

Each country’s vote carries equal weight. Every year, representatives of member states approve hundreds of resolutions – on average, three quarters of them without voting, the rest by an absolute majority – on various issues of international politics. Because of their thematic breadth, the voting patterns of member states is seen as a good indicator of their international profiles. They are also used as an indicator of the convergence among countries involved in regional integration schemes.

During the Cold War, voting in the UNGA was strongly influenced by the bipolar conflict between East and West (Voeten 2000). However, in the 1950s a ‘third way’ of voting began to develop, influenced by the movement of non-aligned states, or Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was less concerned with bipolar disputes and more with development issues. From then on, colonialism became one of the main topics of discussion. Following the wave of decolonisation in the 1970s, the issue of international inequalities began to gain momentum, as evidenced by the proposal of the Third World for a New International Economic Order (NIEO).

Since the end of the Cold War, the East-West division in UNGA has weakened and the North-South debate has gained space (Kim and Russet 1996), with resolutions dominated by the conflict in the Middle East as well as human rights issues. However, the UNGA has not become more consensual; from 1974-1991 to 1992-2008, the number of ‘no’ and ‘abstention’ votes increased by 23.4% (Ferdinand: no date).

The literature on the voting behaviour of countries involved in regional integration schemes is limited, with much of the attention focused on the EU. According to Beauguitte (2009), while in 1985 the most demonstrative groups in UNGA were the NAM and the socialist bloc, in 2005 the European countries had become a highly interconnected group. Unanimity among the members grew slowly until 1998, and has stabilised at about 80% since then.

Hosli et al (2010) have used different indicators to measure the convergence among European countries in the UNGA. From 1992 to 2005, while cohesion among all UNGA members fell from about 70% to 60%, cohesion among EU members rose from 70% to 90%, with the upwards trend beginning in 1980. The expansion of the EU has not reduced cohesion, showing that new members have adapted rapidly. In this sense, the EU is an example of the gradual homogenisation of foreign policy preferences among members of a regional integration scheme.
tions which had split votes in 1999 were not restated. They returned in 2001, bringing the differences to the fore once again.

Argentina was responsible for more than half of the conflicting votes in these period, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Divergences in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states, 1991-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairs of countries</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by author.

Unlike the other member states, Argentina under Carlos Menem abruptly abandoned its previously third-world-oriented foreign policy, and sought a closer alignment with the US. Known as ‘peripheral realism’, this approach held that a closer relationship with the US – seen as the single most important power following the end of the Cold War – would increase Argentina’s standing in world politics, help it to gain market access, and help it to attract higher levels of investment (Saraiva and Tedesco 2001). Flowing from this, Argentina took part in the Gulf War in 1990, and withdrew from the NAM in 1991.

In 1990, the first year of Fernando Collor de Mello’s brief presidency, Brazil adopted a similar approach, moving towards a liberal and modernising approach. Following a series of economic policy failures, the country descended into hyperinflation. The diplomatic corps reasserted the country’s traditional role in the international system, preserving its non-interventionist and autonomous profile.

Following de Mello’s impeachment in 1992, Itamar Franco – who had a more non-interventionist style of governance – made the foreign ministry responsible for formulating and implementing foreign policy (Arbilla 2000). In an intermediate period, Fernando Henrique Cardoso sought to insert the country into world politics as middle-ranking and autonomous power, while engaging with the rules of multilateralism and defending western values.

Figure 2 reflects the divergence in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states by issue area in the period 1991-2002. The role of Argentina in particular requires attention. Most of the instances of divergence are explained by its alignment with the US: resolutions on the nuclear issue were about disarmament, resolutions on the Palestine / Middle East condemned Israel’s actions and defended the Arabs and most resolutions on human rights condemned the use of mercenaries in civil wars. Most instances of divergences in respect of development involved the issue of colonialism.
Despite these differences, however, Argentina maintained significant levels of convergence with its neighbouring states. As Tokatlián has noted:

It is important to remember that, despite the aspiration to identify the government with one or other group of nations, in effect Argentina continued to belong to the developing world; themes such as The Malvinas, the very scarce endogenous scientific and technological capacity, financial fragility, the absence of consolidated State laws, the evident social gap and distributive inequality, among many others [factors], recall the actual place of Argentina in the world (1999: 25; author’s translation).

Table 3 reflects instances of divergence in UNGA votes by Mercosur member states in terms of issue areas in the period 1991-2002. They reflect the cases in which Argentina diverged from the others, with Uruguay being responsible for adding up cases concerned to Palestine / Middle East. Those resolutions condemned the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights (bordering on Syria). Uruguay abstained from voting on these resolutions, while the other Mercosur countries voted in favour.

