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JULIA THERESA EDER

**Trade and Productive Integration in ALBA-TCP –
A Systematic Comparison with the Corresponding Agendas
of COMECON and NAM**

ABSTRACT *The Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America – Peoples’ Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) is a counter-hegemonic regional integration project which rejects neoliberal trade. It aspires to establish solidary, complementary and cooperative trade relations and to promote the productive integration between the member countries, inter alia through the creation of Grand National Enterprises (GNEs). Some inspirations for the regional trade and production agenda have been examined in detail, but the impact of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and of the Collective Self-Reliance (CSR) approach of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has not been researched systematically. On the basis of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), this article provides a comparison of ALBA-TCP documents on trade and productive integration with the corresponding counterparts of COMECON and NAM. The analysis demonstrates that ALBA-TCP does not represent a mere copy of either of the approaches, but has probably drawn inspiration from both.*

KEYWORDS *regional integration, trade, productive integration, ALBA-TCP, COMECON, NAM, collective self-reliance*

1. Introduction

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) originated from the struggle against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) promoted by the United States at the beginning of the new millennium. It was presented as a Latin American alternative to integra-

tion through free trade (ALBA-TCP 2004). In 2004, the former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez proposed the regional integration project to Cuban president Fidel Castro as a mean of broadening their anti-capitalist bilateral cooperation, which had existed since 2000. Two years later, Bolivia followed the call and then Nicaragua (2007), Dominica (2008), Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador as well as St. Vincent and the Grenadines (all 2009), joined the Alliance. The last members to affiliate were St. Lucia (2013) and Grenada, as well as St. Kitts and Nevis (both 2014). Honduras acceded to ALBA in 2008, but was withdrawn by the coup government in 2009. Evidently, the politico-economic alignment of ALBA did not succeed in persuading the economically better-developed countries of the region to join.

Although ALBA emphasised the importance of social and political issues in regional cooperation from its creation, it did not neglect the economic dimension. In 2006, Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela signed the Peoples' Trade Agreement, based on solidary terms of cooperation (ALBA-TCP 2006). The following year, several 'Grand National Projects' (GNPs) were presented, encompassing along with health, education, culture, tourism and telecommunications, the fields of fair trade, energy supply, food production, development finance, mining, transport and industrial development. 'Grand National Enterprises' (GNEs) – multinational state-owned enterprises – were intended to promote some of these projects (ALBA-TCP 2007). In the same year, the creation of the Bank of ALBA constituted a first step in the formation of a New Regional Financial Architecture. The development bank began to operate in 2008, when the purpose and goals of the GNPs and GNEs were also specified (ALBA-TCP 2008a). Later in the same year, ALBA's presidential council passed a joint declaration to introduce a regional common account unit, the SUCRE (ALBA-TCP 2008b). In 2009, all member states adopted the Fundamental Principles of the Peoples' Trade Treaty (in Spanish TCP; ALBA-TCP 2009a), which added the suffix TCP to ALBA. At the same summit, they embraced the action plan for the creation of a joint economic development zone and eventually signed the agreement for the implementation of the Economic Zone of ALBA-TCP (ECOALBA-TCP) in 2012 (ALBA-TCP 2009b; ALBA-TCP 2012).

The roots of ALBA-TCP's regional trade and production agenda have been repeatedly discussed in the literature. However, some influences have been preferentially treated. In relation to trade and production, this applies to the proposals coming from the alter-globalisation movement and indigenous traditions, such as "Living Well" (Daza 2012; Muhr 2010). Also, great importance was attached to Cuba's development aid practice towards the Third World (see for example Yaffe 2011). The impact of other historical influences – namely the theory and practice of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and the concept of Collective Self-Reliance (CSR) of the Non-Aligned-Movement (NAM) – has not been analysed in detail. The present article seeks to fill this gap by comparing the approaches to trade, productive integration and multinational enterprises in ALBA-TCP with those in what were its potential historic predecessors. Where can we discern similarities, where do we encounter differences? The article's goal is to identify the elements of the two historic approaches which could have framed ALBA-TCP's regional trade and production agenda.

