Venezuelan Strategy for Agreeing on ALBA in Facing Trade Expansion United States of Latin America

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ABSTRACT

In 2004 Venezuela and Cuba have agreed on a regional collaboration in Latin America called Alternative Bolivarian Las Americas and abbreviated ALBA. This collaboration is formed as a resistance facing U.S. trade expansion to bring a mission neoliberalism. With the formation of ALBA, Venezuela is the regional co-operation leaders making strategic measures to face Neoliberalism. In 2010 ALBA has had a total of 10 member countries. As a counter hegemony, ALBA also worked in three spaces. In the space of ideas, countries members need complementary principles of solidarity and cooperation to achieve prosperity and equitable regional development. At the institutional space, the idea is then integrated into ALBA.

Keywords*: Regionalism, ALBA, Trade Expansion, Strategy Integration*

A. INTRODUCTION

The writer will discuss Venezuelan Strategy in agreeing with the ALBA in the face of the expansion of US trade in Latin America from 2004 - 2010. This research will look at and describe how Venezuela's steps and strategies to fortify countries in Latin America are protected from the form of trade expansion in the United States (US) in the form of a regional collaboration. Latin America is a region located in the south of the American continent which is a former Portuguese and Spanish colony. This background makes Latin America an area of identity crisis in world politics due to authoritarian policies based on Socialism. Speaking of Latin America, generally the first thing that comes to our mind is a region with very high inequality and inequality. In addition, the historical experience of countries in the region in the past five centuries has been characterized by a very strong oligarchic regime, therefore many assumptions state that Latin American decolonization is only an entry point for the exploitation of the oligarchy.

Starting from the rise of socialism from left groups such as the leaders of Venezuela and Cuba, there were two rocks that were obstacles in achieving the interests of the United States in Latin America, especially economic and political interests. The international trade system brought by the United States to bring global prosperity is one of the free market products that is very difficult to implement in Latin American countries. This is due to opposing political elements and the

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displeasure of leftist leaders in Latin America who directly or indirectly refuse to cooperate. In this economic system various provisions are made which basically regulate the similarity of economic policy orientation in the international trade system that is free from state intervention. Implementation or a concrete project, neoliberalism works through debt trap schemes that lead to the direction of debtor countries (third world) to establish a program to adjust the structure of trade.

One example of economic dependence on the United States had occurred in Argentina in 2001 which made the country experience the worst financial crisis in history. Half of the 20 million Argentinian population experienced a crisis and fell into poverty. Argentina's debt payments are only about 12% of its total foreign debt and have not been able to steer the Argentine economy out of the crisis. This is a consequence of economic liberalism and the inability of Argentina to make its economy worse. Almost the same thing also happened to the Brazilian economy during the reign of president Itamar Franco in 1992-1995. This situation is further exacerbated by trade liberalization and the elimination of subsidies, which means that competitive skills in manufacturing leather goods, furniture, clothing, and machine tools for the domestic market have been 'cruelly turned off', resulting in many small-medium businesses being forced to roll mat because of the penetration of imported goods. The degree of vertical integration (increasing living standards) has declined sharply, while outsourcing practices, at the international level, are increasing. Thus the region's dependence on foreign capital goods and technology becomes an inevitable consequence

Latin America initially benefited from investments by the United States. But over time Latin America began to realize that their dependence on the United States made their natural resources more exploited. They only get a small profit compared to the United States. Latin America only has the benefit of labor income and the export of raw materials of little value. Poverty is ultimately a major problem for Latin American countries. The economic crisis hit Latin America at that time. Dependence on foreign capital turns out to make a country unable to achieve independence and not even develop. High inflation cannot be overcome by the Brazilian government because two of its economic ministers have resigned, as a result Brazil has not been able to slow the rate of inflation 30% per month and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by around 10%. With this situation Brazil no longer has the luxury to eradicate the poverty of its own people because the flow of state money is only to repay its foreign debt obligations which reach US $ 120 billion as much as US $ 8 billion annually.6 Of these two examples are evidence of the ineffectiveness of the US trade system against Latin American countries, but there is also a country that can survive,

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which is Colombia, which is actually a puppet state formed by the US as a satellite for monitoring the political temperature in Latin America.

