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The formative platform of the Congress of Panama (1810–1826): the Pan-American conjecture revisited

A plataforma formativa do Congresso do Panamá (1810–1826): a conjectura Pan-americana revisitada

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Introduction

A large number of historians attribute Pan-American designs to the Amphyctionic Congress of Panama.¹ One ramification of this assumption consists in making Simón Bolívar's opposition to US participation dependent solely on specific conditions.² In most cases, it concentrates on the process surrounding the calling of the Amphyctionic Congress, in particular the invitation strategy of the Vice-President of Gran Colombia, Francisco de Paula Santander, eliminating the importance of prior stages in their function as formative platforms for Bolivarian unionism.³ The other current of historians sustain a different perspective: the confederative project was essentially Latin American.⁴

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1 This position has been defended by, among others, Lockey (1927), Guerra (1946), Whitaker (1954), Caicedo (1961), Bernstein (1961), Castillo (1972), and Bingham (1976). For the Tenth Inter-American Conference, Venezuela's Ministry of Foreign Relations held a competition on inter-American history in 1954 which stipulated, among other requirements, that the works would have the following title: "From the Congress of Panama to the Conference of Caracas, 1826–1954: the genius of Bolívar seen through the history of inter-American relations". As a result of that initiative three works were published with pan-Americanist premises: Yepes (1955), Cuevas Cancino (1955), and López (1955). One of these authors, Yepes (1955, I, 59), says that "those who belittle his political horizons at the very time when he was about to realize the greatest dream of his life really do a disservice to the glory of Bolívar." Cuevas Cancino (1955, 66) is more diverse in his arguments, although he defines the Congress as "Americanist, continental and [...] a standard-bearer of democracy for the world." Notice that the pan-Americanist thesis follows some time after the facts. Among its first enunciations are the documents of the International American Conference of 1890 (1890).

2 Lynch (2010, 286), among other authors, states that Bolívar excludes the United States from the ecumenical project for reasons of identity and "to respect the susceptibilities of the British."

3 A noteworthy exception is seen in Cuevas Cancino (1955, 23), for whom the bilateral treaties "are epoch-making, and their heroic proposals pushed forward everything that had been done."

4 This conjecture is also defended by a large number of authors: Vasconcelos (1934), Martínez (1959), Medina Castro (1968), Pacheco Quintero (1971), Connell-Smith (1971), Pividal (1977), Escarra (1977), Ortega (1982), Calderas (1983), Bushnell and Macaulay (1994), and Díaz (2001). Connell-Smith (1971, 23) states the following: "Bolívar wants a Hispano-American group," while the inter-American system "originated in the concept of Monroe, not with Bolívar." Vasconcelos (1934, 72) treats that difference as a colonialist conflict: "We refer to

The present paper is devoted to studying the characteristics and goals of the formative platform of the Congress of Panama. In this way it aims at upholding the hypothesis that the first test of integration in the Western Hemisphere resulted almost exclusively from the process initiated during the Hispanic American War of Independence. With that objective, the study has been structured into five sections: the formation and collapse of the First Republic of Venezuela; the development of the confederative project; the foundation of Gran Colombia; the network of bilateral treaties concluded by this country with five republics; and the scope of the Santander strategy. The period being studied comprises sixteen years, from Venezuela's Declaration of Independence in 1810 to the final bilateral "union, league and perpetual confederation" treaty in 1826.

The First Republic of Venezuela

The unionist enterprise reveals its coherence and lines of action from the beginning of Independence.⁵ To document this assertion it is necessary to go back to the Revolution of April 19, 1810, when the Supreme Junta in Caracas ratified Venezuela's Declaration of Independence and, for the first time, associates the defense of sovereign rights with "the great work of the Spanish-American confederation." A month and a half later, Bolívar goes on a mission to England to explain to the British government the reasons for the Venezuelan Revolution and gain Britain's support. In London the position he takes earns him the sympathy of the capital's population, but not the backing of the government, which prefers to maintain its reserve in order not to further weaken the Spanish monarch during the French occupation. On September 5 a report appears in *The Morning Chronicle* in which Bolívar establishes the need for full independence from Spain. The thesis is relevant because the majority choice of the patriots at that point is still the conquest of broad autonomies within the Spanish monarchy. In that commentary he also links the independence movement to the projected Hispano-American confederation:

The day, which is not far off, when Venezuelans—convinced that their moderation, the desire to demonstrate sustained peaceful relations with the Metropolis and their pecuniary sacrifices, in sum, have not merited the respect or gratitude they believe they have a right to—will definitively reach for the flag of independence and they will declare war on Spain. Nor will they rule out inviting all the peoples of America to unite in a confederation.⁶

Bolivarianism as the Hispano-American ideal of creating a federation out of all the peoples of Spanish culture. We call Monroism the Anglo-Saxon ideal of incorporating the twenty Hispanic nations under the northern empire, through the policy of pan-Americanism." For Bushnell and Macaulay (1994, 25), finally, the Congress "was at the same time a symbolic display of the highest degree of Hispano-American cooperation and, in its results, a demonstration that the conditions for a permanent alliance were still not present."