The first chapter provides an overview on the literature on ALBA-TCP, moving from the general to the specific. The following chapters discuss the issues of trade, productive integration and multinational enterprises from the perspective of ALBA-TCP in comparison to the practice and/or suggestions of COMECON and NAM. The analysis of the documents was conducted on the basis of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), following Mayring (2000). After the theoretical and thematic focus of the article was specified, I selected for closer investigation eight declarations and agreements of ALBA-TCP specifically dedicated to trade and productive integration, one joint declaration of MERCOSUR approving the productive integration with ALBA-TCP, and the basic principles of ALBA-TCP published on the official website. Furthermore, I analysed the Complex Programme of COMECON from 1971, and the NAM action programme for economic cooperation from 1976, both elaborating on the above-mentioned categories, which were developed deductively on the basis of literature on trade and productive integration on ALBA-TCP, COMECON and NAM. In the field of trade, I isolated key statements on the principles of trade, on its political regulation and on the applied or foreseen mechanisms. In relation to productive integration, I looked for how the documents related their

objectives to trade and how they foresaw promoting and controlling the process. Concerning the multinational state-owned enterprises, I focussed on their goals, their structure and their role in the process of productive integration. Available empirical data on ALBA-TCP and secondary literature on COMECON and NAM complemented the analysis.

2. Different approaches to ALBA-TCP

Analytical works drawing on concepts from mainstream political science and international relations categorise ALBA-TCP as a “post-hegemonic” (Riggirozzi 2011; Riggirozzi/Tussie 2012) or “post-liberal” (Sanahuja 2012) integration scheme, which could develop because of the declining hegemony of the United States of America in international politics. The creation of ALBA-TCP and other recently-formed regional cooperation schemes in Latin America (UNASUR, CELAC) is linked to the election victories of left-wing parties in several Latin American countries, starting with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998. The focus of research is on the ‘resurgence’ of the nation state as central political actor, and on the strong political and social dimension of cooperation (in contrast to the neoliberal new regionalism of the 1990s). In this context, Riggirozzi and Tussie (2012: 2) refer to the new regional governance as a “post-trade regime”, because “trade has ceased to be the mechanism for the transmission of neoliberal principles.”

Another approach with diverging methodological and theoretical implications stems from the fields of critical international relations, globalisation studies and human geography. From this perspective, ALBA-TCP, as part of the “new strategic regionalism” (Aponte-García 2014) in Latin America, is defined as “counter-hegemonic” in the (neo-)Gramscian sense of the term (Aponte-García 2014; Benzi 2016; Muhr 2010, 2013, 2016). Hence the nation state is not perceived as a monolithic bloc, but as an arena in which social actors struggle to reproduce or alter the hegemonic consensus in society. Moreover, the research does not focus exclusively on *international* (= inter-state) relations, but includes *transnational* actors and processes. This approach investigates ALBA-TCP as an attempt to create a new hegemonic consensus in the region, one not based

on the (neo-)liberal assumptions of the (Post-)Washington Consensus. The present article analyses ALBA-TCP from this methodological and theoretical viewpoint, considering also class interests and the resulting contradictions and conflicts.

Much research on the ALBA-TCP of either approach targets not so much the economic developments, but rather the programmes and measures in the political and the social spheres (e.g. Muhr 2010, 2013; Riggirrozzi 2011; Riggirrozzi/Tussie 2012; Sanahuja 2012). This is comprehensible because the governments heading ALBA-TCP argue for prioritising those issues over economic interests. However, it would not be correct to state that trade and productive integration are completely irrelevant in the Alliance. In particular, those scholars who study the ALBA-TCP cooperation as a development strategy critically discuss the multiple proposals to transform existing and establish new trade relations and to enhance productive integration for the promotion of endogenous development (see for example Aponte-García 2014; Benzi 2016; Briceño-Ruiz 2014; Califano 2015; Girvan 2011; Muhr 2016; Yaffe 2011). As the following chapters will show, ALBA-TCP's policy makers have been very concerned about analysing prevailing trade and production patterns and developing viable policies for their transformation. In this regard, to characterise ALBA-TCP as 'post-trade' does not seem adequate.

The existing literature discusses the different roots of ALBA-TCP's trade principles. On the one hand, Yaffe (2011: 134f.) stresses the influence of the Cuban practice of providing international solidary aid, particularly in the fields of health and education. Interestingly, many exchange mechanisms applied in ALBA-TCP were also used in COMECON, of which Cuba was an affiliate. I assume therefore that Cuba could have transmitted this knowledge. On the other hand, Daza (2012: 7ff.) and Muhr (2010: 44f.) argue that the objective of establishing complementary and solidary trade relations was adopted from the alter-globalisation movement. The Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) – formed in the Americas out of social and grass roots movements opposed to the FTAA – published in 2002 the document “Alternatives for the Americas”, which contained alternative principles for trade. Hugo Chávez supposedly drew on these suggestions for the basic conception of ALBA. Furthermore, the same authors emphasise Evo Morales' role. In 2016, the Bolivian president proposed the

joint signature of the Peoples' Trade Agreement, inspired by the popular Bolivian concept of *Vivir Bien* (Living Well; Daza 2012: 10; Muhr 2010: 44) and, according to Broadhead and Morrison (2012: 14), also by the HSA document.

