

When the border talks: Singularities of the Argentine-Chilean relationship in recent decades

Cuando la frontera dialoga: Singularidades de la relación argentino-chilena en las últimas décadas

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Abstract

The paper deals with bilateral relations between Argentina and Chile in recent decades, highlighting the potential of their new border relations. It assumes that the wide range of governmental actors, subnational and local entities linking each other have given this a unique dynamic border and are considered spaces of cooperation. The article is descriptive-reflective and is organized around a series of questions about the continued search for Argentine-Chilean border integration since the nineties and the construction of top-down and bottom-up institutional agreements. Within the variety of links, some remarkable examples are selected for the article like the "Integration Committees", the settlement of the Central West of South America Integration Zone (Zicosur) and the Argentine-Chilean cooperation in Antarctica. It stresses the integrationist Maipú Treaty (2009) and institutions that charge different instances of bilateral dialogue.

Keywords: Argentine-Chilean bilateral relationship, new vision of borders, trans-border relationships, Integration Committees, Zicosur, Antarctic cooperation.

Resumen

El trabajo aborda las relaciones bilaterales entre la Argentina y Chile en las últimas décadas resaltando el potencial de sus nuevas relaciones fronterizas. Sostiene que el amplio abanico de agentes gubernamentales, entidades políticas subestatales y locales y los diferentes canales de vinculación transgubernamental, han dotado a dicha frontera de una dinámica singular, connotándola como espacio de cooperación. El artículo es descriptivo-reflexivo y se organiza alrededor de una serie de preguntas acerca de la búsqueda sostenida de integración fron-

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teriza argentino-chilena desde los años noventa y la construcción de una singular institucionalidad *top-down* y *bottom-up*. De la variedad de vínculos existentes, selecciona algunos ejemplos significativos como los Comités de Integración, la conformación de la Zona de Integración Centro-Oeste de América del Sur (Zicosur) y la cooperación argentino-chilena en la Antártida. Asimismo, subraya el contenido integracionista del Tratado de Maipú (2009) y la institucionalidad que cobran las diferentes instancias de diálogo bilateral.

Palabras clave: relación bilateral argentino-chilena, nueva visión de fronteras, relaciones transfronterizas, Comités de Integración, Zicosur, cooperación antártica.

Introduction

During the 1970s and part of the 1980s, the South American space was characterized by the experience of a wave of military (dictatorial) governments whose foreign policy actions were marked by territorial controversies, orthodox geopolitical readings, and a very small margin in which to advance policies of dialogue and integration. High priority was given to territorial questions, which inspired distrust towards neighbors, and thinking about the border problem was framed by “zero-sum games.”

The relations between Argentina and Chile in that era did not escape these general characteristics. They expressed, to a large degree, that “conceptual reductionism” and pressed the issue to almost arriving at an armed conflict around Christmas 1978.

Some years later and as a result of an arduous negotiation process in which papal mediation played a determining role, a significant first step was taken in the relationship: the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1984. This legal instrument was very clear in signaling the obligation to always solve all controversies peacefully and to never resort to threat or the use of force in their mutual relationships.

In the 1990s, a new political-strategic relationship began to progressively be constructed, assuming the compromise of reaching the solution to the set of contentions tied to the axis of territorial sovereignty. In this manner, the perception of neighborly threat decreased to practically zero. The discourse of both countries continued to change toward a new configuration of ideas and expressions with regard to the other, which served to withdraw the preexisting view of virtual threat.

Gradually, the work of negotiation expressed in meetings between the Chancellors’ Offices and the Ministries of Defense and the design of some policies consistent with the advance of the Measures of Mutual Trust (*Medidas de Confianza Mutua–MCM*) paved the way for a high degree of transparency, such as the production and publication of national defense books, in which—already with new perspectives—the scope of action and the principal orientations of defense policy and the use of force were defined. For its part, the formalization and systematic execution of military mutual trust measures fostered a higher level of understanding and generated better conditions to develop trust.

Along these lines, this study hypothesizes about the design of a progressive and constructive pattern of connections in a framework of sustained bilateral democratic relations with the tendency to further deepen the relations. This relationship is anchored in a conception of the border that changes from a conception in which the “limit and separation” were prioritized to another that acquires a cooperative and integrationist character in which, in addition to the political will made manifest by State authorities, there are also contacts on a sub-national scale, granting it great uniqueness and dynamism.

Certain key questions can make sense of the inquiry performed, namely, the following:

1) what processes provide evidence of the sustained search for Argentine-Chilean border

integration?; 2) how is this dynamic organized institutionally, combining top-down and bottom-up actions?; and 3) to what extent has the State political will of Argentina and Chile advanced in cooperation in strategic areas—such as the case of Antarctica—that were unthinkable from a nineteenth-century geopolitical view that promoted separation, not cooperation?