5 The chronology is based on O'Leary (1981, XXIV, 254), Restrepo (1969, VI), Lecuna (1958, III, 320–395), and Puyo and Gutiérrez (1983). For a chronology of the stages, see Mancini (1912, 285–304).

6 Lozano (1948, 175), Yepes (1955, I, 20).

Before returning to Caracas, Bolívar meets Francisco Miranda and alongside other patriots manages to convince him to head the independence movement. Within days of each other, they disembark at La Guaira in December, 1810, and in the middle of the next year the new congress votes in favor of the formal rupture with Spain without conditions. The Constitution of December 21, 1811, which confirms the separation from Spain, does not neglect to include in Art. 129 (Cap. 5, “Successive augmentation of the confederation”), the unionist proposal:

In the same way, and according to the same principles [which unite the Venezuelan provinces], any other parts of the Colombian continent (previously Spanish America) that wish to be united under the conditions and guarantees needed to strengthen the Union will also be admitted and incorporated, with the increase and link to their integral parts.⁷

The first recipient of this invitation is the “Kingdom of Santa Fe de Bogota” (Cundinamarca), where José Cortés de Madariaga goes on March 6, 1811, as the representative of the government of Miranda. On May 28 of that year a Treaty of Alliance and Federation is signed with Jorge Tadeo Lozano, and on October 22, both states exchange ratifications.⁸ With notable programmatic coherence, the Treaty defines the new country as the first step in the construction of the “General Confederation”:

Having realized the division of the Kingdom into Supreme Departments, over which this Government has negotiations pending, they will be admitted as Cundinamarca and Caracas, in the quality of co-states of the General Confederation, with equal rights and representation, the same as any other formed throughout the rest of America.⁹

In mid-1812, the First Republic is overthrown by forces loyal to the Peninsula.¹⁰ The causes behind this setback are important for the Bolívar’s statist

7 *Federal Constitution for the States of Venezuela made by the representatives of Margarita, Mérida, Cumaná, Barinas, Barcelona, Trujillo and Caracas, meeting together in the General Congress*, Caracas, December 21, 1811, ANH, Fondo Bargueño, Caracas, vol. VIII, t. I, p. 278.

8 Miranda, not Bolívar, is central to this initiative. Cortés de Madariaga takes with him a letter signed by the Precursor in which he presents to the invested Canon “a very important commission [...] regarding a political meeting between the Kingdom of Santa Fe de Bogota and the Province of Venezuela” (Arias 1938, 64).

9 The document can be consulted in López (1942, 20–21).

10 In July, 1812, news arrives of the loss of Puerto Cabello, a strategic enclave entrusted with Bolívar, and the War Council called by Miranda in La Victoria decrees on the 24th of that month the capitulation of the First Republic. The moment is recalled by historians by a fact that has no direct relation with our theme but is impossible to ignore. The Venezuelan combatants, among whom we find Bolívar, meet at the home of Manuel de las Casas and refuse to yield; some of them accuse Miranda of the defeat and end up proposing that he should be sent to the firing squad. To mark their distance from the Precursor, they send the royalist forces that also pressure Cortés de Madariaga, Juan Germán Roscio and Juan Paz del Castillo, members of the First Republic government. Miranda is held under arrest at La Guaira, and afterwards transferred to the Fort of San Carlos and from there to the Castle of Morro in Puerto Rico, before his final destination to La Carraca, Cádiz, where he dies in 1816. The accusations raised against him, including supposed bribes from the Spanish, have been challenged by Thorning (1981, 284), among others, who stresses the bad faith of his detractors.

and strategic facets. One of them is the fierce reaction of the royalists, stimulated by Napoleon Bonaparte's reverse in the Peninsula. Another, more fundamental cause is the federal regime, incapable of containing the autonomist tendencies, whose congress has recently conceded extraordinary powers to Miranda on March 19, 1812, too late for an effective defense. The third factor is the atomization of the adjacent territories: Cundinamarca forms its own republic; Panama is in royalist hands; and the provinces of Popayán, Pasto, and Santa Marta form the Federation of the United Provinces of New Granada. These circumstances allow the royalists to concentrate their men on specific points without dividing their forces, thus demonstrating a crushing superiority.¹¹

After this failure, Bolívar takes refuge in Curazao and afterwards in Cartagena. At the beginning of 1813 he is designated Brigadier of the Armies of the New Granadine Union and at the head of a small army returns to Venezuela, to begin what is known as the Admirable Campaign. After a series of battles, on August 7 he enters Caracas in triumph and reestablishes the Republic. For a time, the Liberator thinks that providence has favored Venezuelan arms and that Independence is irreversible. On December 16 he confides in Santiago Mariño his hope that the "union under a sole and supreme government, will show our strength and make us formidable to all."¹² He is referring to Venezuela and New Granada, but is thinking of the whole of Hispano-America.¹³

