

ASYMMETRICAL MOTIVATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF ARGENTINE-VENEZUELAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

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Since Hugo Chávez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998, Latin America has experienced the economic and political sway of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution. The Revolution calls for a unique form of democracy and development shaped by Chávez's idea of socialism. Countries like Bolivia and Nicaragua have enthusiastically answered its rhetoric, whereas those like Chile and Brazil have given Chávez a much cooler reception. Somewhere along this bipolar divide, however, lies Argentina, which has taken quite an "ambiguous" stance in its relations with Venezuela (Castaneda 39). On the one hand, one would expect relations between the two countries to be close, with full cooperation in a wide range of areas; Venezuela was one of the few countries that helped Argentina after its devastating peso crisis of 2001, and the new Perónista in power in Argentina seemed to be part of the rise of leftist movements in Latin America. However, the rhetoric of the Kirchners, Néstor and Cristina, is far more cautious than that used by their counterparts in Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. What we find is that definite areas of non-cooperation exist alongside areas of cooperation, making it the "ambiguous" case of Latin America, a puzzle that begs for further investigation.

EXPLANATION OF THE TOPIC

Several scholars have speculated on what can be seen as the rising pink tide of Latin America. Starting with Hugo Chávez's victory in Venezuela, a wave of leaders, parties, and movements generically labeled "leftist" have swept into power in one Latin American

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country after another. Chávez's election was followed by Lula's in Brazil, Kirchner's in Argentina, Vazquez's in Uruguay, and Morales' in Bolivia (Castaneda 29). Many scholars have speculated as to why the sudden surge in leftist tendencies has been possible. New York University Professor Jorge Castaneda, for example, attributes the cause to the fall of the Soviet Union, Latin America's extreme inequality, and the spread of democratization and democratic elections (Castaneda 30).

Castaneda emphasizes that the face of the left in Latin America is not uniform; there are really two lefts in the region. One is open-minded and modern and has radical roots; the other is close-minded and stridently populist. The former emphasizes social policy but within a more or less orthodox framework. Countries who follow such an idea include Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil. For the latter group of countries, however, rhetoric is much more important than substance, and power is more important than its responsible exercise. These states are more sympathetic to the Bolivarian Revolution and include Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

In order to illustrate this dyad with an empirical example, one can refer to the ways these countries cooperate within international organizations. According to a high-ranking official within a regional intergovernmental organization, Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua are active in criticizing international financial organizations; they actually want a new International Monetary Fund and World Bank. These four countries are also quick to support each other in disagreements. The other left seems to be less interested in Latin American and Caribbean affairs. Chile, for example, believes that "they are the most civilized from the institutional point of view" (Official). The country frequently aligns with the United States, Europe, and the Pacific Ring against its Latin American neighbors. As a telling indication of Chile's position, President Michelle Bachelet spoke for two and a half hours in her State of the Union address, yet there was only one mention of Latin America and the Caribbean (Official). Brazil also considers itself a big player in the region. Brazil has attended G8 and Security Council meetings under the request that it represent Latin American views. However,

Brazil does not consult with its neighbors before these meetings, and in turn, the other left has become quite agitated (Official).

Castaneda categorizes Argentina in the second left but with its qualification as a “somewhat ambiguous case” (Castaneda 39). It is from this remark that I embark on my research project, for this ambiguity cannot be so easily disregarded. From the study of the Argentine case, this paper demonstrates that if two developing countries enter a bilateral relation with differing motivations, their relationship will be ambiguous. In the Argentine-Venezuelan case, Chávez is motivated by ideology while Kirchner is motivated by economic need. The strongest relationships are those with a shared ideology on both sides. This is not the case with Argentina and Venezuela, so their relationship contains disagreements alongside agreements.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

Understanding the structural forces that govern the Bolivarian Revolution has several important implications.

First, this work aims to fill a gap in political science and international relations research. Scholarly work on the Bolivarian Revolution has been limited to articles in academic journals and newspapers. Books on the subject are not as prevalent.

Several reasons explain this paucity of work. First, the Bolivarian Revolution is an entirely new phenomenon, having emerged in 1998 after the election of Hugo Chávez. This social, economic, and political movement is very much defined by Chávez, and thus attempts to project the roots of the movement to earlier eras of Venezuelan history are tenuous. Scholars grapple with less than ten years of history in their attempts to define and analyze the movement. The Chávez regime releases little information to the press and what is reported is highly regulated by the regime. The Freedom House index from 2006 rates the freedom of press in the country as “not free.” The summary states:

A hostile political atmosphere under the government of President Hugo Chávez has fostered a steady decline in press

freedom over the past several years, and that trend continued in 2006. State initiatives have eroded the influence of private media, in which the previous dominance of pro-opposition outlets has been dwindling. Among other actions, the government has enacted legislation prohibiting the broadcast of certain material, intimidated and denied access to private media, attempted to shut down pro-opposition outlets, and harassed journalists employed at such outlets. (Freedom House)

Finding work on the relationship between Venezuela and Argentina has been even more difficult for a third reason. Most scholarly work on the bilateral relations between Venezuela and other Latin American countries has focused on those issues of great visibility. The Venezuelan-Colombian relation has been emphasized because of border permeation and guerrilla warfare. Moreover, the American press has specifically stressed this relation because Colombia is one of America's most faithful allies in the region. Brazil's relations with Venezuela have been highlighted because of Brazil's role as the dominant power in Latin America. Venezuela's relations to Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Bolivia have also been broadcast to a great degree, mainly because of these countries' interest in emphasizing the spread of the Bolivarian Revolution. Argentina, though a crucial player as this paper will show, often falls under the radar of study.