However, it is possible to trace back even further similar approaches to trade and productive integration. Hernández and Chaudary (2015: 5, 12ff.) interpret ALBA-TCP as a Third Way between neoliberal and socialist integration models, but do not elaborate this point systematically. Briceño-Ruiz (2014: 13) attributes ALBA-TCP similarities to COMECON due to the application of barter mechanisms. Yet, he claims that there exist many differences, but does not illustrate them. Benzi (2016: 87) points, in the same context, to the missing planning element in ALBA-TCP, which seemingly only exists in declarations (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 53), and to the diverging role of the state as distinguishing features. Urruchurtu (2014: 15f.) stresses the missing supranational institutionality and “ideologised cooperation” as shared elements. Nevertheless, none of the authors offers a systematic comparison of the trade and productive integration agendas of COMECON and ALBA-TCP.

Other scholars elaborate on the impact of the concept of CSR, prominent in the 1970s and 1980s among the NAM and in *dependista* circles. Muhr (2016: 634) characterises “relations of mutual benefit and for national and collective self-reliance” as central features of the current South-South Cooperation (SSC) within the framework of ALBA. Fischer (2016: 8f.) also observes similarities with CSR, but introduces a valuable distinction between the NAM approach and the dependency approach. According to her, ALBA's promotion of CSR mechanisms sustains the tradition of NAM's declarations and (proposed) policies (see also Girvan 2011: 20). In the *dependistas'* approach, Samir Amin (1981: 535) advocated openly for the disassociation of the capitalist world market and for the construction of socialism grounded on his “Theory of Peripheral Capitalism”. Johann Galtung and Dieter Senghaas agreed that unequal trade relations could not otherwise be overcome (Kahn 1978: 23ff.). Meanwhile, the NAM representatives aspired to increase the South-South flows of goods and capital through the guarantee of trade preferences (Fischer 2016: 3; Khan 1978: 16). They seemed to strive for “a share of the core's pie” (Fischer 2016: 2) in global capitalism through the implementation of a New International

Economic Order (NIEO; Fischer 2016: 2; Kahn 1978: 23ff.), an aspiration which was harshly criticised by Amin (1981: 543ff.). As ALBA-TCP has no dissociation agenda and the (central) means of production remain in private hands, only the NAM approach of CSR applies.

3. Principles and mechanisms of trade

Article 1 of the Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP 2009a) defines complementarity, solidarity and cooperation as the main guiding principles of internal trade relations with which to enhance the welfare of the people, especially of the underprivileged sectors. In Articles 3, 5 and 9 (ALBA-TCP 2006) and Article 15 (ALBA-TCP 2009a), the principle of 'mutual benefit' appears as a feature of intra-ALBA-TCP cooperation. Sometimes the protection of (national) sovereignty in relation to trade, finance and investment decisions is mentioned, which could be interpreted as a fifth principle (reflected in Articles 6 and 19, ALBA-TCP 2009a). A further feature is the non-reciprocity of trade relations (ALBA-TCP 2006). However, Benzi (2016: 87f.) points out that many of the principles have not been defined in detail.

NAM and COMECON had very similar legitimising foundations. In the "Lima Programme for Mutual Assistance and Solidarity", approved by the NAM Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 1975, the title already reveals the projected principles of international cooperation within CSR (NAM 1976: 171). It was probably due to the ideological heterogeneity of NAM that it lacked further conceptual terms specifying its aspired form of cooperation. COMECON based itself on socialist internationalism, consisting of comradely cooperation in mutual interest, fraternal aid and socialist solidarity, all on the basis of the absolute equality of the affiliated member states (Busch/Seidel 1972: 137; Castro Martínez 1990: 396; Lorenzini 2014: 189). Another feature was the complete voluntariness in cooperation in order to protect the national sovereignty of the participating nations. This expressed itself in the absence of supranational institutions and in the 'interest principle', which allowed every nation to cooperate exclusively on matters of proper interest (COMECON 1971: 50, 140).