In July, 1814, the response of the royalist forces and their cruelty towards the civil population obliges Bolívar to leave Venezuela once again. Arriving in Pamplona in November of that year, he issues the "Proclamation of the Urdaneta Division," celebrated in a motto now central to his thinking: "for us, our country is America." When he is entrusted with the task of incorporating Cundinamarca into the "free and independent States of [the] Republic," Bolívar accepts the charge and on December 8, when the president of the rebel city is deposed, he again explains his commitment, this time in ecumenical terms: "Our objective is to unite the masses in one direction so that our elements lead everyone towards the single goal of reestablishing the New World based on their rights of liberty and independence."¹⁴

11 There is yet another significant factor: on March 26, Maundy Thursday, a violent earthquake devastates the cities of Mérida, Caracas, La Guaira and San Felipe. The event helps to influence the fall of the First Republic through both material and human losses, according to the interpretation the Church imbues among the population. Laffaille and Ferrer (2003, 107–123), show that the real effects of the earthquake were exaggerated at the time of the events.

12 Simón Bolívar to Santiago Mariño, December 16, 1813 (Bolívar 1964, I, 113).

13 Lynch (2010, 285) defends this interpretation.

14 Bolívar to the President of Cundinamarca, Campo de Techo, December 8, 1814, O'Leary (1981, XIII, 556).

Development of the confederative project

At the beginning of 1815, the New Granada government refuses to provide Bolívar with arms and provisions to liberate Venezuela, perhaps because it wants a break or a utopian independence in isolation. The Liberator therefore leaves the army and in May boards ship for Jamaica. Now in Kingston, in September in *The Royal Gazette* appears his “Reply by a South American,” better known as the “Letter of Jamaica,” a work that is the summit of thinking on Latin American independence. In this document he analyzes the future of the New World and traces a prophecy that will be fulfilled within ten years. Two of its most important paragraphs rule out the possibility that the Hispano-American republics can form a single political body. The first states:

I should like more than anything else to see America take the form of the greatest nation in the world, less by its size and wealth than by its liberty and glory. Although I aspire to the perfection of my country’s government, I cannot persuade myself for now of the New World being ruled by a great republic; as it is impossible I dare not desire it; and even less do I wish for a universal monarchy of America, because such a project, apart from being useless, is also impossible.

For its part, the second paragraph states that,

It is a grandiose idea to try to form the whole of the New World into a single nation with only one thing linking its parts with each and all. As it has one origin, one language, a number of customs and one religion, it should therefore have a single government that confederates the different states that have been formed; more than that is impossible, because remote climes, diverse situations, opposed interests, and dissimilar characters divide America. How beautiful would be the Isthmus of Panama if it were for us what Corinth’s was for the Greeks! Let’s hope that some day we shall have the fortune of being able to establish there an august congress of representatives of the republics, kingdoms and empires to try to discuss the great matters of war and peace with the nations of other parts of the world. Such an enterprise could take place at some happy time in our regeneration; any other hope is unfounded, like that of the Abbé de St. Pierre, who conceived of the laudable delirium of holding a European congress to decide the fortunes and interests of those nations.¹⁵

As an alternative, Bolívar proposes the organization of a confederation of “republics, kingdoms and empires.” Does he think that an independent Hispano-America will open up countries with diverse forms of government? Perhaps that possible diversity is the reason behind his move towards the Abbé de Saint Pierre’s

15 Bolívar, Reply by a South American to a Gentleman of This Island, Kingston, September 6, 1815 (Bolívar 1964, I, 228, 232).

model. The confederative project of the French thinker was referred, in effect, to a continent divided into more than twenty countries with distinct forms of government, but with the same origin (Europe emerged from the unraveling of the Roman Empire) and one same religion (Western Christianity).¹⁶ Whatever the inner motive, from now onwards Bolívar will not change his diagnosis: the regime capable of bringing together an atomized Hispano-America is an assembly of representatives and a confederation that respects the sovereignty of each member state.

After two expeditions to Los Cayos, both supported by the first independent state of Latin America—the Republic of Haiti—, Bolívar manages to establish the seat of Venezuelan government in a small town near the Orinoco, Santo Tomás de Angostura. Using its attributions, in July, 1818, he replies to the letter from Juan Martín Pueyrredón sent in 1816, to whom he proposes that “all the peoples of America should unite in confederation.”¹⁷ As a greater undertaking, he annexes a proclamation where he calls on the people of Río de la Plata to form a part now not of an existing confederation, such as put forward in the Cortés-Lozano Treaty, but of “a single society, so that our emblem will be Unity in South America.”¹⁸