Second, this research is of particular interest because it focuses on two developing countries. It is common for scholars to point to relations between developed nations, or between a developed and developing nation. With this focus, we miss the dynamics of a huge swath of foreign policy that concerns only developing countries. Specifically, this project emphasizes the importance of ideology in the foreign policy of developing countries, which current schools of thought do not stress.

Finally, this project has great implications for policy decisions made by the United States regarding this region. Understanding how bilateral relations work in South America and what motivates leaders like Hugo Chávez should be a central element in crafting U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America.

These last two points will be discussed at greater length in this paper since their implications are worthy of more detailed explanation. To address the lack of research, I traveled to Venezuela and Argentina in the summer of 2008 to collect sufficient data. Much of what follows in this report is from my observations and field study.

REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

An analysis of the Argentine-Venezuelan relationship is difficult without using some conceptual frameworks to aid understanding. Realism, liberalism, and constructivism have been regarded as the most prevalent schools of thought in international relations theory. It is my belief that these theories cannot in and of themselves completely explain every international situation, but they will be enumerated upon here in order to provide background for understanding Chávez and Kirchner's general motivations for engaging with each other.

I will demonstrate that constructivism can be used to explain the crux of Chávez's foreign policymaking with regard to Argentina, while liberalism better describes Kirchner's actions toward Venezuela. I support this claim in the next sections of this paper, where I draw upon the history of the countries' generally lukewarm relationship and the marked affinity that began when Kirchner became president in Argentina. Through first-hand accounts from my research this past summer and a review of secondary sources, I will suggest that although the countries are closer than ever before in their history, Kirchner and Chávez approach the relationship with different motivations. As a result, the alliance between the two is ambiguous, thus explaining Argentina's position apart from the two lefts of Latin America.

Realism

In realism, the principle actors in world politics are states, rather than non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multina-

tional corporations (MNCs). Realists approach world politics in a very Hobbesian manner: politics involves a struggle for power between states in pursuit of their national interests. Domestic issues play no role in determining foreign policy, so states cannot be driven by economic or social goals. Thus, the role of ideology takes a backseat to more rational drivers such as the need for survival and the protection of sovereignty, and, in order to achieve these goals, a state will try to amass resources (“Introduction to International Relations”).

Realism does not adequately explain the actions of Chávez and Kirchner. Chávez is highly motivated by ideology, and not necessarily rationality. Though he frames his Bolivarian Revolution as protecting Latin America from imperialism, his actions are all but rational. As for Kirchner, domestic issues play a central role in shaping his foreign policy. His goals are largely economic. He depends on the financial support of Venezuela to sustain his country. This all contradicts a central component of realist thought.

Liberalism

A branch of liberalism called interdependence theory was developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye to refer to complex transnational interdependencies between states. Interdependence theorists note that such relations, particularly economic ones, are increasing, while the use of military force and power balancing are decreasing. Reflecting on these developments, they argue that the decline of military force as a policy tool and the increase in economic forms of interdependence should increase the probability of cooperation among states (Beavis). Neoliberalist theory is another school of liberalism that believes nation-states are, or at least should be, concerned primarily with absolute gains rather than relative gains compared to other nation-states. Neoliberals argue that the line between domestic and foreign policy often becomes blurred (Keohane & Nye). As will be shown, Kirchner’s foreign policy towards Chávez is best explained by this theory.

Constructivism

Constructivism seeks to demonstrate how core aspects of international relations are socially constructed, that is, how they are given their form by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction. The theory holds “(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Wendt 1). This is the best framework to understand Chávez’s interest in Kirchner.

Asymmetrical Motivation

Literature on these traditional theories of international relations tends to describe a particular situation as falling completely within one of these camps. None of the literature I have encountered explains a case where countries approach their relations with different motivations, when one theory can be used to describe one party while another theory best describes the other. Traditional international relations theories do not necessarily *preclude* a situation where two countries enter into a relationship with different motivations, but they say nothing about what transpires when this occurs.

This paper will develop a new idea, which I have termed “asymmetrical motivation,” to describe the situation in which two parties have starkly different motivations for entering a relationship. A bilateral relation where the two parties embody similar motivations is more clearly definable than one governed by asymmetrical motivation. As such, in Latin America, the liberalist-constructivist relation of Argentina-Venezuela has a more ambiguous nature than the constructivist-constructivist motivation of Venezuela-Bolivia and Venezuela-Nicaragua and the liberalist-liberalist motivation of Venezuela-Brazil and Venezuela-Chile.¹ Moreover, along this

¹ The liberalist-liberalist dyad will not be discussed at greater length in this paper, due to space constraints. Chávez knows that strong economic cooperation with Brazil and Chile

gradation of relations, those countries that share a similar ideology are closest allies. This observation stresses the importance of shared ideology in international relations, but particularly among developing nations. Financial dependence on another nation is not enough to engender good relations. This, coupled with ideological affinity is the best recipe for a strong alliance.

HISTORY OF ARGENTINE-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS

In order to understand the uniqueness of the contemporary Argentine-Venezuelan bilateral relation, we must understand the history of the ties between these two countries. Argentina and Venezuela have never had particularly close relations, contrary to what those in both governments would like their citizens to believe. Thus, their relatively close affinity today requires explanation.

The Early Years

Officials in both the Argentine and Venezuelan governments are keen to have people believe that the two countries have historically had close ties, and that the current era is simply a continuation of such a past. In *Relaciones Diplomáticas entre Venezuela-Argentina: 1833-1999*, for example, then-Venezuelan ambassador to Argentina, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, describes the 166-year history of bilateral relations between the two countries as marked by “solidarity, close cooperation, and excellence,” noting a speech made by Argentine Foreign Minister Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini in 2000: “Argentina will never forget the attitude of Venezuela in the past, the attitude in the present, and the attitude the State pronounces for the future” (Parejo Hernández). However, the evidence for such a close relation is weak; I found in my research only two incidents in the above period that brought the countries close

is necessary for his country, but he does not see ideological affinity and therefore, there are limits to how much he courts Brazilian and Chilean support. The Brazilian ambassador to the United States told me that the Venezuela-Brazil relationship is strategic and nothing more.

together.

