



Chile and Asia Pacific: Political Strategy in an Age of Geometrical Variables Alliances

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Introduction

In all likelihood, for many Chileans, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is embodied by what they saw in 2004 when the regional forum met in Santiago: the presidents and chiefs of state of twenty countries, including U.S. President George W. Bush and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, sporting multi-colored striped ponchos. Perhaps APEC and the Asia Pacific region are just distant places with no relevance for their daily lives.

It is true that the trade-based framework substantially increased Chilean presence in the Asia Pacific region— in which all post 1990 democratic governments have been fundamental (including right-wing liberal President Sebastian Piñera between 2010 and 2014). In this regards,

this essay will advance the hypothesis that interest in commerce and trade lacks, its an enhanced strategic position for Chile within the South American continent. Also, it not works into a well-defined concept of the political and strategic relationship that it should have with the entire Pacific Ocean region, especially with global powers such as the United States, China, Australia, Japan, and Korea. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that Chile shifts its focus to introduce a greater balance between trade concerns and it is political and security cooperation regionally. Today both shores of the Pacific represent the core focus of global security and trade. From this perspective, Chilean society has before it a window of opportunity for increasing the country's strategic clout as a factor for peace, democracy, political consultation, and to contribute cultural and political elements the advancement; it has achieved in economic-trade growth. An also due to the latter, Chile has failed to take advantage of the opportunity to serve as a bridge between the Orient and South America, especially Brazil, which also would bring benefits from its geographic location as part of the Asia Pacific Region.

To illustrate our hypothesis, in the following pages we will construct a theoretical, epistemological, and methodological framework to explain how our dependent variable – Chile in the Asia Pacific region – is modified by a series of independent variables. Specifically, we refer to the priority assigned to trade via a dependency path focus that can be traced back to the days of the military government. Subsequently, we will analyze how a shift in the core strategy toward political concerns is resulting in a security and defense diplomacy from the heart of the Pacific Alliance. The aforementioned is pivotal in understanding the world's shifting strategic and geopolitical epicenter in the direction of the Asia Pacific region, a situation that even observers of the United States have acknowledged and that prompted Australia's former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to propose a *Pax Pacifica* as the basis for global stability. Our analysis will be under the guidance of a *process tracing* methodology, a qualitative tool that leads to an analytical narrative, which underscores its comparativist nature and facilitates a conclusion consisting of a set of decision-making causalities, and positively, identifies the factors propitious for changing a trajectory of a given historical weight.

To explain the phenomenon of change that occurred in the Asia Pacific and Chile's role, primarily during the Center-left governments, we will

employ a comparative politics epistemology. For that purpose, will draw from the historical institutional focus and limited rationality to explain how Chile adheres to a decision-making process that prioritizes trade, up to the present day in when a climate that fosters questioning is generating the shift to political consideration. We believe this approach offers adequate analytical instrument than solely the international relations perspective commonly employed for these case studies, chiefly because it emphasizes how local actors make decisions at an individual level depending on the government in office at the moment.

We must caution that this essay has deliberately omitted a trade analysis and balance of trade indicators, which are already broadly discussed in the literature about Chile and its relations with East Asia and Oceania. Instead, we will highlight elements associated with historical evolution, institutional development, when and how it became a regional actor, and what can be expected in the future. Our analysis also requires that we pause to consider a type of concept formation or definition of Asia Pacific. Historically, the region was considered to be the Asian and Oceanic shores of the Pacific, but that is no longer the case. The Pacific Alliance, as well as Canada and the United States, are fully immersed in the region. The discussion leads us to question the framework that defines participation by countries of the Americas in forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the incomplete Trans-Pacific Partnership, due to United States President Donald Trump's decision. Therefore, the relations with the rest of the American continent are the same? Alternatively, how do they differ? In order to formulate an answer to the questions posed beforehand, the next section will offer a theoretical framework to enable us to define the scope and perspectives of this study.

Theoretical Framework

The focus on a trade that characterizes the Center-Left governments' foreign policy, in general, has been widely discussed. A noticeable similar emphasis exists in regards to the country's role during the same period in opening itself to the Asia Pacific region, primarily through bilateral relations with the region's nations, for if omitted was a trade, other political, social and economic implications would be lacking.

From that perspective, this article will argue that Chile's agreements with the Asia Pacific are motivated mainly by trade, based on a notion of a variable geometrical alliance that does not necessarily give precedence to strategic, political, and international insertion positions. Based on this way of conceptualizing international integration, Chile's interest has focused on membership in various international associative and cooperative groups, but not exclusively in one particular instance, such as regional instruments like Mercosur. In other words, it employs these instruments from a business perspective but not political. Only the military government shaped its relationships in this zone by increasing economic interchange over political considerations, for mutual convenience with similar regimes in Asia.

Unlike the international relations theory, in foreign policy and its impact on domestic policy, the most traditional schools such as the realist and neo-realists have dominated substantially despite the advance of constructionism. In this regard, limited rationality is an aspect of foreign policy that has been overlooked, even though it appears to guide decision-making. Hill has pointed out that although many political science studies have been conducted along the lines of actors' rational choices, few analyses on international relations take this aspect into account. Moreover, those who do venture this perspective encounter open opposition from traditionalists and others for whom historical analysis holds sway. Furthermore, more recently, constructivists have added their voice of opposition because they argue that one must not presume actors' interests and preferences (Hill, 2003, p. 98).