Five years before the battle of Ayacucho and the end of the War of Independence, Bolívar feels that the Hispano-Americans have within their reach the possibility of creating the largest entity in the West. Up to now, his vision is never continental in geographical terms: “America” or “South America” is always Hispano-America. When he writes to the US government ten days after the letter to Pueyrredón, he limits himself to providing his credentials to its extraordinary envoy to obtain diplomatic recognition from that northern country.¹⁹

Gran Colombia

Successive victories, comprising the disembarkation at Los Cayos and the Battle of Boyacá on August 7, 1819, bolstered his leadership which reached legendary levels. At the peak of his influence, in December of that year, he proposes to the Venezuelan Congress the founding of the “Gran República de Colombia.” He does not seek to revive the New Granada federation, but to create an entity

16 In 1712 and 1717, Charles Irénée Castel, the Abbé de Saint Pierre, publishes in Utrecht the three volumes of his *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*. The first part contains seven discourses aimed at explaining the “advantages” and “disadvantages” of the European confederation; the second is a voluminous outline of the Duke de Sully’s project; and the third is a treaty (“Of the interest of sovereigns”) inspired by the political philosophies of Henry, Duke of Rohan and Gatién Sandraz de Courtilz. The basic aim of the *Projet* is the creation of a society made up of 18 nations denominated as the “Confederation of the States of Europe.” Very probably, this project was known to Bolívar through the “Extract” of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Cf. Saint Pierre (1986), Rousseau (1761).

17 Bolívar to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces of Río de la Plata, Juan Martín Pueyrredón, Santo Tomás de Angostura, July 12, 1818 (Bolívar, 1964, II, 18–19).

18 Bolívar, Proclamation to the inhabitants of Río de la Plata, Santo Tomás de Angostura, June 12, 1818, O’Leary (1981, XVI, 53).

19 Bolívar, “To all those who see”, Santo Tomás de Angostura, July 22, 1818 (Bolívar, 1964, II, 47).

that constitutes “the guarantee of liberty in South America,” the platform for the struggle for Independence and for the creation of the new states.²⁰

On December 17, the Congress decrees the creation of the republic. At the beginning of 1821, the delegates meet at the Villa del Rosario de Cúcuta this time to debate the form of government for Gran Colombia. Although the centralist regime is thrown out vigorously by the federalists, the Bolivarian party manages to approve the union of Venezuela with New Granada in a sole republic (Article 1) divided into three departments (Article 3).²¹ The Bolivarian preference for centralism does not imply a net rejection of federalism. The Liberator contests it in the case of the relatively small units, but accepts when it is attempted to unite the republics more flexibly. He sees centralism as an instrument capable of stabilizing the states and permitting their articulation within a larger and federal regime (internally strong states, united via a law that respects their sovereignty).²²

A little after it was founded, Gran Colombia figures among the most prestigious countries. It is the first to be recognized and therefore hosts the first foreign legations on Latin American soil. John Quincy Adams, then James Monroe’s Secretary of State and a future US president, thinks it was “destined to be one of the most powerful nations on Earth,” for its access to the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and its navigable rivers, the Amazon, Orinoco and the Magdalena, as well as for the fertility of its soil and the abundance of its mining wealth.²³ The governments of France and Great Britain also observe the leading position of Gran Colombia.

In the Antilles, the country stimulates the search for independence and union. In December, 1821, a group of Dominican patriots brought together by José Núñez de Cáceres in Santo Domingo proclaims the independence of “Spanish

20 Bolívar, Address to the Legislative Body, Santo Tomás de Angostura, December 14, 1819, O’Leary (1981, XVI, 565).

21 Bolívar’s address of February 15, 1819, is presented again on the occasion of the Congress of Cúcuta. It is unequivocal on the position of the Bolivarian party: “Doesn’t the *Spirit of the laws* say that these should belong to the people who make them? Is it a great accident that those of one nation can become those of another? Which laws should relate to the country’s physical state, its weather, the quality of the land, its location, its size, the kind of lives the peoples lead [...] to the degree of liberty the constitution may make possible, to the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, their wealth, their numbers, their businesses, their customs, and their fashions? I have here the code we should consult and not Washington’s!” (Address presented at the Act of Installing the Congress of Angostura on February 15, 1819, Bolívar, *Correo del Orinoco*, nos. 19, 20, 21 and 22 from February 20 to March 13, 1819). It should be noted that the decision of the Congress was also supported by some admirers of the US model, such as Vicente Rocafuerte and José María Restrepo. After the failure of the “Patria Boba,” Rocafuerte lost confidence in federalism, although in the debates of 1824 on the Mexican Constitution he defends the US model spiritedly (Soto 1979, 70). The case of Restrepo is different; after his initial support for the US model, he concludes that this system leads to anarchy and chaos, and he later promotes centralism as the most appropriate form of government for the Hispano-American republics (Restrepo 1957, 15–17).

22 The term “federal” does not always denote the same thing; it may be an amphycionnic confederation, such as was designed for the Congress of Panama, or a federation close to the US model, such as the Andean Federation proposed by José María Pando and Andrés de Santa Cruz, and accepted by Bolívar once he knew the meager results of the first.