The first close relation was when the two countries began their respective processes for independence within a month of each other in 1810. Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín, the two heroes of Latin American independence, came from Venezuela and Argentina, respectively, and the affinity between them was clear. In 1822, Bolívar wrote to San Martín: "It is with great satisfaction, dignified friend and sir, that I give you, for the first time, the title that my heart has guarded for a long time. I call you Friend and this name will be the only one that we should keep for life" (Parejo Hernández 13). Dr. Roger Capella, former Venezuelan ambassador to Argentina under Chávez, also characterized the historic relationship between Venezuela and Argentina only in regards to Bolívar and San Martín (Capella).

The second period of affinity was during the Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands (known to Argentines as the Malvinas). The Falkland Islands lie in the South Atlantic Ocean east of Argentina. Their name and sovereignty had long been disputed. The Falklands War began on April 2, 1982, when the Argentines invaded and occupied the Islands and South Georgia, and ended with the Argentine surrender on June 14, 1982 (Smith). Before the war even began, Venezuela was one of the first countries to declare solidarity with Argentina over the sovereignty dispute. Venezuela decided to support Argentina because of its own belief in self-determination and non-intervention. Venezuela made this position clear in various international settings, including meetings of the Organization of American States and the United Nations (Luna).

These two incidences of close cooperation are not enough to deduce that relations have been strong throughout the history of these two nations. Instead, according to the vast majority of my interviewees, Argentine-Venezuelan relations have historically been fairly distant and lukewarm. Differences in their interests and cultures did not compel the two nations to engage naturally or extensively with each other.

Venezuelans descend from a very mixed background, from

African, European, and indigenous ancestors; essentially, they have a Caribbean culture. Argentines descend from Italians and Spaniards; their heritage is distinctly European. According to Francisco Monaldi, professor at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración (Advanced Institute for Administrative Studies), even the way they do business is different. Argentines are harsher and more direct. Hence, they give off the impression of being arrogant and pretentious. Monaldi illustrates this with a telling example from within SIDOR, an Argentine steel company with a production base in Venezuela: "When Argentinean workers came to work at SIDOR in Venezuela, their interactions with the Venezuelan workers were poor. Their clashing cultures did not allow them to work well together. The Argentines actually had to bring in Mexican workers to ease the transition and relations with the Venezuelans" (Monaldi).

The two countries are in completely different subsystems of Latin America. Venezuela is situated on the Caribbean, a region of great strategic importance to the United States. Venezuela's neighbor is Gran Colombia, which includes the Panama Canal (an entrance for China) and Colombia. In contrast, the Southern Cone region, which encompasses Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, is important to Argentina (Scholar). Because of these different locations, the two countries have vastly different interests. Venezuela is oil rich; Argentina is a middle-tier player in energy resources, but a crucial one in food production. Jonathan Coles, the Venezuelan Minister of Agriculture from 1990-1993, summed up the historical relationship between the two countries well: "There was zero interest in Argentina during my term as Minister. The Southern Cone was just seen as totally different. San Martin and Bolivar had their meeting and that was it" (Coles).

The Menem, the de la Rúa, and the Duhalde Years

When Hugo Chávez assumed the presidency in 1999, he maintained this lukewarm relationship with Argentina for several years, during the presidencies of Carlos Menem, Fernando de la

Rúa, and Eduardo Duhalde. He shifted his behavior when Néstor Kirchner was elected (Edmundo Gonzalez).

During his campaign, Chávez only visited three countries in Latin America: Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia. In Argentina, he met with President Carlos Menem. There were certain sympathies between the two leaders, but Chávez was only really interested in being a part of Mercosur, a regional trade agreement to promote free trade and fluid movement of people, currency, and goods. Chávez visited Brazil and Argentina because they were the two powerhouses of the organization. Chávez was so adamant about securing a spot in Mercosur that Carlos Menem was the only Latin American president to have a private meeting with Chávez on the day of his inauguration. In that 7:30 a.m. meeting, only eight people were present: Hugo Chávez, Edmundo Gonzalez, Carlos Menem, and five other Argentines (Edmundo Gonzalez). When Chávez assumed office in 1999, the United States called governments throughout Latin America to ask their opinion of the new Venezuelan president. The person who spoke most highly about Chávez to U.S. President Bill Clinton was Carlos Menem. However, this was only because Chávez asked him to do so (Edmundo Gonzalez). So, though cordial, the relationship with Menem was not particularly defined by a shared ideology, only pragmatic interests. In fact, disagreements between Chávez and Menem soon arose. For example, there were differences concerning the essence of democracy and the creation of a new constitutional assembly in Venezuela (Edmundo Gonzalez). All in all, the Argentine-Venezuelan relationship maintained the same rapport as in past years.

When Fernando de la Rúa came to power in Argentina in December 1999, Chávez did not attend the inauguration. He sent Vice President José Rangel instead. The first time de la Rúa and Chávez met was a few months later at the inauguration of the president of Uruguay, Jorge Batlle, in March 2000. Relations became worse when, later that year, treaties and agreements between Venezuela and Argentina failed to crystallize. In Argentina, Chávez was not particularly popular—he appeared half-guerrilla, was still part of the military, and he had participated in a coup. As such,

there was apprehension toward Chávez in Argentina because of the country's own troubled past with military dictatorship and coups. However, Rangel sought to improve relations. Edmundo Gonzalez actually suggested that Rangel go to Buenos Aires for the second time in 2000. Later that year, Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini came to Venezuela to mend relations which then became fluid and diplomatic, but nothing more significant or special (Edmundo Gonzalez).