Based on these framework questions, this study² aims at the following objectives: first, to briefly review the definitions of “border” to reach the definition that we consider to be operative for the case at hand. Subsequently, we develop some pertinent examples of sub-national and cross-governmental cooperative relationships that have emerged between Argentina and Chile in recent decades to segue into a reflective analysis of the Maipú Treaty (*Tratado de Maipú*) (2009), in which institutional steps are taken that tend toward its own deepening and consolidation. Similarly, we emphasize certain relevant milestones in Antarctic cooperation, understanding that a new view of the border is also expressed there; and finally, we end the article with some reflections and conclusions.

The conception of a border: From canonic definitions to emerging definitions based on a constructivist perspective

Political Science, International Law, and International Relations have coincided in their definitions of the State and its functions. In their classical versions, they understand that the State performs its specific activity in a determined territorial space, which constitutes the spatial basis of its legal system and its sovereignty. Consistent with this concept, the legal conception of a border involves the principle of territorial jurisdiction, which radically differentiates it from definitions that other disciplines and fields of study offer. The function of the border is generically said to determine the spaces that constitute the territory of a State—subject to its jurisdiction—in relation to the territory of another State.

We are conscious of the need to update the traditional concept of the border starting from views that emphasize cross-border interdependence and cooperation, distancing ourselves from perspectives that strongly question the figure of the State and announce a borderless world (Ohmae, 2008).

Increasingly it tends to assert that borders are no longer boundaries that separate countries, as they proposed by various specialists. Notwithstanding the variety of work on border issues, they are interesting and innovative contributions as is the case of Eusebio Medina (2006) who proposes an epistemology for studies of international borders, focusing on the need to undertake border studies from an interdisciplinary perspective and border that overcomes the limitations of traditional historicist and geopolitical approaches. Meanwhile, Nicole Diesbach (2002), discusses the need to point to a new paradigm because, usually, the term border, with our traditional mental picture suggests fragmentation-based separation, demarcation or even obstacle; rarely, meeting, meeting,

² This text reflects a selection of questions and is only part of a line of inquiry, which has been developing since 2006, that pays attention to the structural framework of relations between regions and governmental subdivisions. These form part of the “cross-governmental” relations that have as much to do with territorial divisions (provinces, regions, local governments) as with functional areas (ministerial offices, parliaments, universities, science and technology areas, etc.). The processes addressed constitute the central concern of research projects of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (*Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas–Conicet*) and the current project, which corresponds to the Incentives Program (*Programa de Incentivos*) under the Código19/C265 (Argentina).

mutual enrichment and even friendship. Thus, a scenario has developed in which all types of social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental relationships are woven together through various connecting mechanisms and channels that exhibit different degrees of institutionalization. In the case that we analyze, we find correlations with Boisier (2003, p. 31), who highlights the importance of border zones, defining them as sub-national spaces adjacent to neighboring countries in which particular forms of relationships and the superposition of two or more economic styles and two (or more) different models of economic policy manifest themselves.

Similarly, it is valuable to remember Schmitter (1989, p. 120) in his references to the reintegration processes in Latin America sustained from the region's return to democracy in the 1980s. He notes that the greater the participation of the community interested in intervening in activities particular to integration, acting freely with the support of the authority, even greater would be the possibility of reciprocity between the interested parties; additionally, the search for agreement between the parties would be easier, achieving better conditions for an associative response. That is, democracy will provide spaces to diverse actors at the negotiation table where their interests can be manifested. To this we can add that these actors will make their associative proposals in a bottom-up manner.

A combination of objective elements—such as those noted above—with symbolic questions concerned with the changes produced in the “other's view” from each side of the border, added to the conviction about the need to agree to be able to face common challenges, would constitute the salient signs of the new way of conceiving borders. For this reason, we consider it relevant to take into account the “constructivist” view of Alexander Wendt (1992) when defining international relations as a social construct and “anarchy”—that is, the lack of a global-style government—as a product of the interrelation of the parts: “Anarchy is what States make of it.”³ In this manner, we paraphrase the author, saying: “the border is what States make of it.” There is no single way of conceiving the border. According to historical moments and political anchors—how the State perceives itself and the other—borders can serve to separate or to join and favor the continued work and participation of the diverse sub-national actors who find themselves committed, also thus molding their own interests.

This broad spread of governmental agents, sub-state and local political entities, and the different spaces of cross-governmental connection have become particularly relevant when studying the bilateral relations between Argentina and Chile and have given the border a unique dynamic.

The density of these bilateral relations is too extensive for one article to address; thus, we have selected some examples that allow us to visualize how this constructivist conception of the border is that which best represents the current dynamic.⁴ The selection demonstrates, first, the “Integration Committees,” which combine top-down and bottom-up actions, that is, decisions from the national governmental sphere with proposals that come from the sub-national scale. Subsequently, it focuses on a complex process

³ For the constructivist theorists, international relations are a social reality, composed of social deeds that depend on a social accord and that, therefore, are taken for granted; in consequence, international relations will exist to the extent that the accord exists, in this way configuring how we categorize the world and what we do. A fundamental question used to distance oneself from the predominant theories is whether “anarchy” really exists or whether it is a product of certain social practices in a determined historical context (Wendt, 1992). Similarly, it considers the agent-structure relationship as mutually constitutive.