Table 3: Divergence in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states by issue area, 1991-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue area</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestine/Middle East</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nuclear question</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Issue area Cases Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue area</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms control</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN system</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>281</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.

### Political co-ordination in Mercosur, 2003–12

In 1991-7, the erosion of internal tariff barriers led to greater trade and investment flows among the Mercosur countries. However, successive international financial crises (Mexican, Asian and Russian) ended this trend. Due to these and other factors, Brazil suffered a currency crisis in 1999, and Argentina an economic and political crisis in 1999-2002.

The election, in 2003, of Néstor Kirchner in Argentina and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula) in Brazil therefore occurred in a post-crisis context. At that time, the trend in thinking was to enhance the bilateral partnership, and question the free trade model on which Mercosur had been based until then. The two presidents met in the Argentine capital in October. ‘Consensus of Buenos Aires’, the document resulting from the meeting, proposed that Mercosur be revived, but should be reprioritised to give more attention to the social, political, participatory, and distributive dimensions of regional collaboration and integration. While trade liberalisation was not abandoned, the new slogans guiding the process became social justice (the fight against poverty, inequality, hunger and illiteracy); joint action in multilateral arenas; the participation of civil society; and the reduction of regional imbalances.  

In December 2003, at the bi-annual summit in Montevideo, the four member states approved a Mercosur work programme for 2004-2006 that incorporated this new perspective. Identified tasks included:

1. **Economic and trade**: consolidate the common external tariff, formulate the Customs Code, promote productive integration, achieve macroeconomic co-ordination, and evaluate external negotiations;
2. **Social**: broaden mechanisms for the participation of civil society, and research social issues such as work, education, and human rights;
3. **Institutional**: establish the Mercosur parliament, and strengthen existing institutions;
4. ‘**New agenda**’: promote co-operation in science and technology, and the integration of energy supply systems.
Progress towards meeting these objectives was uneven, with both successes and failures recorded. For the purposes of this article, we just need to note that the participants succeeded in extending the agenda of regional integration, giving Mercosur a political and strategic direction in addition to its economic and commercial aspects. This, in turn, led to the increased co-ordination of the foreign policy positions of member states, thus advancing Mercosur’s functioning as an international coalition.

The revival of Mercosur along these lines formed part of, and contributed to, a broader thrust towards South American unity. Led by Brazil, this initiative started with the First South American Summit held in Brasilia in 2000, where its main goals were defined as:

i. bolstering the physical integration of the continent, including the establishment of the Initiative for the South-American Regional Infrastructure Integration (IIRSA);
ii. initiating a process of convergence between Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), with a view to forming a free trade area between the two blocs;
iii. co-ordinating negotiating positions in respect of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in order to ensure access to international markets; and
iv. confirming the status of the region as a zone of peace, and affirming a commitment to democracy.

These goals were reaffirmed at the Second South American Summit, held in Guayaquil (Ecuador) in 2002. It adopted a Declaration on the South American Zone of Peace, and affirmed the significance of the First Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of Mercosur, Chile, and the Andean Community the previous year and the establishment of the Mechanism of Dialogue and Political Coordination in encouraging the convergence of views on issues of common interest.

The Third South American Summit, which formally created the South American Community of Nations (CASA), was held in Cusco (Peru) in 2004. Political and diplomatic co-ordination, understood as a means of strengthening the continent’s negotiating capability and international stature, was named as a major goal.17

In 2005 and 2006, Heads of State and Foreign Ministers of the CASA met in Brasilia and Cochabamba respectively, projecting a common political understanding as part of the essence of the continental community.

In 2008, all countries on the continent signed the Constitutive Treaty of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Its goals included the ‘strengthening of political dialogue between the Member States to ensure a forum for coordination to strengthen South-American integration and the participation of UNASUR in the international arena’ (Unasur Constitutive Treaty, article 3, section a).

This broader co-ordination and integration process was largely driven by the Lula government in Brazil, which adopted a more proactive foreign policy posture, based on a revised understanding of the international context (Lima 2005: 11-13; Amorim 2010: 215). The previous administration sought to gain credibility in the eyes of the great powers
by adopting global western standards, in the belief that it would benefit from being seen as a globalising and modernising country. By contrast, the Lula government sought to retain Brazil's autonomy by forming alternative political fora that signalled a rejection of a unipolar world order, as well as a devolution of global power. It did so in the belief that an unfettered process of globalisation tended to generate inequalities, and that Brazil (and other South American countries) would need to develop the skills and capabilities needed to become effective global players.