In December 2001, Fernando de la Rúa was forced to end his term as president in response to protests against his handling of the economic crisis. Eduardo Duhalde replaced him. Duhalde seemed to have some sympathy for Chávez. At the meeting of the Grupo de Río en Costa Rica, for example, Duhalde supported the democracy of Venezuela and adamantly opposed the elite coup attempt of April 2002. Relations seemed to be getting better, but Duhalde was not in power long enough to fortify relations (Edmundo Gonzalez).

NÉSTOR KIRCHNER AND CHANGES TO THE RELATION

The period of 2003-2004—when Néstor Kirchner assumed power in Argentina—was a significant turning point in the relationship between the two countries. However, those working for the Argentine and Venezuelan governments, though they recognized a marked increase in commerce between the two nations, did not sense a political change. Moreover, the newfound commercial affinity just “balanced their historical unity” (Binaghi). This section will show that the two countries did actually become significantly closer, both economically and politically, with the start of Néstor Kirchner's term.

Increased Economic Affinity

The economic affinity between Argentina and Venezuela since 2003 has been substantial. The commerce between them does not balance their historical unity; it goes above and beyond

any relation they may have had before. Between 1999 and 2002, Argentine exports to Venezuela actually decreased slightly; the same was true of exports out of Venezuela to Argentina. In total, the commercial exchange between the two nations decreased from about \$300 billion to \$152 billion. Lukewarm political relations seemed to parallel economic ties during the presidencies of Menem, de la Rúa and Duhalde in Argentina. A change came in 2003, however, with an even greater spike in 2004. In these years, the total commercial exchange increased, and nearly tripled between 2003 and 2004. The export of petroleum in particular doubled from 2003 to 2004, and then increased nearly twenty-fold between 2004 and 2005. Whereas the value of petroleum sold to Argentina used to equal the value of non-petroleum products, this changed dramatically in 2004 and by 2007, petroleum made up nearly 93.25 percent of all exports to Argentina (Asociación Venezolana de Exportadores). Although exports to the rest of the world also increased during these years, the rate of increase did not nearly rival the rate of increase to Argentina. Whereas total exports to the world increased by about 24 percent between 2001 and 2007, total exports to Argentina increased by about 192 percent in the same time period. Chávez spent more than twice the amount of money on Argentina from 2005 to 2007 than he spent on even his closest allies, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. The timing of this spike in economic activity thus emphasizes Chávez's particular interest in maintaining close relations with the new Argentine president, Néstor Kirchner, as it corresponded with Kirchner's assumption of power (Asociación Venezolana de Exportadores).

As further evidence, both Argentina and Venezuela have significantly increased their services and activities since 2003 in order to keep up with the new economic affinity between the two nations. For example, the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA) and the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial (INTI) are public, decentralized institutions in Argentina that have demonstrated increased activity during Kirchner's presidency, most notably in their relations with Venezuela. INTA provides the technical "know-how" to improve agrarian functions

in countries throughout Latin America; farmers learn how to manage agricultural machines, how to produce the best milk, and other skills. According to Javier Binaghi, Secretary of the Economic-Commercial Division of the Argentine Embassy in Caracas, INTA provided 33 courses to Venezuelans last year (*Asociación Venezolana de Exportadores*). This year they are providing 55 courses, with an enrollment of over 600 Venezuelan students (*Cipolla*). In 2007, INTA sent a permanent representative to Caracas, Venezuela's capital, for the first time in its history. INTI, on the other hand, provides the "how-to" information for those in the agrarian business. INTI coordinates, assesses, and designs industrial technology and factories of the state, called "fabricas," throughout South America. According to Federico Merke, Academic Sub-Secretary of the Argentine Council for International Relations, INTI used to primarily concern itself with quality control. However, this changed with the arrival of Enrique Martín as the new president of INTI, who is widely regarded as a fervent Chavismo, that is, one who is sympathetic to the left-wing ideology espoused by Chávez. Martín is changing the institutional mission of INTI into one of "inventing solidarity through technology." Over a hundred Venezuelans are now enrolled in INTI classes to learn about social cooperatives (Merke).

The history of the *Cámara de Comercio Venezolano-Argentina* (Venezuelan-Argentinean Chamber of Commerce) is also a telling indication of how economic relations between the two countries have changed with the rise of Kirchner. The *Cámara* works with Argentine companies seeking to initiate operations in Venezuela. The organization determines what documents are needed to enter Venezuela, how to work with the exchange control system, what permission is needed, and other technicalities. The *Cámara* was formed in 1973, but went through a prolonged period of inactivity during the latter half of the twentieth century. Its function was only revitalized in 2003, coinciding with the start of Kirchner's presidency. The organization realized that an immense number of treaties were being signed between Venezuela and Argentina, and so it was in their best interest to restart operations (*Borguillos*).

Increased Political Affinity

“Before Chávez, Venezuela never cared about Argentina. But, that has completely changed” (Lladós). This is quite true even when considering the newfound political affinity between the two nations. Juan Battalame, an expert on national security, gave the example of his classroom in Buenos Aires. In the 1990s, there were no military officers from Venezuela taking his course. Today, there are four to five in his class but only two Americans and two European military officials (Battalame).

Cooperation between the two nations in joint venture projects also seems to be at an all-time high. In February 2007, Chávez and Kirchner opened the first joint-venture oil well in the Venezuelan state of Anzoátegui, in the Ayacucho 6 block. This venture is part of the so-called Magnificent Reserve plan in which the Uruguayan state company, the National Fuel, Alcohol, and Portland Administration, is also a partner. In the same month, the two nations also announced the creation of Banco del Sur, a regionally controlled multilateral lender intended to lessen South America’s economic dependency on rich countries. In August 2007, Argentina and Venezuela pledged new oil and natural gas investments in Bolivia, which is seeking new investors after nationalizing its energy sector in 2006 (Bank Information Center).