⁴ Keep in mind that among the ties pactured between Argentina and Chile, more than 45 mechanisms are recognized.

that is now converted into a macro-region such as the Center-West Integration Zone of South America (*Zona de Integración Centro-Oeste de América del Sur-Zicosur*), which has its origins in business initiatives dating back to the 1970s and has a markedly sub-national (bottom-up) imprint, with an agenda that surpasses economic-commercial questions and makes a strong incursion into cultural aspects. Finally, it realizes a paradigmatic case of “construction of trust and cooperation” in the Antarctic area, which, visualized as part of the agenda of “high politics” and as part of an “undefined border” between Argentina and Chile, delayed in becoming a space for joint negotiation and work.

Contacts and ties on the sub-national scale expressed in the dynamic of the “Integration Committees”

The set of Argentine-Chilean relations, which are vital when understanding the consolidation of this bilateral relationship, includes so-called sub-national or non-central government actors, that is, the Argentine provinces and the Chilean regions, in addition to the municipalities, which in their actions and their way of connecting with each other generate a type of network state.

The interest placed on the prioritization of bi-oceanic paths and corridors, cross-border communication, the realization of roadwork, the reactivation or design of new railroad lines, and a varied agenda of tourism-related questions on the use of shared resources and environmental issues belongs to the broad spectrum of issue areas that have these actors as principal protagonists.

This vision of favoring exchange and the idea of “neighborliness” that was timidly expressed in the accord of 1984 (the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1984, *Tratado de Paz y Amistad de 1984*) was settled with a first experience: the Border Committee for the International Crossing System Cristo Redentor (*Comité de Frontera para el Paso Internacional Sistema Cristo Redentor*), created by the Act of the Binational Argentine-Chilean Commission for Economic Cooperation and Physical Integration (*Comisión Binacional Argentino-Chilena de Cooperación Económica e Integración Física*) in April 1987. Since then, the number of these committees—today called Integration Committees (*Comités de Integración*)—has grown to the current number of eight.⁵ It is important to clarify that, different from what occurs with other countries in South America, where the “border” between two countries is frequently almost unmarked because there is no geographical feature that separates them (in some cases, the separation between two countries is simply an avenue in a city center), in the case that we are studying, there is the barrier of the Andes. For this reason, the work related to border crossings and their improvement has become a priority. Of the 75 border crossings that Chile has, not all are currently in service; thus, provinces, regions, and localities constantly solicit that the appropriate attention be paid to them to make them operational.

At their inception, the Border Committees were working groups united by the proposal of facilitating cross-border transit; subsequently, they incorporated additional activities to attend to aspects of local development, health, infrastructure, and other questions relevant to the improvement of the adjacent regions.

⁵ With the incorporation of the Las Leñas Committee (*Comité Las Leñas*) in 2011, to date, there are eight: NOA-Norte Grande; Atacalar (Atacama-Catamarca-La Rioja); Agua Negra; Sistema Cristo Redentor; Pehuenche; Región de Los Lagos; Integración Austral; Las Leñas Committee (*Comité Las Leñas*).

The evolution of cross-border interdependence and the need to give it an institutional framework for negotiation, simultaneously with a change in the view of its functionality that was occurring, caused them to change their name to Integration Committees. Regarding this matter, it is interesting to reproduce part of the considerations made in the Decree 278 (*Decreto 278*), which collects the exchange of notes produced by the Argentine ambassador, Carlos Abihaggle, and the sub-secretary of Foreign Relations of Chile, Alberto Van Klaveren Stork. In these notes, there is a reference to the “initiatives of cooperation of the Chilean regions and Argentine provinces” and to the consideration of these committees as “privileged forums” and the “will to establish their common interest,” among their grounds.

Their role has been crucial, and their magnitude is manifest in the simple mention that the Argentine-Chilean border is the second-longest in the world. The frequency of meetings is annual, and they alternate meetings in one country or the other.

In 1997, they were given an institutional regulation based on an accord between the two countries, which authorizes the creation of commissions in their interior to address specific issues, establishing that the recommendations adopted in the committees’ meaning are elevated to their respective chancellors for evaluation and decision. Their own development led them, within the framework of their meetings, to begin holding Meetings of Mayors and Region Leaders from cities that are part of the involved regions and provinces.