B. Discussion

General description of ALBA collaboration

One hope for regional integration was then linked to a phenomenon that was happening in the field where at the moment the victory of socialism in the last few elections of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and his victory in the last election, indicated he was someone who had the ambition to realize these ideals. Latin America is an area in the South of the American continent consisting of 12 countries, 10 of which are Latin countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Regionalism in Latin America is not the same as most regionalism on other continents because Latin American regionalism only covers a small part of the whole country in Latin America. Because the closeness of the ideological base of these leaders is somehow the capital for the creation of an understanding to work together. The main attention is directed at the national interests of each Latin American country and looking at the characteristics of the regime that is left, then the rationalization of the formation of alliances is possible.

Latin American regional cooperation

In facing the era of globalization that dominates and free trade in it, many regional countries have created an organization formed to ward off the adverse effects that would occur with the arrival of the great waves of globalization, especially economic globalization. Within the Latin American region there are several regional organizations in the economic field formed in response to globalization and free trade that have been carried out by developed countries. Regional organizations are also expected to encourage integration in the Latin American region itself. One of them is MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur) which is one of the regional organizations in Latin America founded by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay through the Treaty of Asunction in March 1991. The purpose of establishing MERCOSUR is to promote peace and stability and strengthen internal cooperation and international cooperation. This regionalization in the international economies of countries in Latin America shows the existence of trade liberalization between Mercosur member countries. Basically MERCOSUR is an agreement with an ambitious end goal to shape economic integration in the Latin American region.

The existence of MERCOSUR also triggers trade creation and trade diversion. MERCOSUR has a tendency to only trade manufacturing for fellow members because

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of tariffs from member countries to non-members, this removes the desire of consumers to buy and access technology from developed countries. However, it should be understood that integration with regional groups can eliminate the potential to gain integration with the outside world and eliminate the opportunity to get technology transfer that should be able to increase the country's profits, by seeing MERCOSUR members still consist of developing countries. The second regional organization of Latin America is the Andean Community which was formed based on the Andean Pact of 1969. The countries which are members of the Andean Community are Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. By cooperating with MERCOSUR, the Andean Community formed the South American Community of Nations (SACoN) with the aim of creating a wider free trade area by combining the two regional collaborations and having prospects for cooperation until 2019 by removing barriers to small and medium product tariffs. The increase in new regionalism in the Latin American region is inseparable from the influence of external parties, especially the United States. Changes in US foreign policy affect regionalism in Latin America due to the position of the United States as a hegemon both in the American region and globally. The US changed its traditional foreign policy and adopted three paths of political and commercial policy, namely the strategic and pragmatic combination of multilateralism, regionalism and unilateralism. This is what drives the entry of liberalism into the Latin American region and raises regional awareness of the countries in the region.

ALBA as an alternative collaboration

In 2004, Venezuela and Cuba initiated the regional cooperation of Alternativa Bolivariana of Las America or the Agreement for the Application of the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas and the People's Trade Agreements, abbreviated ALBA. Declared in the Cuban Capital, Havana, April 28, 2005. The basic assumption is the tendency of countries to use international regimes or institutions to achieve the country's interests. Then these countries then form a regime as long as it can still fulfill their interests. Chavez and Evo Morales who have an interest in remaining vocal towards the United States will of course see that these interests will be better if supported by other countries. The prospect of regional cooperation ALBA also works in three spaces where in the space of ideas, member countries believe the need for complementary principles, solidarity and cooperation to achieve prosperity and equitable regional development. In the institutional space, this idea is then integrated into the ALBA. Through the division of ALBA's organizational structure, the Political Council. (Political Council) and the Economic Council (Economic Council) ensure that efforts to counter the hegemony of neoliberalism can then be facilitated by coordinating political economic policies among member countries. Through the Social

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Council and the Social Movements Council in the organizational structure, the ALBA is a regional cooperation organization in which the people are involved in efforts to achieve prosperity and equitable development.