Argentina approved Venezuela’s bid for entry into Mercosur even as the issue was still being hotly debated in Brazil and Paraguay. In March of 2008, Néstor Kirchner allowed Chávez to use Argentina for a rally attacking U.S. President George W. Bush, who was visiting neighboring Uruguay. Under the Kirchner administration, 40 of the 140 bilateral agreements Argentina has have been with Venezuela (Russell).

THE “AMBIGUOUS” CASE OF ARGENTINA

Though the political relations between the two nations has grown stronger since the presidency of Néstor Kirchner, there have been clear constrictions, hence the ambiguity of their relationship.

Venezuela asked Argentina to join the Bolivarian Alternative for the People of our America (ALBA), an international cooperation organization based on the ideas of socialism and economic integration. Argentina issued a conditional acceptance. For example, Argentina wanted to receive some benefits of ALBA, like energy and economic help, but did not want to receive Cuban doctors, educational help, or an ALBA house. This clearly illustrates Argentina's need for financial support from Venezuela but also its reluctance for sharing Venezuelan ideology. This act was indicative of Argentina's ambiguity towards Venezuela, seeming almost "half-in and half-out" (Luna).

Argentina's actions within intergovernmental organizations also symbolize its ambiguous stance. While Argentina actively supports the Venezuelan approach in criticizing the international system, they are very careful in passing judgment about the domestic policy of other Latin American countries. They value the idea of non-interventionism, and so are hesitant to criticize the domestic policy choices made by other countries, unlike Venezuela and Bolivia who have no qualms in condemning others' domestic policies (Official).

As for the joint venture projects between the two nations, in a conversation with Catalina Smulovitz, Director of the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires, it was pointed out that most of these projects have not been started, or if they have, efforts have been halted in the middle of production. The reason for such stagnation seems to be that not enough money is being funneled into these projects, and Kirchner may be doing this purposely. This would suggest that although Argentina may owe Venezuela for its bond purchases, Argentina is hoping eventually to wean itself off Chávez and Venezuela (Smulovitz).

HUGO CHÁVEZ'S INTEREST IN ARGENTINA

In order to address this ambiguity, we must understand the motivations behind this relationship. As shown earlier, both real-

ism and liberalism are inadequate in explaining the motivation of the Venezuelan president. Ideology plays a central role in Chávez's foreign policy, and only constructivism properly accounts for such a dimension.

Constructivism as an Explanation

Those who seek rational explanations for Chávez's behavior towards Argentina may point to the Argentine peso crash of 2001. The critical period of Argentina's economic crisis started in 1999 with the decrease of real GDP. The peso then crashed in 2001 to a third of its value, a devastating blow to the Argentine people. Using a rationalist approach, one would think that Chávez would have given aid to Argentina immediately when the currency failed. However, the economic and political relationship between the two nations did not strengthen until 2003, two years after the economic crisis had peaked. Chávez did not start buying bonds or selling petroleum to the ailing country until Kirchner entered office in 2003. Why was this the case? According to Edmundo Gonzalez, Chávez wanted to wait for someone who seemed to share his own mindset to become the Argentine president before courting the country (Edmundo Gonzalez). Carlos Moneta, who worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of Kirchner's term supported this claim, saying that this interest in Argentina came as soon as Kirchner entered office (Moneta). In fact, Venezuela's constitution itself mandates that the country engage with other Latin American countries to promote the Bolivarian Revolution:

The people of Venezuela...in invoking the historical example of our Liberator Simón Bolívar...with the supreme goal of reestablishing the Republic...which promotes the peaceful cooperation between the nations and drives and consolidates the Latin American integration in accordance with the principle of non-intervention and self-determination of the peoples, the universal and indivisible guarantee of the human rights, the democratization of the international society, nuclear disarmament, ecological equilibrium and the juridical environmental assets and the common and irrenounceable

[sic] patrimony of humanity...decrees the following..." (Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Chávez only found the ability to do this through what he saw as an ideological affinity with Néstor Kirchner.

Kirchner was a Peronist, and in Chávez's mind, this meant great similarities to Chavismo. In fact, on a visit to Argentina, Chávez proclaimed that he had read Juan Perón's biography and he could indeed call himself a Peronist (Asbert). Both Perón and Chávez share a very similar background. "Though Hugo Chávez has been compared to socialist icons such as Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende, his military background places him squarely with Juan Perón. Castro was a lawyer turned guerrilla fighter and Allende was a career parliamentarian while Chávez and Perón own their pre-political careers to the military" ("Perón & Chavez: Separated at Birth?"). Juan Perón had formative experiences abroad as a young man in the military. He was present in Spain, for example, during the civil war. He witnessed the deep ideological rifts that fueled that conflict. In Il Duce's Italy, Perón saw elements of the corporatist vehicle of social control. Combined, Perón's travels explain in part the kind of paternalistic populist society he sought to construct in Argentina. Hugo Chávez, like Perón, became inspired by international experience, specifically the Peruvian military regime of Juan Velasco. The political program of Velasco's regime centered on Plan Inca, which included nationalizations of foreign oil companies, land reform, and normalized relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba. Chávez has sought to reconstruct a similar system in his own country. The Peronismo and Chavismo that arose from such experiences, however, were not ideologies in the intellectually rigorous sense of the term, and in this regard, the two leaders share another similarity. Nearly everyone I spoke with classified both Peronismo and Chavismo as a "way of doing politics" or "catchall politics" (Calle). Both Perón and Chávez incorporated elements of socialism, fascism, communism, and even elements of corporatism into movements that do not strictly fall into one category versus another. Finally, both leaders used populism as the overarching dis-

course to support the people rather than the elites. They depended on the reaction of mass audiences and so they sought to give audiences what they desired (Marcano & Tyszke).

