SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN THE CHÁVEZ ERA IN VENEZUELA

Abstract

South-South Cooperation (SSC) has become one of the major trends in the International Relations of the new millennium. Initiatives of political cooperation, economic and technical assistance can be traced back to the 1960's, for example the Bandung Conference of non-aligned countries or the creation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) under Raúl Prebisch's aegis [Braveboy-Wagner 2009; Prebisch 1954, 1969]. Nevertheless, the emergence of China and the BRICS and a new period of high oil prices have produced an increased involvement of middle-income states in initiatives of cooperation with other countries of the Global South. Venezuela has been an actor in this wave of SSC during the government of Hugo Chávez. Certainly, SSC is not new in the Venezuelan external relations because Caracas implemented programs of cooperation to supply oil in special conditions to some Central American and Caribbean countries since the 1970's. Example of this were the Puerto Ordaz Agreement, approved during the Carlos Andrés Páez presidency (1974-1979) and the San José Agreement, a Venezuelan-Mexican initiative implemented in the early 1980's [Grayson 1985]. Similarly, Carlos Andrés Páez played a role in the promotion of a New International Economic Order and in the establishment of the Latin American Economic System (known in Spanish as SELA). [Pérez 1980, 1983]. However, the logic of Venezuelan South-South cooperation was transformed since the rise to power of Hugo Chávez in 1999 and in particular after his victory in the recall referendum convened in 2004. Chávez aimed to transform the Latin American Economic System (known in Spanish as SELA) [Pérez 1980, 1983]. However, the logic of Venezuelan South-South cooperation was transformed since the rise to power of Hugo Chávez in 1999 and in particular after his victory in the recall referendum convened in 2004. Chávez aimed to transform the Venezuelan foreign policy since the beginning of his government. One of his goals was obviously the deepening of the relations with the Global South. Venezuela as a middle-income country became a driver in the new dynamics of SSC both in Latin America and the Caribbean and beyond the Western Hemisphere. This paper analyses this increasing involvement of Venezuela in initiatives of SSC, in particular the reasons that led Chávez to promote those initiatives. Due to the particular narrative furthered by the Venezuelan government to explain its SSC agenda, supposedly based on solidarity, complementarity and cooperation, this paper compares Venezuelan strategy of international cooperation with more traditional forms of North-South Cooperation (NSC). To achieve such a goal, a qualitative methodology is used in the paper based on the review of the literature on international cooperation and on the evaluation of international cooperation promoted by the Venezuelan government.

Keywords

South, South cooperation (SSC), Hugo Chávez, Venezuela, the "Bolivarian revolution", oil diplomacy.

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aim was to transform Venezuela’s foreign policy, and he was committed to expanding relations with the global South beyond the traditional Venezuelan space of cooperation and influence. A favourable context of high oil price