Funding assistance directed by Venezuela to the ALBA countries

(in the amount of million US dollars)

Destination	**Amount**
Cuba	18776
Bolivia	6724
Nicaragua	5523
ALBA Bank	1350
Haiti	440
Honduras	130
Dominica	8

Source: Data from Cieca in «Cuánto cuesta el alba» en El Universal, 9/28/2008, Caracas, available in www.eluniversal.com

The Venezuelan strategy agreed on the ALBA in the face of the expansion of US trade in the Latin American region

ALBA cooperation is an answer as well as an alternative for countries in the Latin American region to work together and create a stable economic integration, especially to deal with US neoliberalism in its FTAA products. Venezuela as a pioneer country has a number of ALBA cooperation points and created a solid economic and political alliance to counter the Free Trade Area and US Capitalist institutions including the international monetary fund (IMF) financial formula.

Integration of oil and gas trade between regions

Basically the aim of the ALBA is to transform Latin American society, making them more just, knowledgeable, participatory and supportive. Therefore ALBA can be understood as an integral process intended to ensure the eradication of social inequalities, and to improve the quality of life and effective participation of the community in creating a good social and economic sector. To achieve this goal, there are several ALBA collaborative projects undertaken to strengthen regional integration in the oil sector. In this context Venezuela has an important role in creating economic and political integration in Latin America. Venezuela has some of the largest oil and natural gas reserves in the world, and is consistently in the world's top 10 producers. The country's largest oil reserves are located around Lake Maracaibo, the Gulf of

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Venezuela, and on the Orinoco River in eastern Venezuela. In addition, the largest conventional oil reserves and the second largest gas reserves are located in the western suburbs, Venezuela.

PetroCaribe Formation

Since the founding of Petrocaribe the country has supplied nearly 60 million barrels of crude oil to its members with payments of 50% in 90 days and 50% for loans of more than 25 years, with a two-year grace period and an interest rate of 1% per year. PetroCaribe also aims to integrate energy cooperation based on a beneficial and fair exchange scheme between Central America and the Caribbean countries. It is among these priorities that social and economic development in the region can proceed according to the scheme and get tangible benefits for the people of Latin America. Cuba agreed to provide Venezuela's import duty free access and to remove non-tariff barriers, in return Venezuela also agreed to remove non-tariff barriers to Cuban imports. In payment arrangements, there are provisions for payments in oil imports from Venezuela with trade compensation and Reciprocal Credit Arrangements, both contained in the Venezuela - Cuba Agreement. Venezuela has been given the same facility in paying for imports by Cuba without reciprocity from Venezuela. In the Caribbean and Dominica it is permissible to pay 40% of Petrocaribe oil imports with banana exports.

ALBA Cooperation offers 22 bilateral cooperation agreements that connect different member states to the economic colonization that swept across Latin America in the 90s through waves of privatization, free trade agreements, and structural adjustment policies that pushed Latin America deep into debt. The ALBA project was proposed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez by organizing and pooling Venezuelan PDVSA resources, ENARSA Agentina, PETROBRAS Brazil, COPETROL Colombia, PETROECUADOR Ecuador, PEMEX Mexico, PETROPERU Peru, PETROTRIN Trinidad into Latin America. At present the merging of the organization is an integrated project that has been fulfilled and controls approximately 11.5% of the world's oil reserves. PetroCaribe has produced more than 140 million barrels of crude oil to ALBA member countries, with a total bill of more than US $ 10,000 million and financing of more than US $ 4,000 million and member countries can save more than US. $ 2,000 million in a financial agreement. One of the actions carried out through this agreement is the supply of 200 thousand barrels of diesel fuel per month to Bolivia under special financing conditions. A memorandum of understanding was also signed to supply two factories to extract liquids from natural gas, as well as a memorandum of understanding to create Fertisur, a complex for producing nitrogen fertilizer, and an agreement so that INTEVEP, PDVSA's technology branch, would train 200 workers from the energy industry in Bolivia. In the context of the country