The importance of ideology in Chávez's foreign policy can be demonstrated even further by his actions following his triumph in the recall referendum of 2003. With a new injection of confidence, Chávez sought to make the Bolivarian Revolution even more influential in his foreign policymaking. In November 2004, Chávez organized a meeting with all the ministers, vice-ministers, governors, and the Minister of Defense, to present a PowerPoint highlighting what changes would be made to his foreign policy. Some ideas included enhancing relations with the common people and solidifying Bolivarian circles and ties (Gerbasí). Essentially, Chávez wanted a new international order—a multipolar world against capitalism, aligned with emerging countries like Cuba, Argentina, India, China, and Russia (Mazzei). Even those within the government recognized his radical vision for a new type of foreign policy. Dr. Roger Capella, former ambassador to Argentina who was removed from his post by Argentina for alleged ties to Iran, said that Venezuelan foreign policy indeed entered a new era around 2003 and 2004. According to Cappella, Venezuela used to be a country without any foreign policy. Its foreign policy was wholly based on the United States: "Whatever was the foreign policy of the United States, was the foreign policy of Venezuela. Chávez finally released the country from its imperial hold in 2003-2004 by turning to Latin American countries, like Argentina, instead" (Capella).

Realist explanations for Chávez's behavior are weak when compared to this constructivist explanation. Both economically and politically, his decision to ally with Argentina cannot be considered rational.

First of all, Venezuela was the only country that bought Argentine bonds after the peso crisis of 2001. All other countries and international financial institutions deemed any kind of purchase of bonds too risky. Indeed, if Argentina defaults again, the bonds that Venezuela bought are going to be of little value. The risk that Chávez's actions have brought has been demonstrated in the statis-

tics: "Venezuelan bonds fell for a second day, with the nation's debt trading at more than 6.5 percentage points above United States Treasury securities. That puts Venezuela behind only Argentina, also struggling with rising inflation, in economic risk measures of large Latin American countries" (Romero). There is some profit the Venezuelan government makes from this purchase of bonds, however, that should be recognized. This profit occurs because of the two exchange systems that exist in the country—the official rate of 2.15 and the black market rate of 3.30. After purchasing the Argentine bonds, Venezuela sells them for bolivares, not dollars. Individuals do not mind buying the bonds for more than 2.15 because they can sell it for 3.30. So, Venezuela can sell the bonds at 2.55, for example, and claim a profit. However, a lot of corruption underlies this process. Venezuela sells the bonds to favored banks, using unbridled discretion. Banks give a commission or fee to the Venezuelan government in return. Then, the banks can sell the bonds at 45 cents more, for example, at 3.00 bolivares, which is a profitable deal. These select banks benefit, as well as select individuals in the Venezuelan government. The entire country, however, does not. Moreover, this exchange system undermines the country's own foreign exchange system. According to all the economists I spoke with, Venezuela could be achieving better with the dollars they are using to buy the Argentine bonds. Thus, this practice, though profitable for some, is ultimately harmful to Venezuela as a whole (Monaldi).

Moreover, the diesel and fuel oil that Venezuela produces is not of the quality that Argentina needs or requests. It contains too much sulfur and other excess compounds. Therefore, in order to sell petroleum to Argentina, Venezuela must first buy the refined product from Mexico and Norway, and then send it to Argentina. Venezuela also sells this oil to Argentina at important discounts. Overall, there is no economic gain from this transaction (Diego Gonzalez). The debt of PDVSA, the Venezuelan state oil company, has thus been increasing at an extraordinary rate. Officially, it has \$16 billion dollars of debt, but this is only international debt. If internal debt and labor are included, that figure rises to about \$30

billion. During Diego Gonzalez's time as an engineer at PDVSA in the 1990s, debt was only \$2-3 billion at most (Diego Gonzalez). In fact, according to anonymous observations made by a financial planner, the company that does the current auditing of PDVSA cannot actually properly audit because PDVSA is a "mess" (Financial Planner).

Instead, could Chávez have a political reason for aligning with Argentina? He does want to acquire political power in order to combat American power. Juan Battalame, Professor of International Relations at the Universidad Argentina de la Empresa (Argentine University of Business) calls this the "prestigio de la revolución" or the "prestige of the revolution" (Battalame). However, politically, Argentina does not have as much sway in the international arena as Brazil and Chile, the rising powerhouses of the region. Chávez's relationships with these countries are quite distant, though, and this is primarily because Chávez understands that the leftist tendencies of Presidents Lula and Bachelet are quite different from those of Kirchner. This is enough to subdue his advances towards these countries.

Chávez knows that economically and politically, he does not gain much from his relationship with Argentina, yet he continues with the practice. Thus, his actions cannot possibly be explained with realist logic. Briefly, Chávez does not act from a liberalist lens either: power balancing is indeed at the forefront of his agenda. Cooperation with the United States is nonexistent and domestic issues do not necessarily drive his foreign policy. Therefore, it appears that constructivism has played the primary role in Chávez's foreign policy towards Argentina.

KIRCHNER'S INTEREST IN VENEZUELA

What explains Kirchner's willingness to ally with Venezuela? In contrast to what Chávez appears to believe, ideology is far less of an incentive for Kirchner than it is for Venezuela. Rather, it is economic need coupled with a short-term foreign policy vision that determines Kirchner's relationship with Venezuela. Kirchner's for-

eign policy can be explained using a liberalist lens.