23 Instructions by Quincy Adams to Anderson, Washington, May 27, 1823, Manning (1930, I, 235).

Haiti” and its incorporation into Gran Colombia.²⁴ After that initiative, wiped out by the invasion of Haitian troops in January, 1822, what follows is the activism of “Soles y Rayos de Bolívar,” a secret society organized in Cuba with the aim of creating a State united to Latin America. Less known and equally fruitless is the movement in Puerto Rico led by Antonio Valero de Bernabé, former Head of State of Mexico and, together with some members of “Soles y Rayos,” author of the *Plan for Independence* of 1823 of the Island, aimed at forming an independent State integrated with Colombia.

Bilateral confederations

On *Tierra Firme* the unionist initiatives also proliferate although they have a defined scope and are directed by Bolívar himself. In 1821, assisted by Santander and Pedro Gual, he tries to establish the basis for the confederation by appealing for a network of federative agreements with the Hispano-American republics. To carry out this plan, he decides to send a minister plenipotentiary to Mexico (still incorporating Central America) and another to Peru, Chile and Buenos Aires. Miguel de Santamaría is chosen for the first mission on October 10, 1821, and a day later, Joaquín Mosquera y Arboleda for the second. Their instructions, edited by Gual based on Bolívar’s ideas, propose to the governments of the region “the formation of a truly American league,” and, contrary to conjunctural objectives:

[...] this confederation should not be formed simply on the principles of an ordinary alliance of offense and defense: it must be much closer than what has lately been formed in Europe against the liberties of the peoples. It is necessary for ours to be a brotherhood of nations, separated for now and exercising their sovereignty through the course of human events, but united, strong and powerful enough to sustain themselves against aggression by a foreign power. It is essential that you urge incessantly the need that now exists to establish the foundations of an Amphyctionic Body or Assembly of plenipotentiaries that will promote the common interests of the American states, to annul the discord that may arise in the future between peoples who have the same customs and habits and lack such a blessed institution which can maybe excite the ill-fated wars that have desolated other less fortunate regions.²⁵

24 The Constitutive Act is composed of 39 Articles. The 4th institutes that the “Spanish part [of the Island] will enter then into an alliance with the Republic of Colombia—to become one of the States of the Union.” The 5th is disposed to send “a deputation as quickly as possible” to Gran Colombia to interview Bolívar in order to communicate to him the latest events and request from him the Colombian constitution “in order by prior examination and knowledge to give this Spanish part the act of accession.” Finally, the 6th aims to annul relations with Haiti via a friendship, trade and alliance treaty “for the common defense and security of both territories.” “Constitutive Act of the Provisional Government of the Independent State of the Spanish part of Haiti”, Printed by the Presidency of the Independent State of the Spanish part of Haiti, José María González, Santo Domingo, December 1, 1821, and reproduced in Rodríguez (1971, 70–72).

25 Instrucciones, Cúcuta, October 11, 1821, Cadena (1878, 287). See also Lockey (1927, 291–292).

The term “truly American” refers to Hispano-America, the exclusive destination of Bolívar’s emissaries. The *Memoir on Foreign Relations*, presented by Gual at the Congress of Gran Colombia in April, 1823, explains those missions by their importance in systematizing relations between the new republics. In passing, it validates its civilizational identity, the only one, also, with respect to which it makes sense to speak *uti possidetis*, of captaincies and viceroys:

The following were adopted [...] as the basis of the new system: first, that the American States be allied and confederated perpetually, in peace and in war, to consolidate their liberty and independence, mutually guaranteeing the integrity of their respective territories; and second, to make that guarantee effective, they would abide by the *uti possidetis juris* of 1810, according to the demarcation of each General Captaincy or Viceroy established as a Sovereign State.²⁶

In June, 1822, Mosquera in Lima negotiates the first Treaty of Union, League and Perpetual Confederation with Bernardo Monteagudo, member of the government presided by José de San Martín. He signs the second treaty in Chile on October 21 with Joaquín de Echeverría and José A. Rodríguez, Ministers of Foreign Relations and War and Finance, respectively. Once in Buenos Aires, on March 8, 1823, he signs a friendship treaty with the Director of the United Provinces, Bernardino Rivadavia, without any confederative derivations. During that period, Chile and Peru conclude between themselves an agreement that appears to rival the Bolivarian treaties, although its insignificance makes this document nothing more than a historical curiosity.

In Mexico, a little after the fall of Agustín Iturbide and the reorganization of the country as a federal republic, Santamaría signs a third confederative treaty with Lucas Alamán on October 3, 1823.²⁷ The last of these treaties is negotiated by two future delegates to the Congress of Panama: Pedro Gual and Pedro Molina, the first for Gran Colombia and the second for the Federation of Central America. Despite the modifications to the Bolivarian draft, a reflection of differences at the negotiating table, the four league and confederation treaties are practically identical and share the proposal of merging themselves into a unique agreement.²⁸

²⁶ Quoted by Silva (1967, 15).