It can be affirmed that they have also expanded their radius of action because the space of contact offered by the Integration Committees not only earned the recognition of the border provinces but also has drawn interest in participation on the part of other provinces that could benefit, especially with the construction of infrastructure works in the border-crossing areas.⁶

The Maipú Treaty for Integration and Cooperation between the Republic of Chile and the Republic of Argentina (*Tratado de Maipú de Integración y Cooperación entre la República de Chile y la República de Argentina*), signed by presidents Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet on October 30, 2009,⁷ makes a significant recognition of the activity of the Integration Committees and, in general, the sub-national activity in terms of their positive contribution to strengthening and deepening bilateral relations. This accord represents, on the one hand, the recognition of the advances achieved in the more than 25 years since the first Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed by president Alfonsín in 1984 and, on the other hand, the setting of goals or a “roadmap” toward a more complete and deeper integration.

In its articles, it pays special attention—between articles 15 and 21—to the Integration Committees, confirming in writing their role, their objectives, and the specificity of their functions. The definition presented here, in which they are understood as “forums of meeting and collaboration between the national public and private sectors and those of the Chilean Regions and Argentine Provinces to promote their integration, with the support of national, provincial, regional, and municipal bodies” (*Tratado de Maipú, 2009*,

⁶ This is so in the case of the Agua Negra Tunnel (San Juan province–Region IV), which would be very useful for transportation toward the Pacific for the provinces of the Central Region (Santa Fe, Córdoba, and Entre Ríos); hence they manage their participation in discussions even though, geographically, they are not part of the Andean border. Similarly, the province of Santa Fe has incorporated into Atacalar.

⁷ According to the Official Bulletin of the Republic of Argentina (*Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina*), it became Ley 26561, approved on 18 November 2009 and enacted on 17 December 2009. Ratified by both congresses (Argentina and Chile) in November, it went into effect on 22 January 2010.

p. 5), is the most appropriate for describing the functions that they perform. The need to proceed to a reform of the Regulations for the Integration Committees currently in use (*Acuerdo entre la República de Chile y la República de Argentina*, 2011) was also foreseen.

The launch of the Maipú Treaty (2009) on 22 January 2010 has allowed the institutionalization of various preexisting mechanisms, establishing itself as a roadmap for the promotion and development of bilateral relations on a variety of levels,⁸ and it has produced some concrete advances in the meetings between governors and regional authorities as well as in the meetings of the Joint Parliamentary Commission (*Comisión Parlamentaria Conjunta*). Therefore, the meetings of parliamentarians in the Joint Commission and the now-institutionalized periodic meeting of governors, as part of the “institutionalized relationship,” should be valued and recognized as one of the innovations for all of the foreign policy of Argentina and Chile because they bring decisions closer to citizens.

The experience of the Border Committees is successful, but it is not the only such experience. The *provinces* and *regions* have emerged as important actors in the bilateral relationship through a variety of accords, visits, and projects that it is important to take into consideration. From the Argentine side, some provinces have known how to undertake an interesting task of influence and lobbying so that their interests would be taken into account by the central government, as we observe below.

A superlative example of the actions of the Argentine provinces is that shown by Mendoza and San Juan with their constant exercise of “lobbying” to attract the attention and the commitment of the national State to perform infrastructure works and road connections in the area bordering Chile. Indeed, in addition to being the provinces that traditionally and for various reasons were always closer to Chile, their strategic location at the vital center of the cross-border paths constitutes a power that is conveniently emphasized by the provincial authorities. In addition, they have stressed that the “connectivity” that could be constructed from them not only would have a binational impact but also would offer benefits for the broader spaces of the bi-oceanic Mercosur corridors.

In addition to the Integration Committee meetings, these provinces access various Mixed Binational Commissions (*Comisiones Mixtas Binacionales*), thereby producing the most significant achievement by having managed to get the Maipú Treaty to include two complementary protocols. One of these is the Complementary Protocol on the Constitution of the Binational Entity for the Tunnel Project of Low Height-Central Trans-Andean Railroad (*Protocolo Complementario sobre la Constitución de la Entidad Binacional para el Proyecto del Túnel de Baja Altura-Ferrocarril Trasandino Central*);⁹ the other is related

⁸ In Article 3, it establishes the following:

...the Parties will have available the following bilateral mechanisms: Presidential meetings, Binational Meetings of Ministers, a System of Permanent Consultation of the Ministries of Foreign Relations, the Binational Commission for Economic Cooperation and Physical Integration, the Binational Commerce, Investments, and Economic Relations Commission, the Joint Parliamentary Commission, and the Integration Committees.

A large part of these mechanisms record activity predating the Treaty, but what is relevant here is that they are recognized as “a constitutive part of the institutional operation” on which this bilateral relationship relies (Colacrai, 2010, p. 350). Similarly, from a reading of the complete Treaty, it is inferred that approximately 60% of its articles refer, in one way or another, to cross-governmental and sub-national relationships (provincial and local governmental actors).

⁹ In the case of the connectivity at the height of Cristo Redentor, one of the primary antecedents was the project for the rehabilitation of the trans-Andean railroad proposed by the Mendoza business *Tecnicagua* in 2007. In 2008, the project added other private initiatives that, in March 2009, conducted the first feasibility study. In October

to the Complementary Protocol on the Constitution of the Binational Entity for the International Tunnel Project Agua Negra Crossing (*Protocolo Complementario sobre la Constitución de la Entidad Binacional para el Proyecto Túnel Internacional Paso de Agua Negra*).¹⁰ With the signing of these two instruments by the governments of Argentina and Chile, the above-mentioned provinces have assured themselves a seat at the table of the respective binational commissions.