Economic Need

The Argentine peso crisis of 2001 left the country economically devastated. Argentina did not have credit in the international market, and was billions of dollars in debt. By this crisis alone, Argentina became one of the few cases around the world of a country that went from being a developed to a developing nation. And, in Argentina's eyes, no one stepped in to help during this time. *Memories del Incendio*, written by former President Duhalde about the economic collapse of his country, claims that the United States "desuella la mano," or de-linked its hands from Argentina (Duhalde). The IMF and World Bank were equally culpable in their lack of support. To make matters worse, the governmental structure of the country was going through a concurrent upheaval, with a number of men assuming the position of president over the course of the next two years. However, with the semblance of political permanence that came with the rise of Néstor Kirchner, the new president also hoped to bring some sort of financial stability. Kirchner took office with a fiery speech that called on Argentines to rethink its economic plan. The 1990s image of Carlos Menem dancing with Hillary Clinton in the White House was over; Washington had praised Argentina as a model economy in Latin America, but Argentina "had fallen doing their homework" (Cardenas). Kirchner would not stick to this homework any longer. Although de la Rúa and Duhalde had indeed engaged with Leftist ideology, it was only with Kirchner that a complete restructuring of the domestic economic model was completed (Official). In placing the domestic crisis at the top of Kirchner's priority list, the new president naturally turned to Venezuela, which emerged as the only cushion during this time of struggle.

The extent to which Argentina has depended on Venezuela to help the country out of its financial crisis is incredible. In December 2005, Kirchner decided to liquidate the Argentine debt to the IMF in a single payment, without refinancing, for a total of \$9.81

billion. The payment was partly financed by Venezuela, which bought Argentine bonds en masse. From 2005 to 2006, Chávez bought more than \$3 billion worth of bonds from Argentina, issued by the government following the debt restructuring (“An alternative Dracula makes a buck,” *The Economist*). In August 2007, Chávez bought another \$500 million in bonds (*Associated Press*). The total amount of Argentina’s debt held by Venezuela is currently estimated at around US\$40 billion (*Clarín*). However, the reliance of Argentina on Venezuela for a large portion of its financing needs has not been well received in Wall Street circles. On July 18, 2006, Goldman Sachs Emerging Markets Research noted: “Instead of trying to restore its credibility with the broad capital markets, the government keeps on relying on Venezuela as its main credit supplier” (“Economy of Argentina”).

Short-Term Foreign Policy Vision

In Venezuela, Kirchner saw a quick fix to his economic crisis. He did not think ahead as to what this relationship with Venezuela would mean for the future. During the peso crisis, the Chief of Cabinet organized a meeting of political scientists and other academics to talk about the crisis and to outline some solutions. This group was called the Cabinet for the Strengthening of Democratic Governance. Julio Burdman, a former member and now Director of the School of International Relations at the Universidad de Belgrano (University of Belgrano), recalls that the government was desperate during this time. They felt that Argentina was falling to pieces. Their mindset in developing policies was very short-term (Burdman). Yet this mindset still governs much of their foreign policy, as Argentina has not yet fully recovered from the crisis. Jorge Castro agrees with this idea. Castro was the Secretary of State of Strategic Planning under Menem from 1998-1999. He was a personal counselor to the President for conflicts, economics, and external affairs. Castro claims, “Kirchner has no long-term strategy. All the foreign policy he does is based on domestic issues” (Castro). According to Carlos Moneta, Kirchner has even refused

to have dinners with presidents of foreign countries when they are in Argentina (Moneta).

In this regard, Kirchner's way of doing foreign policy is quite different from that of Chávez. Chávez works from the outside in. That is, he has envisioned a world governed by the Bolivarian Revolution and has structured his bilateral relations and his domestic policy along this line. Kirchner, on the other hand, works from the inside out. His priority is domestic, and foreign policy is an appendage to this (Liendo). In this way, liberalist thought best explains Kirchner's blurring of domestic and foreign policy, as well as his economic goals.

The Role of Ideology

Hugo Chávez thought he was dealing with Perón when he first decided to fortify relations with Argentina, but Kirchner leads with his own brand of Peronismo, called Kirchnerismo, which has proven to differ from Chavismo in three important respects. First, there is disagreement over Jews and Israel. Argentina is home to the largest Jewish population of South America, many of whom have loudly expressed their displeasure at the relationship between Venezuela and Argentina. The Jewish population is mainly concerned about Chávez's ties to Iran. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the destruction of Israel, and his country is suspected of having a hand in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people and wounded more than 200. Kirchner, though, has consistently sided with the Jews of his nation, refusing to attend the inauguration of President Correa of Ecuador because of the presence of President Ahmadinejad (Barrionuevo). On another occasion, Kirchner invited Chávez to San Isidro, the private residence of the Argentine president. All the directors of the Jewish community were there, unbeknownst to Chávez, and Kirchner asked the Venezuelan leader to explain if he was anti-Jewish or not. Chávez, of course, replied in the negative, but the act firmly cemented the Kirchners on the side of the Jews (Romero).

Second, they disagree on interactions with Washington.

Kirchner is essentially anti-United States, but he understands that “even if he does not like his neighbor, he still has to live with him” (Romero). Therefore, Kirchner is far more cautious than Chávez with what he says about the United States. Finally, Kirchner is undoubtedly a capitalist. There exists a strong private sector in Argentina that has no counterpart in Venezuela because of Chávez’s strong aversion to such development.

Essentially, Kirchner is against the neo-liberalism of the 1990s and the role of international economic institutions, much like Chávez. By and large they hold starkly different ideological views (Merke).

ARGENTINA EXPLAINED BY ASYMMETRICAL MOTIVATION

Thus, it has been shown that the primary motivation of Chávez for engaging with Kirchner is ideological. The Venezuelan president searches for shared ideology throughout Latin America, a process that constructivism explains well. Kirchner’s primary motivation though, for engaging with Venezuela, can only be explained in liberalist terms. In order to fulfill his domestic needs, Kirchner has conflated domestic policy with foreign policy. And though economic interest pulls Kirchner into Venezuela, ideology does not do so with the same vigor.