This also happened in a changing international context. The ‘War on Terror’ promoted by the US administration of George W Bush from 2001 onwards, involving major unilateral initiatives such as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, had a major impact on US global leadership, leading, among other things, to the loss of support of some traditional partners in Western Europe (Buzan 2007). It also resulted in the USA giving less attention to Latin America, focusing on the Middle East and Asia instead. Thus circumstances in the early 2000s was conducive to the launch of developing country initiatives that challenged US hegemony and sought allies in the defence of multilateralism. This trend gained strength towards the end of the decade following the 2008 financial crisis, the Chinese economic advance, and the Euro crisis.

In this setting, Brazil started to advocate a multipolar global order based on the principles of multilateralism. South-South co-operation, a key element of the new project, had two main elements. The first was to bolster South-South development co-operation with African Portuguese-speaking and South American countries, aimed at establishing durable partnerships, creating positive images of solidarity, gaining international status and prestige, and diversifying international relations. The second was the formation of South-South international coalitions aimed at giving participating countries greater power to defend their common interests in global politics.

Regional integration was meant to fit in this broader strategy. Thus the government’s ‘Balance sheet for 2003-2010’, posted on the presidency website, stated that:

...the consolidation of political and economic relations between the South American countries will contribute to the socioeconomic development of South America and to the preservation of peace in the region; to the development of the South American internal market and the increasing competitiveness of countries in the international market; and to the strengthening of Brazil’s capacity to act in other international fora. South American integration is based on two pillars: UNASUR and Mercosur (Brazil 2010: 18).

In line with this strategy, other Mercosur countries were inserted into three of the five new international South-South coalition initiatives promoted by Brazil: the G-20, formed within the framework of the Doha Round negotiations in support of the elimination of barriers to trade in agricultural goods; the Summits of the South American-Arab Countries (SAAC); and the Summits of South America-Africa (SAA).19

As summarised by the then Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim (2010: 231):
... South-South cooperation is a diplomatic instrument that comes from a genuine desire to give solidarity to the poorest countries. At the same time, it helps to extend Brazil’s participation in international relations. Cooperation among equals on issues of trade, investment, science and technology and other fields reinforces our stature and strengthens our position in negotiations on trade, investment and climate. Finally, to build coalitions with developing countries is also a way to engage in the reform of global governance in order to make international institutions more just and more democratic.

This makes it easier to understand why in 2004 the Mercosur and CAN signed a trade agreement, and Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela joined the Southern Cone bloc as associates, participating in its bi-annual summits. In 2012 Guyana and Suriname joined Mercosur, giving it the same membership as UNASUR. In the process, at long last, Mercosur and Unasur became complementary elements of the same project, aimed at increasing the participation of South American states in global affairs, and creating multilateral mechanisms for negotiating the rules of global governance.

In line with this, the joint communiques issued after the Mercosur presidential summits between 2003 and 2012 reflected a broadening and deepening of themes, as well as the proposed steps for addressing them:

Table 4: International political issues addressed by Mercosur summits, 2003–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)</td>
<td>Attention to agricultural issues, particularly the distortions caused by agricultural subsidies, in order to achieve greater balance in international negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
<td>Commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, express via support of resolution 1540/2004 of the UN Security Council and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 financial crisis</td>
<td>Developed countries held responsible for the crisis; focus on need for reform to strengthen the legitimacy and increase the resources of international financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>Repudiation of the economic, commercial and financial blockade, depicted as contrary to the principles of the UN Charter and the rules of international law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Values and principles to be respected and promoted. Mentioned in respect of recent military dictatorships in the region, related to the rights to memory and truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Malvinas Islands</td>
<td>Support for the rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands. Rejection of the claim to consider the islands as countries and territories subject to Part Four of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and the Overseas Association Decisions of the European Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants</td>
<td>Support for non-discrimination against migrants and their families regardless of their circumstances, in pursuit of their security and self-respect, and the promotion of human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>Support for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as inserted in the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
<td>Supported. Stated need for regular and predictable co-operation by developed countries, greater access to international markets, and innovative financing mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Support for the right of the Palestinian people to establish a state based on the 1967 lines, side by side with the state of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World drug problem</td>
<td>Support for a comprehensive approach under the principle of common and shared responsibility (regional and global), with respect for international law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property</td>
<td>Related to development and public policies. Concern expressed about rights related to biological resources and/or the traditional knowledge associated with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform of the UN</td>
<td>Support for comprehensive and urgent reform which would allow the democratisation of international decision-making bodies. Support for reform of the UNSC to make it more democratic, representative and transparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doha Round</td>
<td>Support for developmental approach. Condemnation of tariff barriers, domestic support and export subsidies by developed countries in respect of agricultural products, said to distort international trade patterns and prevent the advancement of the multilateral system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>To be combated in accordance with domestic law and international law, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, international humanitarian law, international refugee law and human rights, and relevant international conventions and instruments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Joint communiqués following bi-annual summits of Mercosur and associate countries, elaborated by the author.