While NAM declared multilateral cooperation from the beginning as its main goal (NAM 1976), COMECON relied – as does ALBA-TCP today – mostly on bilateral agreements. Officially, COMECON used to present the bilateralism in trade (as ALBA-TCP currently does) as a result of the consequent protection of national sovereignty (ALBA-TCP 2006, 2009a; Schiavone n.d.: 106, 111). While this was certainly a relevant aspect, there also existed critical voices who questioned whether the framework of bilateral agreements was deliberately chosen. They assumed it was the product of the initially non-convertible national currencies. Later, the introduction of the transfer rouble as COMECON’s clearing account unit resolved this problem and promoted the multilateralisation of the socialist trade relations (Castro-Martínez 1990: 397f.; COMECON 1971: 88). ALBA-TCP’s bilateral trade approach, in contrast, can be interpreted as a consequence of scarce (foreign) hard currency. In 2010, ALBA-TCP introduced the clearing account unit SUCRE to free intra-ALBA-TCP trade from its dependency on the dollar and to facilitate multilateral trade operations. Nevertheless, the SUCRE is scarcely used, with the exception of private bilateral trade between Ecuador and Venezuela, and even in this relationship its use has been declining since 2012 (SELA 2015a: 14ff.).

ALBA-TCP grants Special and Preferential Treatment (SDT) to the less developed countries within and outside the Alliance (ALBA-TCP 2009a, Article 5; Girvan 2011: 11, 21; Principles of the ALBA n.d.). For example, in the Peoples’ Trade Agreement, Cuba and Venezuela recognise in Article 12 the “special need of Bolivia as a result of the exploitation and plunder of its natural resources during centuries of colonial and neo-colonial rule” (ALBA-TCP 2006), leading to the non-reciprocal abolition of tariffs and other non-tariff trade barriers favouring Bolivia (ALBA-TCP 2006; First of the joint actions developed by Cuba and Venezuela towards Bolivia). In relation to development finance, Girvan (2011) demonstrates how ALBA-TCP practises SDT with three of its economically weakest member states, the Caribbean islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Other options of exercising SDT – granted by ALBA-TCP and practised in COMECON – are price subsidies or preferential credits, which could in some cases be repaid with goods (Bethkenhagen/Machowski 1978; COMECON 1971: 56f.; Girvan 2011). Furthermore, the possibility of bartering – to pay for goods or services with

other goods or services without the intermediation of money – favours the weaker economy with lower access to hard currency, for example in the framework of the TCP from 2006 (Article 9, ALBA-TCP 2006). In COMECON, barter was actually the only trade option before the transfer rouble was created (Dietrich 2014: 63).

In theory, the CSR approach of NAM proclaimed the protection of the weaker economies and COMECON aspired toward the reduction of development asymmetries. The SDT should thus be mediated through the establishment of a system of preferential trade mechanisms between (NAM) or towards (COMECON) the nations of the Global South (COMECON 1971: 53ff.; Lorenzini 2014; NAM 1976: 171, 175). While NAM hardly implemented its proposal (and will therefore not be further discussed here), the practice of COMECON was inconsistent. Trade relations within COMECON were usually non-preferential and the goods were paid on delivery (Castro Martínez 1990: 398). However, during the first 20 years of COMECON, the Soviet Union conceded generous aid and applied SDT to the less developed economies within and outside COMECON (COMECON 1971: 56f.; Lorenzini 2014: 184; Dietrich 2014). From the 1970s on, the Soviet Union subsequently tried to reduce SDT towards its better developed commercial partners within COMECON and with the developing countries outside, turning to the ‘mutual advantage’ as a new ideal (Dietrich 2014; Lorenzini 2014: 188; Castro Martínez 1990: 399). However, the mere application of the mechanism of socialist price-building could be interpreted as a form of SDT, considering that it guaranteed additional stability when compared to capitalist trade relations (Bethkenhagen/Machowski 1976: 58f.). The least developed COMECON members – Cuba, Vietnam and Mongolia – continued to be subsidised with oil supplies and exaggerated prices for their products until the collapse of the Soviet Union. For example, the Soviet Union paid at least triple the world market price for Cuban sugar (COMECON 1971: 56f.; Dietrich 2014: 54). These solidary trade relations aimed at reducing the disadvantages of deteriorating terms of trade and were helpful in the beginning. Nevertheless, Dietrich (2014) shows that, instead of creating self-reliant economic structures, new dependency relations emerged.

In ALBA-TCP, regional trade flows are weak, as they were between the COMECON states after the Second World War (Castro Martínez

1990: 395). COMECON was successful in overcoming this initial problem and had already by the 1970s established closely linked economies (Busch/Seidel 1972: 150). ALBA-TCP's results are less convincing. Intra-ALBA-TCP trade flows started from a very low level and still represent a minimal share of the total trade of the member states (Califano 2015: 93f.). Califano demonstrates, on the basis of figures from 2013, that the main trading partners of the five biggest ALBA-TCP members were non-affiliates, which has not changed significantly up to the present. Only Venezuela ranked in the top five export destinations of Cuba and Nicaragua, but even this share has been decreasing since 2014. The trade within ALBA-TCP is effectively irrelevant for Venezuela's total trade (Benzi 2016: 89). It could, however, be argued that these figures have no relevance, because – contrary to COMECON – ALBA-TCP's main purpose is not to increase intra-zone trade. Instead, trade is interpreted as a tool to reach other goals (Principles of ALBA, Article 1). However, ALBA-TCP would have needed to redirect or create trade flows to a greater extent in order to fulfil its non-trade objectives, a goal which has clearly failed.

