

Territorial discourses opposed in the 21st century: The case of the Chile-Peru relationship from a critical geopolitics perspective

Discursos territoriales contrapuestos en el siglo XXI: el caso de Chile-Perú desde la geopolítica crítica

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to understand, from the perspective of critical geopolitics, how the discourses of territorial conflicts between Chile and Peru in the 21st century have been represented by each of the parties, while at the same time establishing underlying elements that they go beyond the official conceptions issued by the States. To obtain this, a theoretical-conceptual approach to the notion of territory is considered from the mentioned discipline, and thus establish how the territory has been considered mostly as a conflictive aspect in bilateral history, demonstrated in recent years in the territorial oppositions made by the maritime border and in the so-called “terrestrial triangle”. It is concluded that the territorial conflicts are only a sample of a more structural problem in the relationship between both countries, while the territorial discourse is used to maximize the differences and minimize the similarities.

Keywords: critical geopolitics, Chile, Peru, territory, discourse.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene por objetivo comprender, desde la visión de la geopolítica crítica, como los discursos de los conflictos territoriales del siglo XXI entre Chile y Perú, han sido representados por cada una de las partes, al tiempo que se establecen elementos subyacentes que van más allá de las concepciones oficiales emitidas por los Estados. Para lograrlo, se considera un acercamiento teórico-conceptual de la noción de territorio desde la disciplina mencionada, y así establecer cómo el territorio ha sido considerado mayormente como un aspecto conflictivo en la historia bilateral, demostrándose en los últimos años en la contraposición por la frontera marítima y en el denominado “triángulo terrestre”. Se concluye

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que los conflictos territoriales son solo una muestra de un problema más estructural en la relación entre ambos países, al tiempo que el discurso territorial es utilizado como mecanismo para maximizar las diferencias y minimizar las similitudes.

Palabras clave: geopolítica crítica, Chile, Perú, territorio, discurso.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to use the perspective of critical geopolitics to explain how discourses on the territorial conflicts in the Chile-Peru¹ bilateral relationship have been presented in the 21st century. From a methodological point of view, we can offer an initial, simple answer to the question without influencing the subsequent exploration of the different topics this question raises. First, the Chile-Peru bilateral relationship, from a historical and political perspective, has been encumbered with opposing views and conflicting interests, especially since the end of the War of the Pacific (also known as the Salitre War) (1879-1883). The original view, although later acquiring some nuances, fostered structural elements of mutual distrust that have hampered any agreements beyond commercial relationships at this point in the 21st century. Thus, the discourses on certain points, such as the ongoing maritime boundary dispute and positions on the “terrestrial triangle”, show that beyond the individual issues, the differences are manifested in the underlying elements of the official discourse between Chile and Peru. Thus, although both of these points of conflict have territory as a common denominator, their individual characteristics are different, mainly due to the underlying elements of the discourse on these territorial issues.

Furthermore, these underlying elements, which are manifested in the discourses that have become part of each country's identity, can be used to visualize and explain these discourses by applying a critical geopolitical perspective. Doing so becomes even more important when considering that all of the aspects in which the opposing discourses are manifested are part of a narrative with interconnected territorial elements. Therefore, obtaining a broader understanding of the territorial issues helps in understanding the value of a territory for creating and building an identity. It also helps in visualizing the conflict from more holistic point of view and in expanding beyond the narrow legal perspective dominating the territorial conflicts between the two countries in the 21st century. This legal perspective is also the product of the international process both countries have undertaken since 2008, when Peru filed a claim against Chile in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), with the aim of defining the maritime boundary between both countries.

This article focuses on analyzing and explaining, from the standpoint of critical geopolitics, how Chile and Peru developed certain opposing territorial discourses, using the previously mentioned conflicts as individual case studies. Although

¹ This article uses “Chile-Peru” when referring to both countries simply because of alphabetical order.

the methodological elements of critical geopolitics are still being debated, elements such as discourse and symbols are clearly legitimate to incorporate when interpreting territorial importance, since they provide a perspective beyond the traditional explanations by imparting an understanding of the influence of these conflicts' underlying elements. However, without belittling the above contribution, the main value of critical geopolitics for this study lies in providing a new understanding of the territorial issues between Chile and Peru characterizing much of their mutual history. These issues have been analyzed and explained in the past from a positivist perspective, establishing an absolute value for the territory and ignoring subjective elements.