For Chávez to acquire strong allies, both economic need and ideology must exist on the other side. This is what one observes in the populist left of Latin America. Leaders like Morales of Bolivia and Correa of Ecuador need Chávez for his petrol dollars: “Chávez has been replacing the international financial institutions in a way, functioning as a source of capital without the conditionalities that the Bretton Woods institutions usually impose on borrowing countries” (Rouaux). However, these countries also share fundamental similarities with the Venezuelan president in regards to ideology. Neither economic nor ideological forces, however, pull Lula of Brazil and Bachelet of Chile into such a cozy relationship with Chávez; hence they occupy positions in the more distant, social democratic left.

For Kirchner, however, the forces pull in opposite directions. Kirchner seems close to Chávez because he depends on Venezuela for financial support, hence the strengthened economic affinity. But there are limits to the friendship Kirchner bestows on Chávez since he disagrees with the Venezuelan on important ideological issues. Hence, there is ambiguity. This is even more proof that ideology is critical, as economics is not enough to keep Kirchner invested and adherent to Venezuela at all times.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

This research has both theoretical and practical implications, namely regarding the literature on relations between developing nations and foreign policy towards Latin America. The literature concerning relations between developing nations is limited. And, though this project focuses on only one case study, it sheds light on certain topics and themes that may be of particular interest in the study of developing nations. Eduardo Mayobre, a specialist in energy and oil issues, argues that the major error in the relations between developing nations is that these countries seek to be the same as others in the world. Unlike the European Union, which was formed to regulate commerce that already existed, Latin American countries are attempting to foster integration that is simply not ready to exist in the region. This is the motivation behind Chávez in the Argentine-Venezuelan relationship, and so the long-term prospects of such an arrangement seem bleak (Mayobre). This project also indicates that the role of ideology may be more important in the relationship between developing nations than developed nations because in developing countries, like Argentina and Venezuela, foreign policy is not as institutionalized as it is in developed nations. In Argentina, the relationship with Venezuela is not managed by the Foreign Ministry but by the Planning Minister, Julio De Vido. During the Néstor Kirchner administration, five people in total conducted the foreign affairs of the country: Néstor Kirchner, Cristina Kirchner, De Vido, Chief of Cabinet Alberto Fernandez, and Secretary to the President Carlos Zanini (Russell). In

Venezuela, Chávez made four fundamental changes to the structure of the Foreign Ministry since assuming power. Before, there was one Minister, one Vice Minister, and then Sector Directors who were in charge of departments like International Policy, Economics, Culture, and Judiciary. Now there is one Minister of Foreign Policy, and beneath him five Vice Ministers who are divided by the following regions: Africa, North America, Latin America, Asia and Oceania, and Europe. Beneath each Vice Minister, there are other departments: Borders, Human Resources, Strategy, Administrative Services, Planning, and others. While decentralization is often considered a form of power sharing, this paper evidences how Chávez has ostensibly devolved powers in order to dilute the power of top officials. According to Jesus Mazzei, a diplomat in the Borders division for Latin America, this decentralization has allowed Chávez to concentrate policymaking power in his hands and a few select others (Mazzei). Because of this lack of institutionalized policymaking in developing nations like Argentina and Venezuela, the ideological basis for foreign relations takes a more prominent role, and depends on the heads of state. So “if we have another guy in office in Venezuela, he may not want to buy Argentine bonds like Chávez is doing” (Montamat). This lack of permanency makes foreign policy between these nations quite fickle in nature. “All the foreign policy in Latin America is between presidents. For example, Venezuela just left the Andean Community of Nations [CAN]. It just left because Chávez did not like Uribe [President of Columbia]. This is the Latin American idea of foreign policy. Political sympathies change a lot in Latin America” (Vera).

Finally, this project has great implications for foreign policy towards Latin America. We must not forget that: “Although international relations and foreign policy researchers assume different perspectives—macro, in the one case, and micro in the other—the foreign policy subfield continues to be intimately linked to the broader...approaches that have been the analytical underpinnings of the field of international relations after World War II” (Braveboy-Wagner). Specifically, the ambiguity created by asymmetrical motivation could allow a space for third party actors, like the

United States, to exert their influence. As for the specific case undertaken in this thesis, Argentina's affinity to Venezuela, as shown, largely depends on economic need, not ideological affinity. Under the George W. Bush administration, the United States repeatedly snubbed Argentina in the belief that Kirchner is strengthening ties with Chávez. In 2007, President Bush avoided Argentina on his South American tour, visiting only Brazil and Uruguay. In March 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveled to only Brazil and Chile for meetings, again disregarding Argentina (Barrionuevo). Actions like this are likely to push Argentina further away, when the United States could replace Venezuela as the primary provider of financial assistance to Argentina. As an alternative to direct assistance, the United States could also grant Argentina access to the international market, namely to the Paris Club and the International Monetary Fund. It seems that Argentina needs financial assistance more than ideological likeness creating a space for the United States to step in.

CONCLUSION

This is an exciting time to study this topic: we may currently be witnessing a possible shift in relations between Argentina and Venezuela. Venezuela's own economic system is at risk with the recent plummet of oil prices. The Venezuelan economy depends so much on oil that this price drop has been disastrous. One should wonder if Chávez will be able to continue buying Argentine bonds and providing the oil that the Kirchners request. Moreover, with Barack Obama's victory in the recent U.S. elections, Chávez may need to recreate or dismantle his paradigm of the imperialist United States, which could mean great changes in the foreign policy of a leader so focused on ideology. It will be interesting to see how this theory of asymmetrical motivation functions amidst all these changes. It is my prediction that as Chávez loses his money, he will most likely lose alliances as well, with Argentina going first.

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