The advances in favor of connectivity are not as agile as the provinces and regions had hoped; to date, there have been attempts to coordinate legislation with both sides of the Andes to conduct important studies on the environmental impact and the possibility of combining public and private financial efforts for works of this magnitude.

The path taken here gives hope to other provinces and regions—for example, those in Patagonia—that their border crossings will be prioritized and, in this manner, be opened up to new possibilities for connectivity and exchange.

As we have explicitly stated in this section, the structural framework of the connections produced involves governmental decisions on a central scale that stimulate and accompany the proposals coming from the sub-national level.

In summary, the processes that we have revealed here exhibit in their trajectory and progression the three fundamental conditions that Rhi and Conato (2009) note as favorable for border cooperation, namely, that the territories involved participate in a process of physical connectivity; that there be a will and a high level of political accord between the countries involved that enables the organization of their relations to be made a reality in some institutional framework; and, finally, that the participation of the sub-national border governments be recognized as spokespeople for local actors as a fundamental institutional instance for positive cross-border governance.

The emergence of multistate cross-border regions with a sub-national dimension: The case of Zicosur

As part of the progressive growth of sub-national connections, that is, brought forth by non-central—local, provincial, or regional—governments, in terms of commerce, culture, tourism, etc., the instances of cooperation and integration have multiplied. A dynamic has been produced in which aspects in relation to those “close or nearest to integration” are prioritized compared to the great regional integration processes in which this dynamic is frequently perceived as displaced or marginalized.

According to our criteria, the clearest example would be represented by the Center-West Integration Zone of South America (*Zona de Integración Centro-Oeste de América del Sur*), known as Zicosur, which could be characterized as a multistate, cross-border region with a subnational dimension. This particular institution—considering institution in the broad sense—“officially” emerged in a meeting held in Antofagasta in 1997¹¹ and brings

of the same year, the presidents of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, and of Argentina, Cristina Fernández, established in Maipú the Binational Entity in charge of directing the implementation of the project by the respective States.

¹⁰ In accordance with recent declarations by the Chilean ambassador to Argentina, Marcelo Díaz Díaz, the announcement that the Agua Negra Tunnel will definitely be up for bidding in 2015 gathers strength (“Aseguran que la Relación entre Argentina y Chile”, 2015).

¹¹ This sub-national integrative process could be cited as the first of these characteristic processes, emerging as the Business Forum (*Foro Empresarial*), which dates back to 1977 when the Inter-regional Business Group of the South American Center West (*Grupo empresario Interregional del Centro Oeste Sudamericano-GEICOS*)

together Argentine, Chilean, Bolivian, and Paraguayan regions. The following regions are members of this proceeding: from Argentina, the provinces of Catamarca, Chaco, Corrientes, Formosa, Jujuy, Misiones, Salta, Santiago del Estero, and Tucumán; from Bolivia, the departments of Beni, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, Oruro, Pando, Potosí, Santa Cruz, and Tarija; from Brazil, the state of Mato Grosso del Sur; from Paraguay, the regions of Alto Paraguay, Alto Paraná, Amambay, Boquerón, Caaguazú, Caazapá, Canindeyú, Central, Concepción, Cordillera, Guairá, Itapuá, Misiones, Ñeembucú, Paraguairí, Presidente Hayes, and San Pedro; from Chile, the regions of Arica y Parinacota, Atacama, and Tarapacá; and from Peru, the departments of Arequipa, Moquegua, and Tacna. This space brings together a population approaching 40 million inhabitants in an area of 4,200,000 km² (in a comparison, it is no less than the total population of Argentina).

Among its principal functions, we find the ability to create a space for discussion and the design of policies from the conjunction of the public and private, projecting a common competitive exportable offer, based on the advantages offered by the Chilean side for the existing port infrastructure to access the markets demanding common production, especially those of the Asia-Pacific region.

Specifically, one of its strongest objectives is that of working on the infrastructure for roads, railroads, and waterways and on the facilitating procedures at the border-crossing points of the five countries (Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay).

In 2011, an unprecedented achievement was made in the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs when there was an official presentation of Zicosur to give it national and international visibility. Additionally, in that seat, on 20 November 2013, there was a great reception for the First Seminar of the Whole of Zicosur (*Primer Seminario Zicosur Integra*), which could be considered the culmination of a series of important prior activities.¹²

When the evolution of the entire Zicosur process is analyzed, the similarity and emulation of pre-existing mechanisms in the Common Southern Market (*Mercado Común del Sur–Mercosur*) and certain steps taken with a view to its institutionalization are evident. It also stands out because it advances activities that transcend economic interests, in addition to those of regional infrastructure and planning, to progressively commit itself to institutional, cultural, and inter-university undertakings. This was made clear in the meeting at the end of 2007, in which the Program for Student Mobility (*Programa de Movilidad Estudiantil–PME*) of the Criscos Network (*Red Criscos*) was presented, depending on the Governing Council for the Integration of the South American Center-West Sub-region (*Consejo de Rectores por la Integración de la Subregión Centro Oeste de Sudamérica*) (“Hoy Finaliza en la UNCA”, 2007).