The discourses examined here were created by academia, even though they arise from the Chile-Peru territorial conflicts occurring at the time. As such, the concept of critical geopolitics that should be applied is "formal geopolitics". That concept provides insight into how discourse emanating from intellectual centers such as universities, institutes, or individual professionals portray the territory in addition to their own realities and threats. In this sense, although the discourse is linked to official views maintained by both countries, the relationships between the history of conflict and the new territorial disputes are more clearly appreciated from an academic point of view. In the discourse on territorial representation, formal geopolitics establishes a relationship between those conflicting structural elements—such as 19th century history, other disputes associated with cultural elements, and one country's opinion of the other—while considering the influence of the entire history of bilateral relations more often than not.

The study concludes that even though the elements of territorial conflict can be addressed and analyzed, a number of underlying aspects of the bilateral relationship still arise from territorial disagreements as well as from the influence of a geopolitical discourse on conflict. Thus, these underlying aspects of the discourse on conflict are the main elements to be addressed in solving the structural problem between the two countries, with the objective of maximizing the positive processes and minimizing the negative parts of the bilateral relationship.

The Value of Critical Geopolitics: Territory and Discourses

When conflict issues occur, analysts, reporters, and even academics have a bad tendency to attribute the problem to some aspect of geopolitics or to describe the conflict as a geopolitical issue. While some level of geopolitics may exist, this tendency is a symptom of the concept's abuse and misunderstanding. Issues related to territorial disputes, natural resources, economic problems, and even to the use of military force are labeled as "geopolitical problems", which is not necessarily the case (Kelly, 2016). Therefore, a brief review of the concept of geopolitics is needed, with the sole objective of determining what is understood and, perhaps more importantly, what is not understood by geopolitics as a discipline.

Broadly speaking, the discipline of geopolitics can be divided into two major groups: classical and critical (although each has different fields). The classical perspective is based on positivist thought, which had its beginnings in the late 19th century, mainly as a result of the influence of social Darwinism. However, its expression as a discipline was accomplished in the middle of the 20th century's first half, especially in the way it envisioned the world, producing a world view in which the state had a predominant role. Thus, a link was established between the state and its development potential on the one hand, and its surrounding geographical and political context on the other (Cuellar, 2012). However, the use of geopolitics to justify certain plans with ideological and racial objectives (the Nazi territorial expansion is the primary example) discredited the discipline as an objective academic branch. Not until the 1970s, when academics such as Yves Lacoste or officials such as Zbigniew Brzezinski joined the debate, was the importance reiterated of studying geopolitics to understand and explain a number of global issues² (Cohen, 2015; Lacoste, 2011). However, in Latin America, the study and development of geopolitical principles were relevant after the end of World War II and were therefore advocated by the military community in advanced, specialized training courses (Cabrera, 2017; Child, 1979; Dodds, 1993).

Along with paradigm shifts in the social sciences, in which views nearer to interpretivism (directly opposed to positivism) gained in popularity, geopolitics began to be approached from other angles and points of view. Thus, the existing discourse was endowed with the ability to establish both social and geographical realities when studying a place or even a state. Based on this outlook, studies by Simon Dalby (1990), as well as the perspectives of Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew (1992), gained greater weight during the conceptual reformulation of the elements properly pertaining to geopolitics, beginning with a critical view of its application. When considering the context in which geopolitical discourse is disseminated, the actors who reproduce it, and even its purpose, the classical concept of geopolitics can be viewed as imperialist, racist, and classist (Ó Tuathail, 1996). This perspective, which is also a way of interpreting a geopolitical reality, is typical of critical geopolitics. While this discipline has its epistemic beginnings in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was not acknowledged as a field of study until the 1990s (Dodds, Kuus & Sharp, 2013).

Nevertheless, a key element of the discipline's critical thinking is that, within an eventual explanation of an event or process, it ascertains various underlying aspects of the realities demonstrated by positivist thinking, from a classical geopolitical perspective. As such, to understand the value of geopolitical discourse, the underlying elements of the discourse must be revealed: in this case, the aspects influencing the development and creation of the geopolitical discourse. This point is one of the main differentiators between classical and critical geopolitical thinking, since through discourse socially accepted and legitimized realities are created, based

² However, at that time, the French concept of geopolitics was much more developed, both conceptually and theoretically, than that of the U.S. For example, from the U.S. perspective, geopolitics was directly connected to realist theory, although these theories may have had different epistemic positions (Kelly, 2016).

on elements initially viewed as objective, such as territory and its relationship with the state (Kelly, 2006).

As previously mentioned, the discourse regarding the interpretation and representation of certain places and spaces is a main point studied in critical geopolitics. Nonetheless, geopolitical discourse cannot be understood as an absolute or unique discourse. Explaining an issue based on a discourse does not make it geopolitical. For a discourse to be represented on a geopolitical level, it must be associated with a territorial or spatial element or it must be about a specific place. If that does not happen, one falls into a relativism that, according to Martin Müller (2008), becomes the main challenge for critical geopolitics: establishing the territorial nature of geopolitical discourse, in conjunction with its underlying elements.