It is often argued that trade flows in ALBA-TCP have not been sufficiently diversified. However, Aponte García (2014: 207ff.) proves that trade flows within ALBA-TCP did not only increase between 2005 and 2011, but that this growth was related to food, beverage and industrial supplies and not exclusively to the petrol industry. Califano (2015: 89f.) complements Aponte García's investigation by comparing trade growth rates to overall growth in GDP and concludes that, despite the onset of the world economic crisis, trade between the five biggest ALBA-TCP members had been growing faster than their whole economies. Furthermore, the increase of trade flows in this period was linked to intermediate goods, not to raw materials. Aponte-García (2014: 211) confirms this in relation to bilateral trade between Cuba and Venezuela, which according to her led to effective industrial development connected with health and education in Cuba. Nevertheless, in absolute terms, non-oil trade in ALBA-TCP is still relatively weak and the focus on primary commodity exports restricts the trade options between ALBA-TCP countries (Benzi 2016: 89; Girvan 2011: 22).

4. Regional productive integration

In 2009, ALBA-TCP started to pursue the goal of expanding ALBA-TCP's trade relations through the promotion of productive integration. At that time, a working group began to elaborate a detailed plan for the further implementation of GNPs and GNEs, which aimed at "providing the Alliance with an economic base not dependent on oil" (Benzi 2016: 87). This task was to be reached through the creation of an Economic Zone of Shared Development "to promote trade and economic-productive complementarity in the framework of ALBA-TCP" (ALBA-TCP 2009b, Article 1.1). In 2012, the Agreement for the Creation of the Economic Space of ALBA-TCP (ECOALBA-TCP) was adopted. ECOALBA-TCP is presented as a "shared-development, inter-dependent, sovereign and solidary economic zone aimed at consolidating and expanding an alternative model of economic relations to strengthen and diversify the productive apparatus and the commercial exchange" (ALBA-TCP 2012, Article 1). Article 1 further specifies its goals, enumerating the coordination of economic policies, the specialisation of production according to the strength of each country, and the use of the financial mechanisms created in ALBA-TCP, namely the Bank of ALBA and the SUCRE (ALBA-TCP 2012). Article 2 reaffirms the Principles of the Peoples' Trade Treaty (TCP) and adds three points to it, one being the "differential and solidary treatment, which takes into account different levels and objectives of development, as well as the dimensions of the economies of each Party" (ALBA-TCP 2012, Article 2, 24). This is followed by the creation of new intra-ALBA-TCP production chains (Article 5), with the goal of increasing the aggregate value/upscaling (Article 6), the promotion of the territorial specialisation "to orient the localisation of the zones of productive development on the basis of comparative and geostrategic potentialities" (Article 7), and the creation of 'Grand National Enterprises' which should establish joint structural capacities in production, distribution and commercialisation (Article 8). The implementation of ECOALBA-TCP is still not accomplished. Article 3 (ALBA-TCP 2012) stated that the Agreement would enter into force two years after the adoption of the document and it formed the Council for Economic Complementarity of the ALBA-TCP to advance the creation of ECOALBA-TCP (ALBA-TCP 2012). Three years later, SELA (2015a: 17f.)

stated that ECOALBA-TCP would enter into force at the beginning of 2016, after having been ratified by Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela in 2015. Nevertheless, until now (November 2016) there has been no indication that this has actually occurred.

Interestingly, ALBA-TCP has also started to negotiate with MERCOSUR, CARICOM and PETROCARIBE to create a Complementary Economic Zone. In 2014, MERCOSUR adopted in Article 1 of a common declaration to

“establish a mechanism of Political Dialogue and Economic and Commercial Cooperation of MERCOSUR to promote the constitution of a Complementary Economic Zone (CEZ) together with ALBA-TCP, CARICOM and PETROCARIBE, with the objective to invigorate their political and economic relation, fostering the development of complementary, just and balanced trade which responds to the top development interests of the people”.