Indeed, rational actors cannot always be presumed to show the same set of preferences, or that they only seek to maximize their benefits in a static context. That is what Simon (1957) argues in his study of actors when he proposes that they do not seek to attain the totality of their objectives but rather attain sufficient to satisfy at a sub-optimum level. Having said this, actors supposedly aim for balance by their own set of preferences but assume that they lack the capacity for attaining all the objectives and must be content with achieving their minimally acceptable goals. In comparative politics, Riker (1962) has demonstrated the importance of building coalitions for minimum objectives, including an intelligent redistribution of cabinet

portfolios, depending on the specific realities of each political party or group. *Cerebus Paribus*, the same occurs in foreign policy, with minimal objectives attainable for each actor (which may be a country, international organization and non-governmental organization). One reason for grounding our debate on this epistemological model is precisely in order to reject classic realists' claims regarding international relations, since they presume that bureaucrats at every level of the foreign policy decision-making process act from the same level of rationality, and as if history, context or a particular reality does not impact decision-making (Keohane, 1984).

This article does not aim to present a comprehensive or definitive model. Instead, its limited rationality has the virtue of explaining with incremental and rational doses why Chile's foreign policy is shaped increasingly by the Asia Pacific region, including Oceania. Subsequently, looks for influencing its relations with countries of the Pacific western shore, associated in what was first the Latin American Pacific Basin Initiative, today known as the Pacific Alliance (including Peru, Columbia, and Mexico. In late 2013 Costa Rica also negotiated its incorporation as part of this group). Ultimately, one could argue the existence of a Chilean decision based on two significant elements that Faust (2004) examines in his analysis about Chile and its interest in East Asia. First, the region represented an escape route for Chilean exportation during a time of isolation in the twilight years of the military government, a viable option given that most countries of the region were in a similar situation, as was the case of South Korea, with whom they expressed solidarity. Also, Chile capitalized on its business penetration to negotiate trade conditions with a zone which the media and experts called the Asian tigers, two decades earlier.

The Incremental Construction of a Relationship

The notion of limited rationality in Chile's advancement in the Asia Pacific context is relevant for positing theories about this situation, especially as proposed by Faust (2004) concerning the country's interest in the region motivated by a type of consensus formed by technocratic, social and political elite to foster an open economy as a developmental model. In this context, the limitations and cognitive patterns inherited

from the military government appear key to accept the model without questioning it. From this framework, the Asia Pacific region would not be viewed as a priority, given the set of local interests, a matter that did not occur with a similar thrust in other Latin American countries such as Colombia, Peru, and Mexico.

The key factor that swayed Chilean interests at the time was the fact that authoritarian anti-Communist regimes governed several Asia Pacific countries, such as South Korea, providing a welcome escape route from international isolation the military government (Faust, 2004, p. 748). From this perspective, it is possible that Faust analyzed them as parallel but not a comparable phenomenon. However, herein lies the primary independent variable that explains the Chilean attitude toward the Asia Pacific. The reason aforementioned constitutes the central point that will facilitate our understanding of the Chilean fascination for the Asia Pacific region, not only during the military government but also during the subsequent Center-Left governments. It is true that both parties were able to overcome that dark period, although the levels and qualities of the respective democracies differ significantly. Whereas in the 1990s Chile continued to prioritize trade, during the same period the Asia Pacific countries began a political cooperation process.

Upon conducting an analytical narrative or “process tracing” of relations between Chile and the Asia Pacific rim, a description of the major landmarks along the way will not suffice. It is important also to recall the points in common as well as the differences that generated incrementally and positive incentives that favored relations with this continent in particular, in keeping with the similar reasoning presented by George and Bennett (2005). Argued is that the first significant approach was diplomacy with the People’s Republic of China by the government of President Allende. Later, the military government deepened those initial ties because its principle of non-intervention in other nation’s internal affairs justified relations with any regime, even Communist.

Valenzuela (2013) sustains this type of relationship was possible because it created a zero-sum game, as both countries – the Chilean regime and the Communist – were violating human rights and therefore mutually annulled complaints by maintaining diplomatic

and trade contact. For the Chilean military government, its only reservation was an ideological rejection of the Soviet Union and its closest allies. Thus, there are two examples of Chilean relations with non-aligned Communist countries such as Romania in Europe, and more pertinent for our case study: China. Therefore, in Asia Pacific relations it was equally important to get along well with dictatorships of the right as well as the left, as long as they were not pro-Soviet. It was of such importance that, as Wilhelmy (2010) indicates, not even the fiasco of Pinochet's failed visit to the Philippines obscured Chilean interest in the region. In sum, let's consider Faust's (2004) theory reasonable and that two neo-realist type elements give rise to trade and closer ties to Asia: on the one hand, to gain autonomy in regards to vulnerabilities that arose in the Latin American region itself. On the other, to diversify trade with different parts of the world, and not depend upon trade with the United States and Europe (Faust, 2004, p. 749). Reinforced is the latter theory through the case of Chile, given that the United States restricted its trade such as in the sale of arms (resulting from the Kennedy Amendment), as well as the lack of political relations with European countries that broke diplomatic relations with the military government in the 1970s.