Thus, according to John Agnew, the complexity of territory cannot be properly understood as such if only viewed as being homogeneous and absolute; it must be understood as having a number of distinct attributes (Agnew, 1994). The problem arises in that, on an international level, the distinct attributes of a territory are overshadowed by the homogenous concept of the state to which it belongs, manifested in the state's foreign policy. Therefore, the influence of other elements, not part of that homogeneous and centralist logic, is marginalized, even within other actors representative of the state but evoking this actor within a symbolic or cultural logic (Hassner, 2006-2007). In this regard, Hassner notes that the cultural and symbolic aspects mainly determine those discourses on the uniqueness of spaces within nations or states. This concept is relevant to the vision of critical geopolitics, because one of the discipline's main objectives is to understand the elements illustrating and originating identity-related discourses at the national and state levels. Doing so enables the identification of some of the interests in these discursive elements, considering their connection to a specific territorial space.

Regarding the influence of narratives in shaping identities, especially at a national or state level, the discursive representation of a territory plays a key role in understanding how this discourse is maintained or how certain images are developed related to other actors also part of the perception of the state. The discourse from a territorial perspective, in addition to indicating a kind of geographical "reality", also has a number of underlying elements representing the interests of the actors who developed this discourse. At the same time, it can consider threats as reflections of multiple actors and processes functioning in national and international dimensions, within a specific imaginary. The connection between the discourse and the territory is established through these elements: the interpretation of the territorial discourse and the expansion of the perception of the territory by incorporating different actors and processes transforming an absolute and rigid perception of the territory (Agnew, 1994).

Thus, the discursive interpretation of a territory includes an assessment and representation of the threats and opportunities posed by other countries and by various actors in the international system (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998). However, to consider a territory within a discursive logic also implies a valuation of the historical

and cultural accounts regarding this territory. Therefore, the discursive aspects lead to an interpretation extending beyond the positivist notion of classifying a territorial space as “strategic”: the territory also becomes part of a social imaginary that can be part of a deconstruction, or part of a key narrative in the development of national and state identities, or even extending beyond the state’s international borders (Hassner, 2006-2007).

In addition to the above, the discourse enables a visualization of other actors and processes linked to the territory and generating changes in their interpretation. For example, territories considered part of a border region cannot be fully understood without some idea of the elements permeating it, thereby changing its meaning (Anderson, 1996). However, the geopolitical representation of territorial spaces also explains the actors who participate in creating that discourse, their interests, and the context in which it was developed, as well as their perspective on whether the discourse provides an answer (positive or negative) on behalf of other actors who have an interest in that territorial space (Kelly, 2016). These elements are associated with critical geopolitics, because the classical view generally assumes an absolute perspective of the territory and uses the state as its main unit of analysis while marginalizing the role of discourse or other structures with a place in the interpretation of a territorial space.

Another notable aspect when applying a critical instead of classical approach to geopolitics, besides obviating the classical approach’s absolute concept of territory, is that critical geopolitics produces a better understanding and explanation of the discipline’s classical approach, especially regarding the identification of actors and processes. This enlightened view results from the visualization of the underlying elements of classic geopolitical discourse revealing the objectives and the motives behind that discourse. Therefore, while the visualization and analysis of a territorial process can establish geopolitical premises from a classical, positivist perspective that can facilitate its understanding, that approach has a bias and several limitations. By applying critical geopolitics, these can be understood and connected to the resulting explanation of the territorial process in question. Therefore, although some authors maintain that the two branches of geopolitics have irreconcilable differences, beyond the epistemic disparities, both branches are complementary with respect to observing, analyzing, and explaining a territorial issue, especially if it has the characteristics of conflict (Cairo & Lois, 2014; Kelly, 2006).

Therefore, the representation of a territory and the discourse on that representation are connected, because a territorial representation is built as the product of this discourse. Thus, the geopolitical representation of the territory is related to the way in which a group of actors, whether they are foreign policy decision-makers, academics, or just part of society (as conceived by the formal and popular classifications of practical geopolitics) reflect their interests on a specific territorial space, thereby influencing the agenda, especially at the international level (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998). Furthermore, that representation is shaped by the context, history, culture, and processes

affecting (positively or negatively) that interpretation. For this reason, the representation of a territory, at a geopolitical level, has an international impact, considering that a national or state-level territorial discourse can be interpreted as a rapprochement or a threat, according to the interpretation made in other, mostly state-level spaces. This implication reinforces the subjective quality of a territory and its representation, which extends into the image and preconceived world views based on different interests, but which does not necessarily represent a widely accepted reality.