It is not clear whether this project is supposed to be the expanded version of ECOALBA-TCP, or what this zone should look like, exactly. According to Muhr (2016: 631) this zone aims to constitute “a space to foment the productive integration in a solidary and just way”, based on the ALBA-TCP principles of cooperation. However, concrete proposals use the plural form of CEZ and show similarities to neoliberal Special Economic Zones (see SELA 2015b). In any case, the recent government changes in Argentina and Brazil will most likely impede this declaration from ever being implemented.

The proposal of ECOALBA-TCP is very similar to the Complex Programme, which was adopted in 1971 by the COMECON states to deepen their productive integration so as to stimulate the exchange of goods and better coordinate their productive efforts in order to satisfy the intraregional demands (Castro Martínez 1990: 398ff.). Even from as long ago as 1954 onwards, COMECON states had coordinated their national production plans and from 1956 they had stipulated specialisation agreements to avoid parallel economic developments (Busch/Seidel 1972: 146; Castro Martínez 1990: 396). In 1962, COMECON members adopted the basic principles of the international socialist division of labour, which provided the ideological basis for the further productive integration, which was finally implemented through the Complex Programme of 1971 (Seidel/

Busch 1972: 147). This elevated the originally bilateral form of cooperation to a multilateral level. At the beginning of 1977 there were already more than 90 multilateral COMECON agreements for productive cooperation (Castro Martínez 1990: 400f.).

In the following list, the main objectives of the Complex Programme are presented, with the corresponding articles of CSR/NAM and ALBA-TCP agreements in brackets (COMECON 1971: 47ff.):

- Bi and multilateral consultation in economic policy (Articles I.4, I.8, ALBA-TCP 2009b; NAM 1976: 175, 181),
- Consolidation of the bi and multilateral planning activities of the countries, e.g. the common planning of specific industrial sectors and types of production (Article 4, 5, ALBA-TCP 2012; NAM 1976: 181), and the coordination of the national plans (NAM 1976: 180f.) before their adoption at the national level,
- The expansion of international specialisation and cooperation in production, science and technology (Article II.2, ALBA-TCP 2009b; Article 4, 7, ALBA-TCP 2012; NAM 1976: 181, 184, 187ff.),
- The extension of the relations between the public administrative institutions, the economic organisations, and the research and development facilities (ALBA-TCP 2009b; NAM 1976: 185, 188),
- The expansion and the increase in the efficiency of mutual trade (Articles IV.1, 2, Article V, ALBA-TCP 2009b; NAM 1976: 175, 181), which in COMECON was seen as a primary means to accelerate economic growth (Castro Martínez 1990: 400),
- The developing of the existing, and the creation of new, international economic organisations by the interested countries (Article V.3, 8, ALBA-TCP 2009b; NAM 1976: 175, 180ff.);
- The improvement of the legal basis of the economic and scientific-technological cooperation (Article I.4; I.2 ALBA-TCP 2009b).

5. Multinational (state-owned) enterprises

It was envisaged that the ‘Grand National Enterprises’ (GNEs) play the leading role in productive integration. These multinational enterprises, owned by two or more ALBA-TCP states, were conceived as opponents

to TNCs and their free trade agenda (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 52) and were supposed to focus on intra-ALBA-TCP trade. Their products are for the final consumer or for further industrial processing within the ALBA-TCP area, but in either case are to be sold for a fair price. Nevertheless, GNEs should strive to be profitable and self-sustainable. Their profits shall either be reinvested or directed to social programmes. Exports to the international market are allowed when regional consumption is satisfied (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 53). GNEs aim at integrating other public or private, large or small, local, national or foreign enterprises in regional value chains (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 53; Article 5-8, ALBA-TCP 2012). Moreover, GNEs are expected to play a central role in the creation and stabilisation of ECOALBA-TCP (Article 8, ALBA-TCP 2012), generating a cooperative advantage in opposition to Ricardo's comparative advantage. However, Califano (2015: 82) and Benzi (2016: 87f.) point out that it has never been clearly defined what these cooperative advantages should and could be. The former argues that technological pooling, or the creation of regional value chains around the GNEs, could be such an advantage.

It is required that GNEs be linked to a 'Grand National Project' (GNP). These projects define strategic fields for socio-economic development (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 53) and can create a corresponding GNE (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 51). According to Espinosa (2013: 292), the GNPs have been selected predominantly from proposals made by social movements at Peoples' Summits and other public meetings. In official documents this is neither confirmed nor denied. As multinational state-owned companies, it was projected that GNEs would operate in areas of public interest, namely in the fields of food production, energy, fair trade, industry, mining, transport and telecommunications (ALBA-TCP 2007). Initially, it was planned they would be bilateral and subsequently include more ALBA-TCP nations (Article 8, ALBA-TCP 2012). Thus, GNEs are a tool with which to support the social, economic and political goals of GNPs. For example, the GNP 'Fair Trade' comprises the following GNEs: one GNE for the commercialisation of industrial supplies and another for the administration of imports and exports in the ALBA-TCP area (ALBAEXIM). Furthermore, the GNP proposed the creation of ALBA stores to distribute the goods produced in ALBA-TCP countries (ALBA-TCP 2007).