The Network was formed in 1996 in the city of Antofagasta after three preliminary meetings of university provosts in the sub-region. The first occurred in 1993 in the city of Salta, Argentina, and in the same year, in the city of Iquique, Chile. Finally, the following year, in Argentina, the Convention of Cooperation among

began its first business meetings in the region. Subsequently, different activities were added, such as product promotion, fairs, and contacts between governors.

¹² By virtue of an accord with the Federal Investment Council (*Consejo Federal de Inversiones–CFI*) signed on 28 October 2011, the CFI has financed the participation of the Zicosur Entity (*Ente Zicosur*) in various events during the year 2012, namely, the following: the participation and financing of stands of the Zicosur entity in the 2012 Book Fair (*Feria del Libro*) (Buenos Aires), in Ferinoá, in the National Cotton Festival (*Fiesta Nacional del Algodón*), and in the Industrial Exposition of Matto Grosso (*Exposición Industrial de Matto Grosso*), Brazil; Expocruz 2012 (21 to 30 September 2012 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia); in the Moscow World Food (17 to 20 September 2009); and the participation and financing of a stand in the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies in Dubai (participation of the president Pro Tempore on 18 September 2012).

the Universities of the South American Center-West Sub region (*Convenio de Cooperación entre las Universidades de la Subregión Centro Oeste de Sudamérica*) was signed; it would later become CRISCOS... It brings together a total of 25 universities in the region (7 Peruvian universities, 4 in northern Chile (from regions I to IV), 9 from northern Argentina (Jujuy, Salta, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Catamarca, and La Rioja), 4 from Bolivia, and 1 from Paraguay). (ANR International, 2013, pars. 2-3).

That is, we find ourselves facing a phenomenon—also new on the regional level—that promotes Cooperation in Higher Education (*Cooperación en Educación Superior*) in an area of sub-national convergence.

From the beginning, the Criscos Network has developed the PME, whose objective is to establish and tighten collaborative connections for sub-regional integration, to improve the quality of the educational services of the member universities, and to favor relations with international organizations and institutions in the network.¹³ Since this program's launch, 1,693 university students have been able to travel to one of the five nations participating in this educational model (Universidad Arturo Prat, n. d.).

As shown by the existing academic exchange programs in different regional spaces and from these regions to the exterior—simulating inter-regional academic dialogues—all of them are moved by the proposal to generate new views of “the other” through knowledge and the development of shared activities that socialize their participants. Undoubtedly, it is also possible from this point to construct new inter-subjective images and meanings, as indicated by one of the innovations that constructivism offers for the study of International Relations.

Advances on issues related to Antarctica: An “uncommon border” between Argentina and Chile

The issues regarding Antarctica have always had relevance in the bilateral relations between Argentina and Chile and, in good measure, have reflected the perceptions of different political moments in both countries.

Very briefly, we remember that the first approaches on the inter-state level were produced at the beginning of the twentieth century in response to the British claims over the entirety of Antarctica between 1907 and 1908. Almost in unison, from each side of the Andes, the need to act jointly was perceived. For this reason, in 1907, the Argentine Minister of Foreign Relations, Estanislao Zeballos, sustained: “England claims all these lands; we will need to defend ourselves united” (Pinochet de la Barra, p. 6, 1999). For his part, from Chile, Puga Borne warned: “Chile and Argentina should combine their action to stand up for their rights against the English ambition” (Pinochet de la Barra, p. 6, 1999).

¹³ With an annual movement of 100 students among the participating universities, the Criscos Network offers study possibilities in the areas of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Husbandry, Agronomy, Anthropology, Education, Social Work, Administration, and Electrical Engineering, among others. In addition, the universities are committed to covering the costs of room, board, instruction, and other academic services for the Criscos grantees. Here, the design of the exchange programs and the method by which they are made operative are similar to the Scale Program (*Programa Escala*) (Mercosur).