Some would argue that Chile did not indeed break ties with world powers nor were the military regime's foreign relations unduly affected (Valenzuela, 2013). The truth is that relations with Communist China were more attractive as a fetish in this area of concern. Wilhelmy and Duran confirm this when they argue, "*Maintaining diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China was an exception – justifiable from the standpoint of the principle of non-intervention – evidently motivated by realpolitik consideration on both sides*" (Wilhelmy and Duran, 2003, p. 274). More so, Ross ventures to affirm that there exists a basis for comparison, in light of some similarities:

"(...) Both countries, even in their respective liberalizing transitions, organize themselves by political authoritarianism and economic liberalism. These equivalent forms, revolving around deep foundational differences, were capable, however, of sustaining a bond that was both instrumental and functional to their own survival" (Ross, 2007, p. 121).

In other words, the military government, despite its self-proclaimed anti-Communist ideology was capable of establishing trade relations

based on the principle of avoiding politics. The Argentine military also adhered to that principle in its relations with the Soviet Union, and even during the Las Malvinas (Falkland) conflict, when it received total support from Cuba, crowned by a meeting between Argentine Foreign Relations Minister Nicanor Costa Menéndez and Fidel Castro himself (Munck, 2013, p. 154).

In this case, we observe how the diplomatic relations Allende began building with China were maintained under Pinochet, but the essence changed was from politics to trade. This point of analysis marks the beginning of a path dependency that is quite difficult to eliminate, as it meets the four principles that Pierson (2004) describes for determining the weight of a dependency once it is generated. These characteristics are the increasing returns yielded from the actors' initial actions, the existence of precise timing, and an opportune moment for change to take place or for maintaining the status quo. Also, this author holds that the third factor is that the actions that maintain or produce change require contingency, context, and a particular set of circumstances. Lastly, the inertia of the actors' and institutional policies foster the maintenance of the same conditions and visions about a given political situation. Posed in that way, maintaining trade policies with the region and depoliticizing relations generated increasing returns for both sides, so that by the 1990s relations notably hinged on exportations. Thus, the international reinsertion policy favored other regions of the world to show the democratization advancement achieved during the administrations of presidents Aylwin and Frei.

However, as Wilhelmy and Duran (2003) recognize, this open regionalism faced opposition in much of the Asia Pacific region, such as Australia, or indifference from the United States, which altered only in the APEC Summit held in Seattle in 1993, and to participate as of the following year as a full-fledged member of the Jakarta meeting. The government of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle increased its presence in the region with active participation in every Summit, primarily since the enormous significance was not only political reinsertion but to stimulate economic growth. The Asian economic crisis somewhat restrained this process by *“undermining the momentum of Pacific integration and would later have significant internal economic repercussions, marking the beginning of a long de-acceleration phase”*

(Wilhelmy and Duran, 2003, p. 283). Despite the crisis, economic relations always remained in force, and no significant instances of political coordination occurred.

This fact alone brings into question to what extent increasing economic returns offer an appropriate explanation of Chile's continual policy of prioritizing economic interests over political, given that the set of incentives never varied. The crisis did not alter the political conditions of relations with the region; despite financial problems experienced by those countries, the economic-based relationship with Chile persisted. Noted is what might be regarded as the beginning of a critical juncture arose with the government of then-President Ricardo Lagos. He increasingly ventured coordination mechanisms of a more political nature, although not directly in the region but rather through Chilean presence in the UN Security Council and the Organization of American States (OAS) where Chile achieved the post of Secretary General. The first timid steps of direct coordination occurred during the first administration of President Michelle Bachelet.

In regards to the timing in propelling an economic-trade vision, it is interesting to analyze the historic moment this occurs from a comparative perspective, considering that it coincides with the end of the Cold War, the unipolarity and the fall of the Soviet Union. In this context, two elements came into play to maintain the path dependency that originated in the 1980s. Chilean political reinsertion in the world during the 1990s had two effects. Probably the most significant of that period was Chile's response to Europe: France, Germany, Italy and other countries had put themselves on the line to restore democracy in Chile. Therefore, there was little pressure to innovate in political affairs with other regions. Since it was unclear where the East and West were heading ideologically, it was not logical to generate political agreements that went any further than maintaining a kind of post-Cold War status quo. In this sense, the ability of the Center-Left governments to increase their political capacity in the Asia Pacific was low. The highest priorities for political work were to resolve problems related to border diplomacy, and, later, reintegration with the vast international powers such as the United States and Europe (Rojas Aravena, 1997, pp. 402-404).

The third characteristic is the element of contingency, from the standpoint of the lack of environmental conditions that would lead Chile to abandon its trade-economic stance. The barrage of new threats to regional security also affects the business sphere, limiting possibilities for interchange and cooperation. However, this discussion only ensued in later years, especially as proposed by the United States and others in regional forums, primarily because of the attacks on the Indonesian island of Bali, refugees, and asylum seekers trying to reach the Australian coast, in addition to other factors that disturbed regional economic and political regimes. The same was true for Asian-Pacific western shores. However, for Chile until recently this situation was viewed as a very remote threat to local problems and interests, except a few instruments, namely, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) on disarmament, but this pertains to the United Nations, rather than APEC. The United States highly promoted the initiative, especially during the Summit of 2003. It is interesting that this mechanism originated in a venue that the United States no longer regarded as peripheral, and indeed the aims for the instrument were global and in no way peripheral.