²⁷ The credential brought by Santamaría and signed by Bolívar on October 10, 1821, authorizes the establishment of bilateral relations “by means of a definitive Treaty that ensures the liberty and independence of both countries, restoring to them in the face of the world the political importance credited to them by their populations and wealth” (SRE 1910, I, 239–40). Santamaría suspends negotiations when the Mexican Congress elects Emperor Iturbide on May 17, 1822, explaining that it lacks instructions to deal with a monarchy. The suspension is authorized by Gual on December 21 and is coherent with the political objects of Bolívar. Months earlier, Bolívar had warned San Martín of the dangers involved in Iturbide’s Treaty with Viceroy O’Donojú, because if Spain accepted the treaty “and transferred Fernando VII [to Mexico] or some other European prince, they would have equal pretensions to all the other free governments of America.” Gual to José Gabriel Pérez, Bogota, December 21, 1822, O’Leary (1981, XIX, 403), Bolívar to San Martín, Bogota, November 16, 1821 (Bolívar, 1965, III, 156).

²⁸ Not for this reason do the differences cease to be significant. In the case of the Treaty with Peru, Monteagudo rejects the *uti possidetis* of 1810 as a principle for anchoring the differences on the question of border limits. As a result, the Treaty is ratified without establishing the limits of the two countries.

The stipulations with respect to this project are inserted into the additional Convention of the Treaty with Peru; in Articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Treaty with Mexico; in the same Articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Treaty with Chile, and in Articles 15, 16 and 17 of the Treaty with Central America:

[1] To make the links closer that should unite both States in the future and to iron out any difficulty that may present itself to interrupt in any way their good correspondence and harmony, an assembly will be formed composed of two plenipotentiaries for each, on the terms and with the same formalities that should be observed for the appointment of ministers of equal class close to the governments of the foreign nations.

[2] Both parties are obliged to lodge their good offices with the governments of the other States of America—previously Spanish America—to enter into this pact of union, league and perpetual confederation.

[3] After this great and important object is obtained, a general assembly of the American States composed of their plenipotentiaries will meet, with the duty of establishing in a more solid and stable way the intimate relations that should exist between each and every one of them, and which serves them as counsel in the great conflicts, as point of contact in common dangers, as faithful interpreter of their public treaties and as judge, arbitrator and conciliator in their disputes and differences.²⁹

Taken together, these dispositions define the characteristics of the future Congress of Panama: they outline its objectives, a part of its agenda and they set out without ambiguities its Hispanic American identity. The first Article determines the naming of ministers to ensure their empowerment; the third (and also the second) determines the temporary character of the bilateral treaties and their later merger into a multilateral agreement. Together with the other stipulations of the treaties, they reveal a unique sequence of ends and means for Bolívar's confederative initiatives.

Unsurprisingly, the call for the Congress of Panama sent out on December 7, 1824, will be addressed only to the “confederated” governments and the first point on the agenda of 1826 will stipulate the “solemn renovation between the confederated States of the pacts of union and offensive and defensive alliance.” The importance of the network of agreements is endorsed by a third element: except for Chile, they will respond to the call made by Bolívar to all the signatory countries of the confederative treaties.³⁰ For the participants of the epoch there

29 Treaty of Union, League and Perpetual Confederation between Colombia and Mexico, AHSREM, L.E. 869 exp. I, years 1825–1826, fs. 9–11.

30 As well as Chile, one other Hispano-American country that does not attend the Congress is the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, a signatory of a friendship treaty different from the others. The resignation of both countries is known by Bolívar, who rules out their presence in the Isthmus. Bolívar to Francisco de Paula Santander, Magdalena, February 17, 1826 (Bolívar 1967, V, 22).

is no doubt that the Congress of Panama is a “consequence” of the bilateral treaties.³¹

The Santander strategy

Up to now we have seen that the unionist initiatives that stretch through the 15 years of the War of Independence determine the organization, characteristics, objectives and the identity of the Congress of Panama. That said, between the issuing of the call at the end of 1824 and the opening of the sessions of the Isthmus on June 22, 1826, a series of actions on the part of Santander take place that tend to modify the identity of the Bolivarian Areopagus. We shall look at this in stages.

The changes proposed by the Vice President are found in his reply to Bolívar on February 6, 1825.³² One of them is the elimination of the foreseen norm of internal protection in the bilateral treaties. The possibility that the new republics cooperate to re-establish order in some of them appears as “subversive of the sovereign rights of the peoples.”³³ Another is their attempt to create a broad system of alliances. In justification, Santander refers to priorities of a defensive nature:

Though our desire to at least lay the foundations of this work, the most portentous ever conceived since the fall of the Roman Empire, is great, it seems to me that it is in our mutual interest that the Assembly of plenipotentiaries convened, is verified in the Isthmus of Panama with everyone’s agreement, or by most of the American governments, the belligerents as well as the neutral ones, equally interested in postponing the supposed right of intervention of which some powers in Europe have already been victims.