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the Republic of Nicaragua made its debut as the fourth permanent member of the ALBA by signing several agreements in the fields of economy, finance, energy, industry, agriculture, medical matters and culture. These two agreements are very prominent and are implemented in the two Cooperation Agreements in the Energy Sector to develop oil, gas and electricity power. Venezuela sees ALBA as a forum for selling Venezuelan oil below market prices to PetroCaribe and Petrosur member countries in exchange for goods and services that address poverty reduction issues. In ALBA, especially oil export financing is subsidized by Venezuela.

Initiating oil pipeline construction

On September 26, 2005 the Venezuelan Minister of Energy invited the Latin American countries attended by foreign ministers from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Suriname to sign the Caracas Declaration in the ALBA agenda which aims to continue taking concrete steps to move towards energy integration. Venezuela and Brazil signed an energy complementariness agreement and integration between Venezuelan PDVSA and Brazil's PETROBRAS which included collaboration and was able to create a concrete collaboration in the field of supply and commercialization of crude oil as well as oil and gas exploration and extraction, construction design and joint operation of the refinery. The energy integration in Latin America has built 8,000 Km of oil pipelines that stretch across South America connecting Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Venezuela at a cost ranging from US $ 17 to US $ 20 billion.

Formation of the South Bank

The establishment of the South Bank was agreed between Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua in June 2007 and was officially launched in 2008. The aim is to support sustainable social and economic development, reduce poverty and strengthen regional integration. Countries that agree to the ALBA consider the IMF is one of the snares of liberalism that causes hunger, suffering, poverty and violence for the people of Latin America. ALBA Bank has a significant role in regional integration and consolidation of countries in Latin America. The President of Ecuador welcomed the establishment of the ALBA Bank which has helped resolve its financial problems. The ALBA Bank is headquartered in Caracas in Caracas, Venezuela and has regional offices in several ALBA member countries. Finance ministers from ALBA countries met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on October 8, 2008 to finalize the Bank's Founding Document. Many technical problems have not been resolved. In a press conference concluded, Guido Mantega Brazil's finance minister said the ALBA countries had been able to overcome all the problems that existed in the way of understanding around the formation of the ALBA Bank.

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The Venezuelan government explained that the South Bank would help develop and offer foreign loans in the Latin American region. This was realized to build a new architecture that assumes an increasing relationship between banks and their capacity to offer credit to their people. The establishment of the Bank also aims to increase liquidity and revive socio-economic development and infrastructure investment in participating countries and protect against IMF and World Bank offers which in 2005 nearly 80% of IMF loans were allocated to Latin America.

South Bank as a counter to the IMF

The vision and mission of Venezuela in initiating the South Bank is to free member countries from the IMF, World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IBD). Assisted in terms of oil profits, Venezuela has pursued its foreign policy with a commitment to unprecendented below the oil market price and to launch financial assistance for other regional countries. One of the advantages of South Bank membership is that it will reflect an anti-Imperialist perspective. The Washington Consensus is a neoliberal practice that exploits resources in the region by offering some cooperation sponsored by liberalism and it is part of America's strategy to conquer the country to get as much benefit for American companies at the expense of its territory and people.