Another initiative is the *Rim of the Pacific Exercise* (RIMPAC), naval maneuvers coordinated by the United States Navy Pacific fleet, in which Chile has participated since 2004. This naval exercise, to which even China is a participant, is symbolic but also has its political dimension. It is symbolic in the sense that nearly all nations want to participate in this naval war exercise, as it makes apparent the countries' participation and regional membership. Also, the United States ratified a policy dating from the end of the Cold War, in a political shift from global presence to global reach to enable rapid deployment of its air, navy and ground troops (Faulkenberry, 1996). This mechanism makes it possible for United States Armed Forces to reach all contexts and any location in the world in a matter of hours. In this light, the RIMPAC accentuates United States identity as part of the region. Furthermore, Chilean Armed Forces, particularly the Army and Navy, entered different regional forums and encounters of Asia Pacific important security and defense organizations.

As can be observed, only in recent years did the perspective gradually begin to change, motivated in part by the Chilean presence in security and defense cooperative arenas. Irrefutable, however, is that since

the onset of the transition there have not been increasing returns, or the need for abandoning the trade track, as no Chilean interest has been affected in any way. In the situation we describe, there are no empirical means to conceive what might have occurred if the regional contingency had been different.

The 1990s represented a boom regarding economic aperture, and government officials had few options beyond intensifying their business-oriented policy. Therefore, it is noted the existence of path dependency inertia in Chile's relations with the Asia-Pacific region, very difficult to change. Possibly the deterioration of the global security situation and the emergence of non-military and non-traditional threats may change that perception. Eventually, such a high degree of interdependence will result in what occurs on the security sphere on the other side of the world being perceived as a threat at home as well. For example, there might arise a possible attack on a port that receives Chilean exports or similar situations. By way of hypotheses, we might point out that the economic and security variables are present in today's global security scenario, particularly in the Asia Pacific basin. More than ever before, economy and security are interrelated, interdependent and mutually complementary. Shortly, the level of security of the trade flow will have a direct impact on the final value of each product, thus consolidating, even more, the relation between economy and security.

It would be interesting to view APEC in the context of what Quezada (2010) regards as a gamble on multilateralism, represented by President Lagos' foreign policy. Quite the contrary, agreement with the European Union and deepening Chilean presence in the OAS arena appears more central, to such an extent that shortly later, towards the end of the Lagos administration, his former Interior Minister Jose Miguel Insulza became the organization's, Secretary General. Thus, we can see that the central elements of political multilateralism did not permeate Chile's relations to the APEC region. The trend changed to an extent with President Bachelet, when the country participated in extra-governmental political spaces such as the Shangri-La Dialogue. Despite the latter, certainly, we do not participate even as observers in the region's political cooperation mechanisms.

The problem of viewing multilateralism with the Asia Pacific exclusively from an economic perspective is the implied presumption that other

elements pertinent to foreign policy may be left out with and not be assessed when it comes to genuinely measuring relations with a given region of the world. To presume that trade alone guarantees diversified, and significant relations is a common mistake made by many in recent years. First of all, globalization has brought with it some virtual borders or neighborhoods, implying that something that occurs halfway around the planet from Chile can have a more significant impact than something that occurs in a country nearby. Moreover, a second factor implies the presence of variable geometries in agreements with countries far away without the dimension of closeness that was impossible to imagine until a short time ago. The above-meant interchange between people, cultures, and experiences cannot be reduced to the sale of products. Consequently, it seems more than reasonable to prioritize agreements like APEC and other similar ones. However, what is not reasonable is that by the latter, benefits obtained in such relations are not employed to improve our negotiation capability and leadership in the region itself, to which we inevitably belong.

Chile tended to enjoy rather exclusive relations with the APEC countries, always relegated to second place other significant relations, especially with the rest of Latin America. Chile has much to gain if it were to complement its capacity to add greater political and strategic closeness to its Pacific in its approach to Argentina, Brazil, and other countries. It cannot be a bridge for all countries on the other side of the ocean, given the region's diversity, but yes, it could be for Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, China and others with which it has advanced along that road. Neither is it possible to sustain the same degree of closeness with all these countries on every issue. In the decade of 2000, Chile made an initial timid turn towards the political sphere. However, it is not entirely true. As Robledo (2013) sustains, that during the years of democratic governments (particularly the Center-Left), relations with the Asia Pacific have a political void, which should be rectified.

In this regard, in 2012 the former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd spoke of the need to build a Pax Pacifica, based on the idea that what happens on Australia's coast is a decisive factor in global stability. The Prime Minister even went so far as to describe the region as the significant propeller of world growth; for that reason, its security is so

important. From the prism of this new reality, many other alternatives for political coordination have emerged, including the notion of regional security and defense diplomacy, mostly centered on the previously cited Shangri-La Dialogues. Concerning this point, Capie and Taylor (2010) hold that an incremental architecture had been building, overcoming initial reticence, as was the case with Canada. Throughout recent years trust has developed, which led the former Australian prime minister to suggest that world stability depends on what is discussed in those forums. On a more international level, it can be seen that the status of global security will benefit if efforts are made to consolidate zones or areas of stability over those unstable areas that directly impact, not just the global economy, but also peace, development, and well-being of the global community (Barnett, 2004).