Table 5: Voting behaviour of Mercosur member states in the UNGA, 2003–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Convergent</th>
<th>Divergent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Convergence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–12</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.
As regards voting in the UNGA in the second period under review, Table 5 and Figure 3 reflect a continued and stable trend of convergence between the original four Mercosur member states.

The dip between 2003 and 2004 is explained by six disagreements on the timing of various resolutions, and the subsequent upturn from 2004 to 2005 is explained partly by their resolution, and partly by convergence on additional issues, including the Golan Heights.

Table 6 lists the cases in which each country of the bloc is responsible for the divergence. They show a major shift in the second period compared to the previous: reducing the Argentine participation from 53% to 36% of cases and making the distribution among the countries less unequal. Thus, it is noted that Argentina, with the governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, moved closer to the regional partners in their outlook. This is due, largely, to misunderstandings between this administration and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which led the country to distance itself considerably from the United States – breaking the “carnal relations” with the superpower previously proposed by the Menem government.

According to Russell and Tokatlián (2011, our translation, p. 298) about this management:

Argentina after the crisis, weak, lonely and self-absorbed, recognized itself as more Latin American and saw in its association with Brazil the best way to gain collective self-esteem and return to a world that, for the most part, had turned it back on her.

Figure 4 reflects divergence in UNGA voting by country and issue area. While Argentina continued to abstain on certain resolutions on nuclear disarmament, there is a
remarkable reduction in divergence over Palestine / Middle East compared to the previous period. The main subject of disagreement for Brazil remained human rights, but the number of cases nearly doubled from one period to the next. Half of the instances were annually repeated resolutions about the impact of globalisation on the enjoyment of human rights, and the other half involved resolutions which accused certain countries of disrespecting those rights (Turkmenistan, Congo, Iran, Belarus, North Korea and Myanmar). Finally, almost all the instances of divergence by Uruguay in respect of Palestine / Middle East involved annual resolutions about the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Table 6: Divergence in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states, 2003-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairs of countries</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.

Figure 4: Divergence in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states by country and issue area, 2003-2012

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.
Table 7 reflects the divergence by issue area in this second period. Due to a large number of resolutions on human rights and the nuclear issue, on which Brazil and Argentina differ from other Mercosur members, these two themes account for more than half of the disagreements, followed by Palestine / Middle East, in large part due to Uruguay.

Table 7: Divergence in UNGA votes among Mercosur member states by issue area, 2003–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue area</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nuclear question</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine/Middle East</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms control</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strezhnev and Voeten (2013), elaborated by the author.

The enhanced international status of South American countries due to their growing regional integration is reflected in the appointment of two Latin Americans to prominent positions in the international institutional arena.

In 2011, the Brazilian agronomist and former cabinet minister José Graziano da Silva was elected as director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and in 2013, the Brazilian ambassador Roberto Azevêdo was elected as director-general of the WTO. They are the first Latin Americans to hold these posts. Three factors contributed to these achievements: Brazilian leadership of the South American integration process; the Lula government’s prominent global campaign against hunger; and Brazil’s role, besides that of India, in leading the G20 (Commercial) and demanding the liberalisation of agriculture.

These appointments are seen as some of the concrete fruits of the South-South cooperation strategy and the political co-operation among Mercosur countries, and have been celebrated in joint Mercosur communiques.

**Conclusion**

Mercosur was conceived as an economic bloc, and its early work programme was essentially an economic one. However, after the initial transition period during which a common external tariff was established, some political issues arose alongside the economic
ones. These included a commitment to democracy and peace, and an undertaking to act in concert in international politics. Later still, discussions in Mercosur were extended to social, participatory and distributive issues. Thus the ‘spillover’ thesis supported by neo-functionalism is confirmed in the case of the Southern Cone: integration started on technical issues and then advanced over political issues.