Anticipating the entanglement of countries in Latin America in doing business with the IMF, Venezuela established an institution that regulates financial problems in an effort to be independent of Latin America in managing finances by providing loans. In 2006 there was ample evidence that Venezuela and ALBA had important roles in the region. Learn from the economic paralysis caused by the debt that was felt by Argentina in 2001. The role of Venezuela came back and directly helped the economic crisis by buying $ 1.5 billion in bonds. 3 Argentina accused the IMF of not being able to save its economy during the economic crisis and immediately decided to leave the IMF membership. The various contributions presented at this conference have provided perspective on the crisis process as it has been running since August 2007 concession failures, bailout packages, and bribery through state intervention in developed capitalist countries aimed at saving the remnants of a dislocated world financial system. Countries in Latin America condemn the pretense that imposes the cost of a financial bailout package in a collective world system that will exacerbate the situation of poverty, unemployment, and exploitation of workers and people of the world both large-scale state intervention that is closely watched trying to save disarticulated entities that emptied by speculation, and massive increase in public debt is not the right alternative to resolve the crisis. In a situation that is very dependent on the creditors' cartel, there is actually another side to being able to negotiate. Dependence on foreign debt, for example, also means that there is a large

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amount of money from creditors circulating in the debtor country. This situation can become a weapon for debtor countries to negotiate, by adopting a policy of refusing to pay debts. It was at this point that the Venezuelan Bolivarian revolution emerged with a more realistic idea with a long structural impact. Current dynamics demand a new round of capitalist concentration. It can also bring back dangerous authoritarian tendencies in the functioning of capitalism as a regressive sign that has been seen in the increasing discrimination and racism against immigrant populations from southern countries in the countries of the North. The need to reconstruct the international economic and financial architecture is unavoidable at this time. With this perspective, the need for a post-capitalist channel has been proven, and Venezuela has named it 21st Century Socialism.

Development of Latin American Television Broadcasting Stations

Another initiative originating from the ALBA project is Telesur, a television channel aimed at Latin America with joint efforts from Venezuela, Cuba, Uruguay and Argentina. It aims to rival CNN and Fox, who dominate the wave network in Spanish-language TV news and other media with mass viewers. In the case in Venezuela, a number of mass media are oligopolically controlled by two large families namely, the Cisneros family and the Bottome & Granier Group. The Cisneros family is the owner of Venevisión, one of the largest television stations in Venezuela which has 70 media channels in 30 countries, including DirecTV Latin America, AOL Latin America, Caracol Television (Colombia), The Univisión Network in the US, Galavisión. Meanwhile, Bottome & Granier Group controls Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) and Radio Caracas Radio. As for print media, the six largest daily print media are controlled by family groups which are also limited.

With oligopolitical ownership, it can be analyzed how much their political influence in opposing the Bolivarian regime. For example, the five largest private television networks namely, Venevisión, Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), Globovisión, Televan and CMT, control 90% of the telecommunications market and the remaining 5% are controlled by small private television. The non-neutral mass media drew criticism from the Venezuelan government which included El Mundo media aimed at voicing the political interests of the opposition through the media and closing all commercial programs just to broadcast some propaganda against the government. Thus, during the political upheaval in the media, the people only get news and images that are unilateral and manipulative. The mass media does not convey the actual reality because what is displayed is a news story formed by the media owner in accordance with his political interests. As a result, people do not get correct and comprehensive information. This media portrait clearly contradicts the

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telecommunications law that the media are independent, working on the principle of check and balance.

Based on this case the Bolivarian ALBA regime then responded by creating its own meaning about "Fairness Doctrine." The Venezuelan National Council then introduced media reforms through the Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television (LSRRT), which proposed guaranteeing public access to the media. The LSRRT proposal was then approved by the National Council for the Commission on Science, Technology and Social Media Communication in May 2003. This proposal was immediately opposed by traditional media management associations such as the Venezuelan Broadcasting Guild (Cámara Venezolana de la Indsutria de la Radiofusión) although the LSRRT was finally endorsed by the Council of Traditional Media Managers National in 2004. In its program, LSRRT wants to reform the structure of media ownership and media content. In terms of broadcasting, LSRRT does not issue regulations that strictly control the contents of private media programs. The reform aims to strengthen regulations relating to the appropriateness of broadcasts during children's broadcast hours, support for independent media channels, democratization of radio and television, and public access and public participation in media communication.