Several decades later, on 12 July 1947, Argentina and Chile—taking as a central concept the question of Antarctica and its connection with sovereignty—formulated the Joint Declaration (*Declaración Conjunta*) of their rights in their respective sectors and promoted the idea of opportunely establishing a treaty with the objective of delineating the corresponding borders.¹⁴ In this manner, they reached an accord to enact a “pragmatic” policy (with a cost-benefit analysis) to determine the border of both States in the Antarctic region. There, they expressed their desire to “arrive as soon as possible at an agreement on an Argentine-Chilean treaty demarcating the borders in South American Antarctica” (*Declaración Conjunta Argentino-Chilena*, p. 2, 1947). All of these continued to be mere intentions, especially because the superposition of their territorial claims always appeared to be a question opposed to the other part, only minimized when confronted with the British aspirations addressing the totality of these claims. This type of dispute for sovereignty was suspended when the Antarctica Treaty (*Tratado Antártico*) was signed in 1959; it originally committed its 12 signatory countries, although due to its article IV, they remained thought of as territorial aspirations pre-existing this accord.

The period of the 1970s and 1980s was more of “distanced competence and coexistence.” The respective military governments had a reductionist and confrontational view of geopolitics and carried this signature outlook to the questions of Antarctica. Thus, the policies implemented in both countries, such as the multiplication of the number of bases installed in Antarctica, the development of population policies—favoring births in the territory of Antarctica; the acquisition of polar warships, icebreakers, and Antarctic technology that would put each country on top were all actions that were taken almost simultaneously and that fed this competition.

During the 1990s, a cycle of Antarctic cooperation began; it presented singular traits compared to other moments of bilateral relations. The initial kick of a “renewed” search for cooperation in Antarctica was given in the Joint Declaration concerning Antarctica (*Declaración Conjunta sobre la Antártida*) between presidents Patricio Aylwin Azócar (Chile) and Carlos Menem (Argentina) in the meeting held 29 August 1990. With it, the previous Joint Declarations were ratified (1941-1947-1948-1971-1974), exchanges were promoted, and the possibility of creating an Argentine-Chilean Program of Antarctic Scientific Cooperation (*Programa Argentino-Chileno de Cooperación Científica Antártica*) was proposed. Since then, the presidential meetings have always included relevant Antarctic aspects; they have even established explicit environmental compromises.

It is important to highlight both the treatment of Antarctic questions in the area of the Joint Parliamentary Commission (*Comisión Parlamentaria Conjunta*)¹⁵ and the inclusion of the Antarctic cooperation as a significant point in the Maipú Treaty (*Tratado de Maipú*) (2009) signed by then-heads of state Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet.

¹⁴ This declaration is known by the names of the chancellors who signed it, Bramuglia (Argentina) and Juliet Gómez (Chile). As antecedents, she recalls the conversations held in 1941 between Isidoro Ruiz Moreno (Argentina) and Julio Escudero Guzmán (Chile) in which, recognizing that both countries had yet to discuss rights to Antarctica, agreed to bring forth a friendly policy to determine them. This was expressed in the Final Act of the meeting held in Santiago, Chile, on 26 March 1941.

¹⁵ Recall that at the First Joint Parliamentary Session held by Argentine and Chilean delegates at the Base Presidente Eduardo Frei Montalva in Chile on 7 March 2009, they rejected the English claim of 1,000,000 km² as their platform in Antarctic areas. Similarly, at the XVII Plenary Meeting of the Joint Argentine-Chilean Parliamentary Commission (*Comisión Parlamentaria Conjunta Argentino-Chilena*) in Buenos Aires on 28 April 2011, they urged the Executive Powers to decide on the installation of a joint scientific base in Antarctica.

As part of the continuity of the Argentine-Chilean Antarctic cooperation, an advance and deepening of it can be noted, with the creation of the “Ad-hoc Committee System of the Antarctic Treaty (*Comité Ad-hoc Sistema del Tratado Antártico*),” which is clarified in the Presidential Declaration (*Declaración Presidencial*) of 16 March 2012 signed by President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and the president of Chile, Sebastián Piñera Echenique. In this manner, this Committee assumes the test of reflecting on and promoting joint policies in the different forums and systems pertaining to Antarctica.

Already having been developed in two consecutive meetings, its task has been to reflect on and promote joint positions in the different forums and systems of the noted system. On questions related to live marine Antarctic resources, they jointly ratified their total commitment to the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (*Convención para la Conservación de los Recursos Vivos Marinos Antárticos—CCRVMA*) and their firm decision to confront any “imposition of regulations and obligations incompatible with it” (*Declaración Presidencial Conjunta Menem-Aylwin*, p. 7, 1990). Another activity that provides evidence of the bilateral cooperation is the joint development of the Combined Antarctic Naval Patrol (*Patrulla Antártica Naval Combinada—PANC*), whose mission is to save human lives at sea and to combat pollution to prevent emergencies in Antarctic waters; its planning and work in the field imply the joint work of the Argentine and Chilean fleets, among other diverse tasks that have also been extended in the area of the Beagle Canal.

Specifically, due to the increase in maritime transit through the Beagle Canal because of its connection to Antarctica, during 2013 and 2014, exercises with varying degrees of difficulty were increased. These included the participation of naval and air-sea units with seats in the cities of Ushuaia and Puerto Williams and more than 200 effective individuals from both countries.