While Mercosur has no formal international representation, its working as a political coalition has developed and matured over time. Since 1995, despite a few low moments, voting on resolutions in the UNGA has converged significantly, from less than 55% in 1991 to 87% in 2012. This did not occur in the UNGA as a whole, revealing a regional process.

The catalyst for this trend was the formation of the FCCP, and the inclusion of Chile and Bolivia. It accelerated in 2003 with the relaunch of Mercosur and the advent of the broader South American integration process, which intensified the dialogue among countries in the region, and prompted them to co-ordinate their positions. Given their common developmental motives, they have progressively diminished their differences as their suspicions have been overcome.

These findings corroborate the constructivist approach adopted by Meunier and Medeiros (2013) in analysing the development of a collective identity in South America following the creation of Unasur. They based their analysis on Hopf (2002), according to which institutions develop a day-to-day logic which work to absorb divergent customs and practices, progressively shape member countries’ visions of the world, and unify their perceptions of interest.

More recently, following the adoption of some intra-bloc protectionist measures by Argentina, and the rapid trade liberalisation of the countries of the Pacific Alliance, a view has developed of Mercosur as a paralysed and isolated body. While warranted to some degree, these analyses are incomplete, and do not consider the fact that the bloc is no longer concerned only with trade and investment. In other words, the new dimensions of integration, and the achievements under this rubric, cannot be ignored. The growth in concerted action among member countries in international politics, as outlined in this article, stands out as one of them.

Notes

1 For a useful treatment, see Mattli (1999) and Torrent (2007). The difficulties related to establishing agreed indicators have been raised since the work of Nye (1968).
2 Interview, Counsellor Breno Hermann, a Brazilian career diplomat.
3 Due to the absence of consolidated UNGA data, the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 could not be analysed.
4 See, for example, Wendt (1994) and Acharya (2009).
5 Hamilton was the first Secretary of the US Treasury, from 1789 to 1795. His ‘Report on Manufactures’ openly opposed British ideas about free trade, and advocated the industrialisation of his country.
6 See the Declaration of Iguacu (1985).
7 The British call the Malvinas the Falkland Islands.
8 From 1998 onwards, Bolivia, as an associate country, gradually incorporated itself into Mercosur
institutions.

9 'Convergent' means that all four countries voted on a given resolution in the same way (whether yes, no or abstention), while 'divergent' means that at least one of the four counties voted differently from the others. When diplomats were absent, and did not vote, these are not regarded as divergences. In any case, this happened only rarely.

10 It is common for the same resolutions to be tabled every year, in order to reaffirm the commitment of member states.

11 For a comprehensive statement of Argentina's foreign policy objectives, see Escudé (1995).

12 'UN system' refers to resolutions about the powers and functions of UN bodies, under Article 10 of the UN Charter. The term 'nuclear issue' involves disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear technology.

13 Argentina's stance on these resolutions was influenced by the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, and the car bomb that destroyed the headquarters of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) in the same city in 1994.

14 The year 2006 saw the creation of the Fund for the Structural Convergence of Mercosur (FOCEM), an important instrument of regional international development co-operation (IDC). It has also served as a vehicle for Brazil to become the leading provider of IDC resources to Paraguay and Uruguay (see Desiderá 2014).

15 In the course of this process, Brazil temporarily abandoned the notion of 'Latin America' (as expressed in the Latin American Integration Association, or ALADI), thereby excluding Mexico. Clearly, Brazil sought alternative drivers of growth in the region at a time when Mercosur showed signs of weakness.

16 The summit was attended by the presidents of all 12 South American countries.

17 At this meeting, the reduction of structural asymmetries in the region made its first appearance as a priority of South American integration.

18 Dissatisfaction with the fruits of trade and financial liberalisation – expressed in the idea of 'asymmetric globalisation' advocated by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Lafer (2001-2002) – had begun to gain ground in the diplomatic corps, even in the last year of Cardoso's government.

19 The other two initiatives are the IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil and South Africa), and the annual BRIC summits (Brazil, Russia, India and China), to which South Africa was added in 2011.

20 Venezuela, particularly, ended up in 2006 by starting a process to achieve full membership, which eventually happened in 2012 at the time of the temporary suspension of Paraguay.

21 Brazil abstained, and the other Mercosur members voted in favour. Brazilian diplomacy avoids signing resolutions in which countries are accused of disregarding human rights on the grounds that developed countries have double standards in this regard, condemning some countries while absolving themselves.

22 Uruguay abstained, and the other Mercosur countries voted in favour.

23 It should be noted that although Roberto Azevêdo's competitor was Mexican, but the South American countries voted for the Brazilian candidate.


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