In sight of the above, we should note what Frohman (2010) and Robledo (2013) pose. They point out that the Asian powers regard mechanisms such as APEC for the possibilities of expanding trade, but also for strategic and political opportunities as elements of integration with their neighbors. In contrast, for the countries of the Pacific's American continental coast, including the United States, these bodies are merely viewed as a bridge to access rapidly growing economies. In this regard, Robledo (2013b) himself delves further into the issue of Chile's absence from regional political forums, signaling the example of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its various forms in recent years.

The previous point indeed results in a weakened position for future negotiations. Chile has been a member of the P4 Group along with New Zealand, Brunei and Singapore ever since President Ricardo Lagos signed the agreement that went into effect in 2005. The forum entails a list of similar countries whose economies are small but open. It caused the United States to take note of them and expand its relations with a continent increasingly regarded as central. Some even believe that the United States is betting its future on the Asia-Pacific, and therefore we should not be surprised to observe its foreign policy and security policy reconfigured in that direction (Giné Daví, 2012, p. 83). Within this context, Solís (2012) holds that U.S. interest in P4 lies in the ability to preach to the choir, regarding countries that it does not have to convince about the virtues of free trade. That same motivation spurred

another seven countries, including Australia and Japan, which went in full swing with negotiations to sign the Transpacific Partnership, concerning very complex issues such as intellectual copyrights. As we know, President Donald Trump took the treaty out of the table, and as far as that agreement goes it was still signed by the rest in 2018, and it is in the process of being enforced.

Bilateral accords with everyone do not suffice; articulation is needed on the multilateral spheres as well. The above explains why many analyses based on the balance of trade statistics and the hope of opening new markets do not adequately explain Chile's position. On the whole, the employment of limited rationality models enables us to understand that the country has acted within the framework of what is possible, given the predisposition to path dependency. However, it was during the first administration of President Michelle Bachelet when a glimmer of light began to shine with higher intensity to play a more political role, including the demand for greater political participation in each APEC forum. In its timid initial efforts, the Defence Ministry was also observed to participate in dialogues that defense diplomacy hopes to open in the region, as well as opening the door for subsequent participation as observer since 2010 in technical forums such as the *Western Navy Pacific Forum*, whose actual membership began during the administration of President Sebastian Piñera. It also might be pointed out the Chilean Army participation in Asia Pacific military forums such as the *Pacific Asia Army Command* (PAAC) and the *Pacific Asia Management Seminar* (PAMS), as well as the Exchange of experiences and personnel with peers regionally and a more constant presence of personnel in some Command Operations.

In other words, it is possible to see how a process tracing a narrative based on political institutions and the development of the history of relations with the Asia Pacific region unveils the stark reality of the absence of dialogue. Also, there is a lack of mechanisms and political instruments that enable Chile to establish its economic presence in the region, while also ensuring specific leverage in decision-making that affects Chile's security and future. It is important to analyze not only how the geometrical variable clash but also are complemented by interests of other countries of the region, as the result of a multiplicity of possibilities for coming together but also of duplications

and contradictions in the scope and possibilities offered by each international instrument.

If we look at the example of the United States, we see various instances in which it interacts with Chile, both as part of the Inter-American system as well as the Asian Pacific forums. In this context, we might ask ourselves whether in the proposed Pax Pacifica Chile would be able to rely on minimal coalitions of programmatic understanding as Riker suggests (1962) in internal government matters but also in regards to the regional territory. That is, would the United States negotiate minimum conditions on relations and coalition-building capability with countries such as Chile so that, regardless of the different objectives its relations seek with one continent or another, the discourse will remain the same? The response does not appear to be either direct or straightforward, but it is essential to know on what grounds they are allies and if the message will remain the same if Chile is pegged as an Asia Pacific country or only viewed as part of the Latin American continent. The same occurs with South America where Chile is a member of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) as well as the Pacific Alliance. Therefore, it leads us to ask whether Brazil, as a regional leader, considers the country part of the regional club or if it should be excluded, in the context of relations such as Mexico's or others outside the region.

In this light, needed is to analyze the United States and the Pacific Alliance. What must Brazil and others do to incorporate themselves in a world whose strategic center displaced an ocean to the west? This would help us better understand Chile's strategic perspectives in relation to the Pacific, and, in addition, if the until now steady and attractive growth in trade has a political component in which mutual trust fosters better cooperation, and, even in a world of virtual borders and globalization, result in a higher degree of integration. Regarding this issue, we conclude by pointing out that the integration of states in more than one regional organization is a consequence of globalization on a global scale and, far from constituting a choice, is a realistic and necessary strategy, as events and their effects today expressed on a global scale.