The third change, in reality a complement of the above, is the invitation to the United States. Santander neither asks nor expects Bolívar’s approval. *After* having circulated the respective instructions, he informs him that he has resolved to invite the United States:

...in firm conviction that our intimate allies will not stop seeing with satisfaction that some very sincere and enlightened friends deliberate of

31 The assertion is made by Restrepo (1827, 2), Chancellor of Gran Colombia during the Panama Congress.

32 Santander to Bolívar, Bogota, February 6, 1825, O’Leary (1981, XXIV, 254–256). For an analysis of the contradictory postures of Bolívar and Santander regarding the presence of the United States at the Congress, see, among others, Medina (1968, 161). On the motivations of Santander, it is essential to consult his correspondence: Santander (1942, I–III).

33 See Articles 2, 5 and 10 of the Treaty with Mexico. According to this: “If unfortunately the internal peace of some part of the mentioned States is interrupted by disorderly and seditious men or by enemies of the legitimately constituted governments, then via the free, calm and peacefully expressed vote consistent with their laws, both parties will commit themselves solemnly and formally to make common cause against them, mutually helping with as many means in their power until they achieve the reestablishment of order and the rule of law.” Treaty of Union, League and Perpetual Confederation between Colombia and Mexico, AHSREM, L.E. 869 exp. I, years 1825–1826, fs. 9–11.

common interest. The instructions with this motive have been transmitted to our Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Washington, of which I enclose a copy, to show you extensively the principles that have caused me to make this resolution. The same reasons have led me to recommend to this Envoy that he explain to the Representative of the Emperor of Brazil in the United States good dispositions of the Republic of Colombia's towards his Empire.

Bolívar expresses his disagreement with him on the US presence in six letters: on March 8, May 8, May 30, July 7, October 21 and October 27 of 1825.³⁴ However, Santander does not desist and involves Mexico and Central America in his attempt to dilute the project.³⁵ Although the "man of Law" lacks the legitimacy to reorganize the pillars of Gran Colombia's foreign policy, either through his presence of a standing nature before the Executive, or for having served as vice president following eight elections, his conduct is far from just a challenge to the authority of the Liberator. To clarify this it is necessary to refer to two contextual elements: the offers and promises he makes to the Americans from 1822, and his defense of a hemispheric approach compatible with the Latin American identity of the confederation.

On the first aspect two US diplomatic communiqués are relevant: in November, 1822, John B. Prevost informs from Chile that he has met the Minister of Gran Colombia, Mosquera, who has assured him that his government will invite the US representative to "preside at a meeting aimed at assimilating the policies of the South [America] with those of the North."³⁶ Months later, in March, 1823, Charles Todd transmits to Adams a similar design from Bogota. According to him, Gran Colombia intends to invite the United States to the creation of an international system in which the liberal governments of Portugal and Spain will also be able to participate. With reference to the bilateral confederative treaties, he minimizes their importance and following the expression of Gual, presents them as "near alliances."³⁷ Both episodes and their outcome suggest that Santander's

34 The varied forms in which Bolívar refers to a possible invitation to the United States leave no doubt about his attitude: "The British and the North Americans are possible allies and very selfish," Bolívar to Santander, Lima, March 8, 1825; "the Federation with Buenos Aires and the United States seems very dangerous," Bolívar to Santander, Ocoña, May 8; "The North Americans and the Haitians, merely because they are foreigners have a heterogeneous character for us. For that reason, I shall never be of the opinion that we should invite them to join our American agreements," Bolívar to Santander, Arequipa, May 30; "England must look unfavorably on such an invitation [to the United States]," Bolívar to Santander, Cuzco, July 7; "I do not believe the Americans should enter the Congress of the Isthmus," Bolívar to Santander, Potosí, October 21; "I am very pleased that the United States is not joining the Federation," Bolívar to Santander, Potosí, October 27 (Bolívar, 1966, IV, 50).

35 Bushnell (1968, 259) states that "[m]ore subtle was Santander's resistance, if it really merits such a denomination, to the Bolivarian project of the Congress of Panama. He did not reject it, but according to the Foreign Secretary of Gran Colombia, Pedro Gual, he diluted it, inviting the United States and Brazil to take part, although their presence did not square with the primitive plans of the Liberator."

36 John B. Prevost to John Quincy Adams, Santiago, November 15, 1822, Manning (1931, II, 495).

37 Charles Todd to Adams, Bogota, March 6, 1823, Manning (1931, II, 627).

desire to invite the United States is as old as the confederative missions, although it remains on a secondary, informal plane, and is ignored by Bolívar. In light of this, it is likely that these quasi commitments exercised pressure on Santander and could explain why he ends up creating his own agenda.