Development of TeleSur TV Channels

Another vision of Venezuela in the ALBA is the realization of Telesur, which is a TV channel primarily aimed at Latin America with joint efforts from Venezuela (51%), Cuba (19%), Uruguay (10%) and Argentina (20%) with support from Brazil. It aims to rival CNN and Fox, who dominate the wave network in Spanish-language TV news and other media with mass viewers. Telesur is a telecommunications project that is counter to discourse. The importance of having other alternatives as well as being critical to the problem, the news view of Telesur becomes increasingly important because Latin America moves to the left and the existence of traditional pro-US parties that suffer defeat after defeat and increasingly depend on manipulation and public lies. In 2002 news coverage of the coup against President Chavez, especially the Television network played a central role in helping to create an atmosphere that led to the removal of the interim president. In Venezuela there are more than 90% of private media who are anti Chavez who openly carry out media propaganda. Nearly 70% of Venezuelan Television programs imported from the United States are responsible for 62% of it. Telesur's advisory board sponsors and has permanent correspondents in Bogota, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Mexico City, Havana, Montevideo, La Paz and Washington, along with a network of stringer. Telesur is actively seeking links with social movements and the masses in the region so that they can inform about their suffering and struggle. Telesur consciously and deliberately

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tried to show the other side of Latin America one that never appeared in the main networks of indigenous peoples, Black people, farmers, laborers, women, and the poor in general and all that was combined with informative documentaries, intellectual interviews and radical politician.

C. Conclusion

Discourse on the concept of development emerges and sinks in the momentum that occurs, especially regarding the progress and backwardness in the terminology of economic development both in the domestic and regional scope. The momentum referred to for example the Great Depression of 1930, the 1980 Oil Crisis and the Asian Crisis in 1998 had an impact on a review of a political economy order that would require a battle of interests of various parties. In the space of ideas neoliberalism carries a philosophical view which assumes that human nature is rational which freedom must be guaranteed in fighting for its interests. In this view, an international trade system that is believed to bring global prosperity is a system where the free market. In these institutions various provisions were made which basically regulate the common orientation of the economic policies of countries in the world, namely the orientation of economic openness in the international trade system that is free from State intervention.

ALBA is one of the discourses that fills this discourse. ALBA is one of the new breakthroughs of Latin America driven by Venezuela. The birth of this regional cooperation organization is in fact a response of Latin American countries to the FTAA (Free Trade Area of Americas) at the United States-dominated Association of Caribbean States Summit and efforts to build solidarity in a more independent Latin American region. ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana the los Pubelos de Nuestra America / Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas) is a collaborative organization. In the institutional space, this idea is then integrated into the ALBA. Through the division of ALBA's organizational structure, the Political Council and the Economic Council ensure that efforts to counter neoliberal hegemony can then be facilitated by coordinating political economic policies among member countries. Through the Social Council (SocialCouncil) and the Social Movement Council (Social Movements Council) in the organizational structure makes ALBA as a regional cooperation organization in which the people are involved in efforts to achieve prosperity and equitable development. In the implementation space or concrete projects, the counter idea of neoliberalism is then manifested in 7 sectors of the ALBA work program. The intended sectors are regional financial sector, trade and investment, industry and energy, food sector, social and cultural sector, environment and infrastructure sector.

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Until now, ALBA has been able to produce new breakthroughs such as the formation of the Bank of the South (Banco del Sur), the regional currency system SUCRE (Unified de Compensacion Regional / Unified System for Regional Compensation). Within the ALBA framework, a network of metal, oil industry, regional cooperation networks for the fulfillment of food needs was formed, a regional communication network was formed which in this case was mainly TeleSUR, and the creation of social services programs especially in the health sector.

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