In the literature, the exact number of GNEs in operation varies. In 2007, the heads of states agreed on the Fifth ALBA Summit to implement 32 GNPs and GNEs, of which 18 projects were prioritised a few months later. In relation to trade and productive integration, these were the Bank of ALBA, ALBAEXIM (combining an old idea of NAM (1976: 174, 176), which foresaw the creation of two separate institutions for these tasks), and the ALBA stores. Nevertheless, in 2013, apart from the Bank of ALBA, only seven GNEs and GNPs had been developed or had been in the process of negotiation (SELA 2013: 17ff.). At the beginning of 2015, Califano referred to official sources mentioning 13 existing (but not all operating) GNEs and 25 GNPs, which formed part of 14 fields of action. At this point, all GNEs were bilateral between Venezuela and another ALBA-TCP country. One GNE was already in operation, while five others were so at such an advanced stage that they just needed their social statute to be approved. Apparently, the number of GNEs in actual operation has always been very limited, but since the end of 2015 no further information on GNEs and GNPs has been published, so that their current state is unclear (Benzi 2016: 87). My written request to the Venezuelan embassy remains unanswered.

The idea to create state-owned multinational enterprises goes back many years. In COMECON, multilateral firm cooperation was practised from the 1960s onwards (Seidel/Busch 1972: 147). Hence, it predates the intention to create multinational enterprises within SSC. The Complex Programme finally established the judicial basis for different types of international economic organisations (IEAs) in the socialist bloc, inter alia joint enterprises (*gemeinsame Betriebe*) to deepen the productive integration. It was planned that they would dispose over the shared management and financial resources of different states. In 1978, six joint enterprises with shared management structures existed. In their most advanced form, they sought to have production sites in all the participating states (Bethkenhagen/Machowski 1976: 28ff., 43ff.; COMECON 1971: 59ff., 92ff.; Lorenz 1978: 15f.). Nevertheless, in 1978, joint enterprises with subsidiaries in all engaged countries hadn't been established yet, although it was planned to expand some of the 55 IEAs this way. In the accessible literature there was no indication that this had been realised successfully at a later stage (Lorenz 1978: 20f.; see pages 55ff. for a tabular listing of all IEAs).

The CSR approach of NAM also foresaw the creation of multinational enterprises (MNEs), but in this case they were explicitly restricted to SSC (Muhr 2016: 637). NAM (1976: 175) declared its intention to set up multinational enterprises between developing countries to collectively organise the marketing, transport and distribution of the products of developing countries. In contrast to transnational companies with industrialised countries as dominant actors, a “multinational enterprise can be defined as formal and more or less transitory agreement of two or more Third World states – or of their citizens – for the implementation of the mutually favoured economic goals in production, exchange and/or service acquisition” (Green 1977: 376). This statement already points to the fact that the Southern MNEs could also include private sector companies or even be wholly constituted by them (Green 1977: 380). They were to increase trade within developing countries and improve their trading conditions with industrialised countries (Green 1977: 387). During the first years, Green (1977: 416) expected the majority of MNEs to belong to the category of “economic cooperation between developing countries” and not to be part of a broader strategy of CSR, as only very few countries had committed themselves completely to national self-reliance by then. This leads back to the earlier-cited statement of Fischer (2016: 2) that the CSR approach of NAM was not anti-systemic, but strove to increase the share of the benefits of global capitalism. Moreover, Green’s elaborations do not address the risk of sub-imperialist exploitation, which the more developed Southern countries might have been able to organise through MNEs.

6. Conclusion

In 2006, Becker (2006: 36) asserted that a shift from development-centred to trade-centred approaches in regional integration projects was observable. In this sense, the creation of the counter-hegemonic integration project ALBA-TCP represented a turning point. As was the case between the 1950s and 1970s, the objectives of regional integration were no longer limited to trade, but aspired to progressive productive integration in order to reduce existing development asymmetries. The systematic comparison with the respective agendas of COMECON and NAM

clearly demonstrated that ALBA-TCP revives principles and mechanisms previously proposed and practised in historic development-centred integration approaches. Additionally, in the field of productive integration we could discern many similarities between the foreseen and occasionally implemented strategies. ALBA-TCP's GNEs adopt elements from the concepts of socialist IEAs and NAM's MNEs alike. While the latter do not necessarily differ from benefit-oriented state-monopolistic enterprises, GNEs are conceived to serve economic and social objectives – as was the case with IEAs. Nevertheless, GNEs seek to integrate private capital – mostly SMEs – which is reminiscent of the MNE definition of Green (1976). All approaches rely (to different extents) on economic planning to link trade and production, and demand a strong state. Hence, the historic concepts probably influenced the conceptualisation of ALBA-TCP's trade and productive integration agenda.