The second aspect is that Santander expects the United States to participate *only* at the conferences on the “derecho de gentes” (international law) and commerce, reserving the confederative sessions to the Hispano Americans. In effect, the powers he delivers to the delegates at the Congress of Panama on August 31, 1825 (i.e. the accreditation they have to present to other delegates to the Assembly of the Isthmus), distinguish clearly between the “reserved” and “public” conferences, and between the “allied” and “neutral” countries.³⁸

The existence of both agendas, a general one aimed at strengthening the defensive capacity to face Europe, and another—strictly Hispano-American—, is also known to the governments concerned. Henry Clay, successor to Adams at the State Department, organizes the timing and the negotiating position of his delegates based on that information. When he obtains delayed approval from the US Legislature, he is confident that his ministers will arrive in time to deal with the second part of the meeting.³⁹ Lucas Alamán, Mexico’s Chancellor, knows this and tells the Peruvian government about it in July, 1825, although he basically does not believe that the Americans will go to the Isthmus.⁴⁰ Manuel J. Hurtado, Gran Colombian Minister in London, communicates a similar version to the British government in January, 1826, and Edward J. Dawkins, the observer sent by George Canning to Panama, is instructed to take into account the double logic of the negotiations.⁴¹

Also the general public knows about this framework. The book that the Abbé de Pradt dedicates to the Congress of Panama and which appears in 1825, in Mexico and Paris, is composed of two main parts; the first one analyzes the negotiations between belligerents (the Hispano-Americans at war with Spain), while the second deals with the arrangements between belligerents and neutrals.⁴²

38 The powers to negotiate with “intimate allies” from Gran Colombia go in one folder, while another gives authorization to deal with the neutrals on matters of “general interest.” As Revenga explains, the latter has a “much more limited” nature. Santander to Gual and Briceño Méndez, Bogota, August 31; Revenga to Gual and Briceño Méndez, September 23, 1825, O’Leary (1981, XXIV, 270–271, 276–278).

39 United States Congress (1825–1827, 834). When the invitations coordinated by Santander arrive, Clay has no doubt in agreeing to send plenipotentiary ministers to the Isthmus. However, the US Legislature does not submit to his proposal requiring a review of the invitation, of the objectives of the Assembly and the instructions of delegates, who, in the end, do not arrive at the Isthmus. Richard C. Anderson dies on his way from Bogota to Cartagena, and John Sergeant joins the recent Assembly in Mexico, where the Congress is moved to end itself in the midst of claims about the lack of approval of the Panama treaties.

40 Lucas Alamán to Peru’s Minister of Foreign Relations, Mexico, July 6, 1825, AHSREM, L.E. 869 exp. I, years 1825–1826, f. 1.

41 Manuel Hurtado to Georges Canning, London, January 11, 1826, Porras (1930, 363), Edward J. Dawkins to Canning, Panama, June 6, 1826, BNA, Public Record, Foreign Office (FO), Congress at Panama, fs. 97–115, 112.

42 De Pradt (1825).

Without any doubt, the invitation to the northern country has for the participants a partial effect, destined to “increase the number of enemies of Spain and their allies.” Although Santander does not understand the scope of the Bolivarian project and his action allows an unnecessary tension between the United States and Hispanic America, none of his initiatives validate the Pan-American hypothesis. In his plan, the participation of the neutrals does not weaken the civilizatory identity of the confederates.

Conclusions

The controversies between historians often owe their permanence to different theoretical paradigms. The identity of the Congress of Panama is an example. However, in this case it is possible to identify a *leitmotiv* uniting and defining the successive Bolivarian confederative initiatives; it clearly determines the Latin American character of the project. The confederation is a rolling enterprise that starts with the dawn of Independence and culminates with the Assembly of the Isthmus. From the Bolivarian perspective, it seeks to protect, complete and project the work of Independence externally. The Pan-American plan is beyond not only Bolívar, but also Santander, who promotes the presence of the United States and even seeks to dilute the Hispanic American identity of the Areopagus, but his expansion of the spectrum of representations had a strictly defensive function.

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Abstract

This article examines the formative platform of the Congress of Panama of 1826. It seeks to support the hypothesis that the nature and scope of the first test of integration in the Western Hemisphere depended critically on the platform created by Simón Bolívar and other Latin American Independence heroes from the Declaration of Independence of Venezuela in 1810 until the last bilateral agreement of 1826. In that respect, it corroborates the Latin American Identity of the initiative.

Keywords: Congress of Panama; Independence; Latin American Integration; Pan-Americanism.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa a plataforma de formação do Congresso do Panamá de 1826. Destina-se a apoiar a hipótese de que a natureza e o alcance do primeiro teste de integração no hemisfério ocidental dependia criticamente da plataforma criada por Simón Bolívar e outros heróis latino-americanos da Declaração da Independência da Venezuela, em 1810, até o último acordo bilateral de 1826. A esse respeito, corrobora a identidade latino-americana da iniciativa.

Palavras-chave: Congresso do Panamá; Independência; integração latino-americana; Pan-americanismo.