Pacific Alliance, the United States and the dilemmas of geometrical variables

When Faust (2004) analyzed Chile's situation about the Asia-Pacific Region, the Pacific Alliance did not yet exist. Also real is that the country initiated its process of moving closer to Latin American partners around the same time in which the author complained about the lack of proximity to neighbors who shared similar problems. In this context, the emergence of this initiative is spurred by Peru's need to surmount the isolation it faced in 2006 during the government of Alan Garcia. Far removed from the realm of ALBA, that represented Venezuela, and also distant from the Andean Common Market, the possibility of gazing at the Pacific appeared to be a correct strategy, considering the Asia Pacific, as previously had Chile, Mexico, and Colombia (Nolte & Wehner, 2013). Five years later the group was consolidated by a treaty signed in Chile, in which the central aspect was uniting with others to look to the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Given this scenario, it seems absurd to believe that the action was intended merely to disturb Brazil, the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) or to form a right-wing alliance against the Venezuelan Bolivarian and Ecuadorian aspirations. In other words, it is right and widely commented that there is unfinished and underlying business between Brazil and Mexico over the primacy of Latin America. However, the ultimate meaning has to do more with generating conditions for competition to improve the levels of internal trade and agreements to speak out with one voice in the most heterogenic market of the world, namely, Asia-Pacific.

If we consider the factors described above, Nolte and Wehner acknowledge that countries that are secondary or middle powers like Columbia and Chile do not oppose Brazil's emergence as a power, but rather the idea is to diminish the asymmetries in political dependency on Brazil (2013). In this case, the quest is for geometrical variables alliances in international relations, especially in regards to economic relations. As Buamann (2009) contends, the latter issue refers to a series of trade negotiation formats in regards in how to deal with different regions of the world and regional mechanisms. In this context, the Brazilian author cautions that those trade configurations not include monetary and financial elements, which are

also important, because although geometrical variables free members from geographic dependency, it is still necessary to count on some degree of compatibility, given the complexity and precarious nature of a multilateral system (Baumann, 2009, pp. 16-17).

The point concerning these geometrical variables alliances is that when they incorporate a geographic element, as is the case of the Pacific Alliance, it is noteworthy how that enables them to overcome those previous difficulties because united they are less orphaned in facing Asia Pacific regional heterogeneity. In this regard, the Pacific Alliance and the Chile's role in the region should be considered within the rationale that Nolte and Wehner (2013) call *exit options*, in other words, avenues by which countries cooperate with each other on common objectives (to improve levels of internal interchange, as well as unite forces to negotiate with others). At the same time, understanding that variable geometry implies also joining with others, and that conditions may change, which, the authors contend, reduce the zero-sum games and vetoes from more powerful actors that would obstruct the advancement of regional projects, fostering improved levels of governance (Nolte & Wehner, 2013, p. 2). Moreover, Latin America and the Asia Pacific are two regions that from the perspective of their states, as a form of political organization, share the situation of having countries with diverse processes of state consolidation. The latter implies different but similar security and defense problems, as well as the more significant possibility of identifying opportunities and instances for cooperation. However, these regions of the global scenario comprise two clear sub-regions where stability is a condition to maintain: Oceania, about Australia and New Zealand the South American Southern Cone.

Independently how some great powers in the region can see Chile or the Pacific Alliance, it seems apparent the need to understand and size the role of middle powers, or at least to grasp what entails. In the particular context of the Asia Pacific, Emmers and Teo (2014) regards as indicators, as follows: population size, geographic area, military expenditure, GDP, GDP per capita, trade as a percentage of GDP, and life expectancy. For these authors, those who top in two or more categories would be regarded as a great power. In this particular case of Asia Pacific, the next eight would be regarded as a middle, and the rest

small. To be part of the middle category, Emmers, and Tao request to be in at least four indicators within the rank established to be part of (Emmers & Tao, 2014, p. 189). The authors above have a mixed bag of results for Australia, being able to be qualified as a great, middle and small power within the Asia Pacific Region. Those same authors, finally present Australia as a middle power, as it is also the normal self- category given by the own government in Canberra.

Emmers and Tao recognize among those senior diplomats, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans. He disbelieves the idea of Middle Powers because population or geography is not definitive. What to do then with cases like Norway? For that reason he proposed in Santiago in 2011 a definition of Middle Power Diplomacy, sustaining that is a:

“(...) Kind of diplomacy which can, and should, be practiced by states which are not big or strong enough, either in their own region or the wider world, to impose their policy preferences on anyone else; but who do recognize that that there are international policy tasks which need to be accomplished if the world around them is to be safer, saner, more just and more prosperous; and who have sufficient capacity and credibility to be able to advance those tasks” (Evans, 2011, p. 2).

Therefore, Middle Power can and should be at the table, even in the face of great powers such as the United States or China. Australia, Japan, Korea, and Chile need to be present, especially in the current shift of the world’s strategic center. President Barack Obama’s discourse positioned the Asia Pacific region at the center of United States strategy and future. United States citizens seem to have concluded that their country needs a new balance with priority assigned to the Pacific Ocean not only to Asia but also to the western Pacific that includes Chile. The defense strategy the Pentagon presented in 2012 explicitly refers to this new concept. However, concerning the Latin American region, it affirms satisfaction with the increased levels of democracy and stability, but that its presence would be low cost, rotational and with modest resources, coinciding to a great extent with what the Australian government has stated in this regard (US. Department of Defence, 2013, p. 3; Australia Defence White Paper, 2013, p. 67).

So how to regard the United States? In regards to Chile and its Asia Pacific policy, it may have two perspectives. First, it may regard the country just as part of Latin America and therefore our politics, security, defense, and other issues would represent a rather modest contribution. Second, however, it might be regarded as part of Asia Pacific, implying membership in the world's most strategic zone and therefore Chile would be right to expect much more attention from Washington. The latter is fundamental, in light of the Transpacific Partnership failure to include the United States. That is, concerning negotiations that involve both countries of the region, what might be expected now? Should Washington be back one day at the negotiation table?