However, there are also four relevant differences between the discussed or proposed integration schemes. One lies in the progress of the integration projects. While COMECON was already deeply integrated in the 1970s, NAM has never been able to put CSR into practice in a broader context (Fischer 2016). In the case of ALBA-TCP, the declarations and agreements prove that the intention to further the integration exists. Nevertheless, the present article has demonstrated that intra-ALBA-TCP trade and productive integration both remain very low and even seem to be in recession. A second difference involves the relevance of the plan for economic activity. While in COMECON the creation and coordination of the national plans was the most important political action directed towards the economy, in NAM it was only foreseen for key industries. In ALBA-TCP, there was an intention to develop 'Grand National Planning' around the GNEs (ALBA-TCP 2008a: 53), but its implementation has not been confirmed. The third difference relates to the fact that COMECON constituted a form of cooperation between (by the 1970s) mostly industrialised countries, while CSR of NAM and ALBA-TCP both adhere to the tradition of SSC. Evidently, this clearly constrains ALBA-TCP's possibilities for successful integration (Becker 2006: 12; Benzi 2016: 88f.), as it unifies small markets and underdeveloped economies (Muhr 2013: 4). Also, it meant that ALBA-TCP countries, for example Bolivia, needed to enter alternative markets to satisfy their import needs, and therefore signed Free Trade Agreements with

the USA and the EU (Benzi 2016: 88f.). The fourth difference lies in the economic basis of the integrating states and is discussed in more detail in the paragraph below.

Probably the greatest and most important difference between member states of COMECON and ALBA-TCP, as well as those of NAM, is found in their politically established economic basis. While COMECON was a socialist cooperation grounded on nationally and/or collectively owned means of production, this is not the case in ALBA-TCP (with the exception of Cuba). Consequently, ALBA-TCP is not a socialist integration scheme, although it attempts, to some extent, to establish non-capitalist cooperation mechanisms. It is exactly this counter-hegemonic alignment within a capitalist world economy which provokes the opposition of private economic actors to the ALBA-TCP governments and which also negatively affects the trade and production dimensions of ALBA-TCP. The national bourgeoisies, most vehemently at the present time in Venezuela, try to stop the economic restructuring in the ALBA-TCP area, because it clashes with their class interests. They still own the central means of production and therefore can – and do – exert pressure to avoid the reshaping of capitalist trade and production patterns. If they succeed in overthrowing the government or in winning the next elections in Venezuela, the continued existence of ALBA-TCP will be seriously threatened. After all, despite the above-introduced efforts to strengthen the productive structures within ALBA-TCP, the Alliance's financial basis is still Venezuelan oil rent. Without the support of Venezuela, the margin for the application of non-capitalist cooperation mechanisms within the SSC scheme will be drastically restricted. This could even lead to the dissolution of ALBA-TCP, for instance if the scarce economic resources inhibit the further implementation of political decisions.

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ABSTRACT Die Bolivarianische Allianz für die Völker unseres Amerikas – Handelsvertrag der Völker (ALBA-TCP) ist ein gegenhegemoniales regionales Integrationsprojekt, das neoliberalen Freihandel ablehnt. Es strebt danach, solidarische, komplementäre und kooperative Handelsbeziehungen aufzubauen und die produktive Integration der Mitgliedsstaaten voranzutreiben, unter anderem durch die Schaffung von großnationalen Unternehmen. Einige Inspirationsquellen für die regionale Handels- und Produktionsagenda wurden bereits detailliert untersucht, während der Einfluss des Rates für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW) und des Ansatzes der kollektiven Self-Reliance der Blockfreien Bewegung noch nicht systematisch behandelt wurden. Auf der Grundlage von qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse vergleicht dieser Artikel ALBA-TCP-Dokumente zu Handel und produktiver Integration mit den korrespondierenden Gegenstücken des RGW und der Blockfreien Bewegung. Die Analyse zeigt, dass ALBA-TCP keine bloße Kopie von einem der Ansätze ist, aber wahrscheinlich von beiden inspiriert wurde.

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