In the summer of 2014-2015, the seventeenth version of the PANC, the binational operation between the Argentine and Chilean Armed Forces whose mission is to save human lives at sea and to combat pollution to prevent emergencies in Antarctic waters, was set. With the increase in Antarctic tourism in the zone of the Antarctic Peninsula, its mission has become paramount.¹⁶

The Argentine-Chilean Antarctic cooperation is one of the actions that has the greatest strategic potential such that, already in the regional space of the Meetings of Administrators of Latin American Antarctic Programs (*Reuniones de Administradores de Programas Antárticos Latinoamericanos—RAPAL*) as in the properly noted bilateral actions, they should continue to deepen and take advantage of the scientific and political capital accumulated by both countries in so many years of sustained Antarctic work.

Conclusions

The positive ascent, the continuity, and the reinforcement of the Argentine-Chilean bilateral relationship—which, as its first step, had the 1980 Treaty of Peace and Friendship (*Tratado de Paz y Amistad*) and, starting in 1991, progressively collected qualitatively relevant advances, with democratic governments in both countries—can be explained

¹⁶ During operation 2014/2014, they navigated 14,743 nautical miles in a total of 149 days, they visited 45 bases from 9 nationalities, and they supported and identified 123 ships. Similarly, they performed the rescue and salvage of the Polish yacht “Polonus” and performed a medical evacuation from the Australian yacht “Icebird” (*Prensa Antártica*, 2015).

by the combination of a variety of factors but granting the political variable the basic and defining condition.

In the 1990s, Argentina and Chile proposed increasing their relations, agreeing on institutional operations and certain basic republican principals, and they decided the orientation of their future connections starting from the construction of a relationship based on mutual trust. Since then and following what could be characterized as a “policy of state” in the sense that it projects itself in time with a continuous line in different governments in each country, they have forged spaces, channels, and institutions that stimulate cooperation on multiple levels of government. If one considers the multiplicity of connective scenarios developed over these 25 years of “new relationship” and the expressed continuity of will and deepening, for example, in the Maipú Treaty (*Tratado de Maipú*) (2009), it is possible to maintain that Argentina and Chile, insofar as their neighborly relationship, exhibit distinctive, almost unique traits in the scenario of South American relations and that, within the broad field of bilateral relations between both countries, the intertwining on the sub-national scale is one that marks the difference. We can affirm that this Treaty is an interesting political-legal peace that shows concepts that are *aggiornados* and revitalizing institutions of a bilateral relationship between the two States.

The formation of instances of the types of the Integration Committees, mixed Commissions, inter-parliamentary relationships, and diverse forums for provincial and municipal exchange have favored consultation and coordination, contributing to the design of an “ordered and fruitful interdependence.”

We clearly find ourselves before a sum of proposals and actions that complement traditional foreign policy—that is, what is assumed by Executives and foreign policy ministries—with the variety and creativity of the proposals and creations proceeding from sub-national areas.

Specifically, sub-national action, in all its manifestations, has added to this bilateral relationship an unprecedented dynamic, favoring public-private dialogue, and it has stimulated the chancelleries themselves to undertake direct contact with provincial requests or more local questions. With regard to the analysis of the Argentine-Chilean relationship anchored in the political variable, we have no doubt that sub-national, sub-state, and non-central governmental actors were given a very relevant construction task, starting from the return to democracy in both countries. They favored dialogue, helping cement the symbolic and the material—ideas and interests—in the relation of each with the other beyond the borders.

They worked at different moments and with a different degree of institutionalization, focusing on collaboration, negotiation, and agreement based on interests that were largely shared and complementary. In this manner, they contributed to the gestation of an “ordered interdependence,” causing the foreign policy, which has always been closed and central, to begin incorporating ideas, perceptions, and the recognized interests and needs of the actors who frequently develop their everyday lives in territories very far from the “capitals.”

The three examples chosen in this study are a sample—each with its particular characteristics—such that the concept of “border” evolves in the Argentine-Chilean relationship, with decisions that involve the Executives, some areas of the State administration, and sub-national actors represented by non-central governments, universities, etc. are combined. The designs that these actions acquire are the result of the convergence and complementarity among the levels involved. Meanwhile, the formation of Zicosur, as we have observed, allows us to observe that in the case of relationships

among bordering States, this spectrum of actors, governmental agents, and sub-state and local political entities can have a determining role.

In the Antarctic question, although the decision of the central States prevails, to favor cooperative work, compatible policies are designed and joint actions that commit the respective national fleets and the scientific and logistical institutions of the Antarctic task are stimulated. These joint activities—where important steps that contribute to the bilateral connection itself are being made—also legitimate both actors in the framework of the Antarctic Treaty (*Tratado Antártico*) and the environmental defense of the region.

In summary, the new bilateral Argentine-Chilean relationship, implemented since the 1990s and strongly anchored in the political variable and the democratic agenda, is the result of the combination of governmental actions that promote dialogue and cooperation and are fed by sub-national proposals and those from specific functional areas.

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