These considerations also give rise to a doubt whether in the context of geometrical variables the association of countries that could make decisions on the multilateral sphere might clash in the framework of cross-membership, and affect the capacity to define who is part of the Asia Pacific. To elaborate this point, we turn to an example proposed by Chinyong Liow (2010), the vice chancellor of the prestigious S. Rajaratnam School of International Relations of Singapore. The author contends that if we consider the Australian proposal to build an *Asia Pacific Community* by the year 2020, who would comprise its members (Liow, 2010, pp. 12-13)? If we regard APEC and the Asian Regional Forum (ARF), its mother organization, we would have to repeat the United States and a couple of Southeast Asian countries. However, ARF members include countries that do not belong to APEC, and even the European Union acts as an observer. In this context, would only coastal nations be admitted for membership? Perhaps all of them and not only coastal countries would request admittance. In other words, geography alone does not suffice when it comes to determining who the strategic actors should be.

The issues discussed in the previous paragraph directly influence Chile's position vis-à-vis the Asia Pacific region, as well as the role the country has played, mainly during the Center-Left governments. From this standpoint, there appears to have been a vast disassociation between the policies developed for that area of the world and policies concerning the countries nearest to Chile in South America. While trade concerns dominated policy eastward, in the immediate region policy moved from disinterest and isolation during the military

government to a sort of active participation in political forums, but without ever using its contacts with other regions of the world as a specific contribution that Chile today is in condition of making to increase its strategic impact. Also, Chile, as a consolidated member of the region, could be a canal-bridge between South America and the Asia Pacific. This role, which Peru also can and must play, is not at all clear in Chile, whereas in Lima it constitutes a specific, established policy that is actively engaged.

This highlights the need for greater political presence with Asia Pacific entities, in conjunction with Chile's power of persuasion that should be articulated to enhance the country within the South American region, in light of the mutual benefits that could be achieved in regards to Brazil, Argentina, and other countries by opening Asia Pacific to those countries. In this reciprocal relationship, Chile would also benefit from their access to the Atlantic Ocean and Africa. The reasoning would be quite direct. While Brazil and Peru have advanced more than Chile on real integration issues, Chile still could offer an institutional structure for deployment as the only country of the so-called BRIC or emerging powers without direct access to the Pacific. The idea would be to maximize political and strategic instances of the Asia Pacific region as an exciting prospect for Brazilian firms and government, which would locate their eastern hub in Chile, and consequently generate incentives to enable Argentina to follow the same path. This process of greater South American sub-regional interaction harnessed through heightened projection towards the Asia Pacific could comprise a virtuous circle, whenever it obliges states that wish to participate in generating more critical and better integration regarding infrastructure and energy. In concert, the countries would generate conditions for improved sub-regional integration, sustained on these two variables as well as the opportunities this projection would offer, as noted by Griffith for Latin America (2009).

The lack of channels and political mechanisms for Chilean participation in the region affects its position in this area in particular, but also regarding others in Latin America and the industrialized world. Furthermore, for this to become a reality, Chile must improve its port infrastructure along the whole length of its coast. Improvement of existing facilities and implementation of new capabilities for offering

adequate services and integrating acceptable security levels for cargo that will be exported to markets that no longer demand product quality alone but also good levels of security to exercise economic interchange.

Challenges and Conclusions

This research dependent variable has been Chilean participation in the Asia Pacific, which has been affected by the motivations and significant actions of political actors as independent variables, besides developing reasons for the country's absence from regional political participation. To facilitate our definition and to prove our hypothesis, the article presented a theoretical and epistemological framework based on limited rationality and historical institutional structure. The employment of comparative political methods instead of international relations enables the development of a case study, while also facilitating identification of Chile's preferences as a political actor. In addition to the latter, the analysis established the existence of a path dependency for Chilean foreign policy towards the Asia Pacific, in light of growing returns, timing, contingency, and inertia of prioritizing trade over political participation and security mechanisms. Consequently, this study did not focus exclusively on trade aspects, which have been the subject of extensive analysis. A political, strategic evaluation appeared more critical. The study led to conclusions for analyzing the performance of the two decades under the Center-Left and for establishing regulatory criteria for the focus needed in the immediate future.

To facilitate understanding of the stages and elements that define Chilean foreign policy towards the Asia Pacific, we employed a process tracing model of qualitative analysis founded on an analytical narrative. It focuses on critical moments or specific junctures when actors advance in determining the evolution or increase of historical weight, in this case, the path dependency based on trade policy. The study's point of departure was President Allende's initial establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of Chile. It went on to compare the military government with similar regimes of Asia that exercised centralized political control, essentially a neoliberal revolution on the economic plane. This shared characteristic resulted

in inertia that permeated the democratization processes, particularly in Chile, that in subsequent decades did not intensify its political coordination.

