



CSDP's new partners: South America

by José Luengo-Cabrera and Antonio Missiroli

At first glance, it may appear somewhat odd that a considerable number of Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and the Dominican Republic) have participated in EU missions and operations in regions far from their immediate geographic security sphere. Yet this is part of a broader trend whereby the number of third countries involved in CSDP activities has steadily risen over the last decade. Of the 19 non-EU states which have contributed to date, 7 have signed Framework Participation Agreements (FPAs) with the Union, thereby establishing a legal foundation for their involvement in its crisis management activities.

In 2014, Chile and Colombia became the first South American countries to sign FPAs, moving their respective partnerships with the EU beyond the traditional realms of trade, aid and political dialogue.

Why do CSDP?

In signing an FPA, third states commit to furthering the EU's strategic interests and accept the Union's 'decision-making autonomy'. Although they assume all costs associated with their participation, and contribute to the 'common costs' of military operations, they nevertheless agree to cede operational control to an EU commander. In addition, partner states are not guaranteed a say during planning procedures – nor are they necessarily invited to force generation conferences.

The benefits of these agreements for the Union are self-evident: more legitimacy, more resources, and more influence. The advantages for the concerned third states, however, are less obvious. Why would countries such as Chile and Colombia willingly enter into agreements which entail such asymmetric levels of involvement? Their stated objectives are to acquire operational experience and contribute to international security. But if that is the case, why not consider stepping up their contributions to UN peacekeeping operations?

There are already a number of Latin American countries which have participated in EU missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Brazil). Most of them have equally contributed to UN missions: Haiti (Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina), Côte d'Ivoire (Argentina, Brazil) and Sierra Leone (Colombia). This simultaneous engagement begs the question of whether there are other incentives for diversifying contributions to multilateral peace missions and operations.

An important driver is the need to strengthen ties with a key economic and political partner. Not only does this allow South American countries to demonstrate independence from the US without raising doubts over their 'Western' credentials, it also reinforces their overall credibility as EU partners. The second aspect, in turn, could enhance cooperation with the Union in areas beyond the security domain.



Ties that bind

Cooperation between the EU and Latin America has a long history rooted in political association, mutually beneficial free trade agreements, and multi-sector investment flows. The EU is its leading foreign investor, accounting for 43% of the region's total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It is also the region's second biggest trade partner – after the US – with commercial volumes having doubled over the past decade as a result of lower tariffs. In addition, the Union is the leading donor in Latin America, with aid amounting to €2.7 billion (2007-2013).

While bilateral agreements have flourished, plurilateral ones with regional blocs like MERCOSUR have stalled. This is principally due to a lack of consensus over market access proposals on the Latin American side (Argentina) or to political tensions between the EU and MERCOSUR members (Venezuela).

Trade-offs...

In the case of Chile and Colombia, maintaining and extending bilateral relations with the EU has generated benefits on many fronts – most notably in trade policy and internal security. Since a free trade agreement came into force in 2003, the EU has become Chile's third biggest trade partner, with bilateral flows rising from €7.7 billion (2003) to €18.6 billion (2011). The Union is also Chile's main source of FDI, constituting 37% of the total inflow of capital between 1974 and 2010. And with a potential revision of the Association Agreement perhaps leading to further trade liberalisation, the EU could yet become the largest importer of key Chilean exports like copper and wine.

As the first South American country to join the OECD, Chile enjoys a privileged relationship with the EU. After signing the FPA, Chile requested support for its education reforms, which the EU stands ready to assist through its programmes of cooperation (notably Erasmus+ and the EU-Chile partnership). Moreover, bilateral political dialogues have taken place regularly since 2003, and the recent return to power of President Michelle Bachelet means that Chile's relations with the EU are set to continue down the same path.

...pay-offs...

For Colombia, the EU has been pivotal in bringing short-term relief, providing aid for victims of

the country's armed conflict and acting as a key mediator in the Havana peace talks. Following the recent provisional agreements between Bogotá and the FARC – the guerrilla group engaged in an insurgency against the government since 1964 – on land issues, political participation and illicit drugs, the EU continues to be a core funder of projects in support of a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Some 70% of the €160 million earmarked through the EU's financing instrument for development cooperation (2007-2013) was used to fund programmes in the field of peace and security. With the implementation of the 'peace laboratories' strategy, the EU has been supporting local initiatives aimed at fostering cohabitation, encouraging reconciliation and boosting economic development. These also include infrastructure projects and job creation in regions that are still heavily dependent on the cultivation of illicit crops.

For countries like Chile and Colombia, in other words, formalising a security partnership could, at the very least, enhance their credibility *vis-à-vis* the Union and encourage the 28-member bloc to expand cooperation or deepen ties in other areas. Consequently, the possible costs of contributing personnel to CSDP missions and operations are not only affordable but also well worth the investment; for three main reasons. First, potential contributions are likely to be limited in number. Second, both parties can strengthen their reputation as active contributors to international peace and security. Third, overall bilateral relations are likely to improve further, with potential spill-over effects in other policy areas.

...and spin-offs...

All this may prompt other Latin American countries to follow in Chile's and Colombia's footsteps. For instance, Brazil is seeking to deepen its institutional ties with the EU, and recently adopted a Joint Action Plan to cooperate in the areas of security, sustainable development and technology. Following the establishment of a 'strategic partnership' in 2007, Brasilia is also negotiating an FPA with the EU – although its signature will probably be delayed as the imminent presidential election takes centre stage.

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