Two and a half decades after the Center-Left first took charge of the government, we have seen, that trade alone is insufficient because the entire world turned its interest to Pacific shores, transforming this ocean into the world's strategic center. In this regard, Chile must keep in stride by integrating political consultation entities with a clear voice in favor of international security and important political standards for sharing ideas; business interests cannot be the sole basis for common ground. Thus, if the Pacific Alliance can circumvent the image associated with it as an entity for right-leaning Latin American countries, it can look forward to an expansive future, positioning itself at the same level as organizations such as ASEAN and others on the other side of the Pacific, that comprise powerful political diplomacy tools.

We believe the economic and trade variable in all relations is not far removed from the development of security and strategic conditions. Both are interdependent and complementary when it comes to exerting greater efforts for peace, development, stability, and wellbeing. Consequently, Chile's participation in peace operations must contemplate interaction in the Asia Pacific region whenever an opportunity arises, for the objective of materializing Chile's strengths in areas of national interest and bolstering strategic relations.

Also, this work considers a normative regulatory element, in the sense that Chilean presence in the Asia Pacific should become a tool at the service of promotion and augmenting our strategic size in the South American region. Chile should become the hub for Brazilians and Argentines' access to the Pacific. However, if this to take place, it is fundamental that Chile increases its coordination and collaborative efforts in Latin America in contrast to its decisions for the Asia Pacific region. The level of coordination and causality in what is done in both regions is critical for the future. Moreover, because of this interaction, the process of sub-regional integration itself is strengthened on this side of the hemisphere.

Finally, this essay offers reflections concerning how to address the issue of geometrical variables in foreign policy, drawing from the history of

Chile's relations with the Asia Pacific. A point worth considering is whether Chile's relations with world powers that participate in the region's instances will be received consistent with what is expected from the Pacific region as the center of global strategy. If such were not the case, perhaps Chile would remain at the periphery of what, the United States but also China, Australia, Canada, Korea, and others, regard as Latin America.

For Chile to sit down at negotiation tables and address relevant treaties, it needs to translate its political and strategic presence into a clear voice and address the coordination initiatives proposed by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the form of Pax Pacifica, as well as defense diplomacy elements. From this perspective, the direct and significant correlation between an enhanced strategic-political level and reaping excellent benefits in multilateral trade negotiations and other economic sectors should be taken for granted. Just as all democratic governments successfully maintained dynamic trade levels regionally, the time has come to underscore the political dimension, which merits more extensive lines of study in the future. In conclusion, these researchers believe the challenge represented by this effort is to envision Chile strategically to meet the challenges of the 21st century adequately.

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ABSTRACT

Chile and Asia Pacific: Political Strategy in an Age of Geometrical Variables Alliances

A path based on trade exchange was inherited from the military government and upheld by the subsequent democratic governments in Chile's approach to the Asia Pacific region. Chile is part of APEC since 1994. Ever since, it has increasingly encountered the logic of geometrical variables alliances in the region, generating the need to embark on changing the core approach. The latter resulted in incremental cooperation inside the region. Chile is compelled to redefine its relation to another border of the Pacific Rim, also as part of its relations with the United States as a critical Pacific player, sharing with Australia that peace in the region is fundamental for global stability, and also excellent relations with China. This essay proposes Chile's involvement in the Asia Pacific Region consolidates its capacity as middle power diplomacy, as also constituting itself as a bridge between the East the rest of South America.

RESUMEN

Chile y Asia-Pacífico: Estrategia política en una era de alianzas de variables geométricas

El enfoque de Chile hacia la región de Asia Pacífico está signado por un camino basado en el intercambio comercial heredado del gobierno militar y sostenido por los gobiernos democráticos posteriores. Chile es miembro de APEC desde 1994. Desde entonces, se ha encontrado cada vez más con la lógica de las alianzas de variables geométricas en la región, hecho por el

que se viu en la necesidad de buscar un cambio del enfoque central. Esto último resultó en una cooperación creciente dentro de la región. Chile se ve obligado a redefinir su relación con otra frontera de la Cuenca del Pacífico, también como parte de sus relaciones con los Estados Unidos como jugador clave de la región del Pacífico, que comparte con Australia la noción de que la paz en la región es fundamental para la estabilidad global, así como excelentes relaciones con China. Este ensayo propone que la participación de Chile en la región de Asia Pacífico consolida su capacidad de diplomacia como potencia media y le permite constituirse como puente entre Oriente y el resto de Sudamérica.

SUMMARIO

Chile e Ásia-Pacífico:

Estratégia política em uma era de alianças de variáveis geométricas

O enfoque do Chile em relação à região Ásia-Pacífico se caracteriza por um caminho baseado no intercâmbio comercial herdado do governo militar e mantido pelos governos democráticos posteriores. O Chile é membro da APEC desde 1994. Desde então, deparou-se cada vez mais com a lógica das alianças de variáveis geométricas na região, razão pela qual se viu na necessidade de buscar uma mudança do enfoque central. O resultado foi uma cooperação crescente dentro da região. O Chile vê-se obrigado a redefinir sua relação com outra fronteira do Círculo do Pacífico, também como parte de suas relações com os Estados Unidos como ator chave da região do Pacífico, que compartilha com a Austrália a noção de que a paz na região é fundamental para a estabilidade global, assim como para excelentes relações com a China. Este artigo expõe a ideia de que a participação do Chile na região Ásia Pacífico consolida sua capacidade diplomática como potência média e lhe permite constituir-se como ponte entre o Oriente e o restante da América do Sul.