Critical geopolitics facilitates a broader and more holistic understanding of a territorial conflict by including elements that are not a priority for the classical approach. Additionally, it enables an appreciation of aspects that may be pointed to in the official discourse as being the basis for the conflict but are not if the process is examined for the importance the disputed elements represent for areas such as identity or a particular culture. As a result of the above, territorial conflicts between countries with a mutual history of armed conflict and the related negative consequences can be analyzed and explained from a perspective that identifies most of the structural problems, while discarding any elements that are temporary or that only provide a partial solution to the problem. This approach can be applied to the relationship between Chile and Peru, especially in the 21st century.

Territory as a Point of Conflict in Chile-Peru Relations

According to authors such as José Rodríguez Elizondo (2004) and Daniel Parodi (2014), the agenda for the Chile-Peru relationship is focused on points of conflict, especially disputes pertaining to territorial issues. That situation may be commonplace for countries who have fought over certain territories, but cultural ingredients play a central role in a story, especially when no systematic efforts have been made to solve the problem (Hassner, 2006-2007), as in the Chile-Peru bilateral relationship.

However, to understand the context for both countries before the 21st century territorial problems began, the ways in which Chile and Peru were connected, especially at the end of the 1990s, should be described and explained. One of the key points for understanding the bilateral relationship is the 1999 signing of the “Act of Execution” (*Acta de Ejecución*) of the unresolved issues related to the 1929 Treaty of Lima.³ Although both countries prioritized this accord among the various topics of the bilateral relationship, its negotiation was not only problem-free but was also somewhat insignificant due to the political climate and the topics. However, its ratification by both countries was still

³ The Treaty of Lima (1929), along with the Supplementary Protocol signed the same year, was the legal instrument that established, 50 years after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), a shared border between Chile and Peru. Therefore, this treaty is considered the central element for defining the current land border between the two countries (Tratado de Lima y su Protocolo Complementario, 1929).

considered a historical event in their bilateral relationship.⁴ Although the objective of fulfilling the unresolved issues between the two countries was finally achieved 70 years after the Treaty of Lima, raising expectations of a new quality in the relationship, the reality was different. In the 21st century, both countries raised objections, especially regarding territorial issues, which pushed aside the expectations raised at the end of the 20th century. However, these “expectations” were based on a questionable understanding and handling by both parties in the relationship.

From the Chilean perspective, even though it was an unresolved problem, negotiating a territorial issue with Peru was not one of Chile’s main foreign policy priorities at the time. In particular, during the second half of the 1990s, Chilean foreign policy was focused on negotiating trade agreements with other countries, prioritizing this type of relationship over more political issues (Fernandois, 2005). In addition, its foreign policy agenda was also forced to accommodate circumstantial events, such as Augusto Pinochet’s arrest in London. That event, in the opinion of Paz Milet (2012), abetted the “Pinochet-ization” of Chilean foreign policy at the end of the 1990s, when the Act of Execution with Peru was being negotiated. In addition, Pinochet continued to exert a strong influence at certain levels of political decision-making in the Chilean democracy, especially on foreign policy and defense issues, while serving as Commander-in-Chief of the Army until 1998.

Meanwhile, on the Peruvian side, the foreign policy coming out of Torre Tagle Palace⁵ in the 1990s was dominated by three major events. First, the self-coup by President Alberto Fujimori in 1992 changed the country’s governability, as it increased presidential power over the other branches of government. Therefore, the various decisions made at the highest political levels, including those related to foreign policy, were all driven by Fujimori’s vision. Because of this political environment, many authors believe Peru became a dictatorship after the self-coup, which created problems of international recognition and isolation, albeit for a brief period (Rodríguez, 2004).

Additionally, two other highly significant events occurred, influencing the management of Peru’s foreign policy. One was the armed conflict in 1995 between Peru and Ecuador over the Alto Cenepa area. Another key event was the strong uprising of terrorist groups who attempted to destabilize the country, such as the Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru—MRTA*). These two events not only limited the scope of Peruvian foreign policy but also focused on specific courses of action, especially

⁴ In his official speech at the signing of the Act of Execution, the Peruvian Chancellor at the time, Fernando de Trazegnies Granda, unequivocally stated:

[...] and now Peru and Chile put an end to the last after-effects with which past events vainly attempted to stain our future in blood. Thus, in two months we can enter the 21st century free of the moral debts and consequences that originated from 19th century problems (“Los Acuerdos entre Chile y Perú”, 2000).

⁵ Peru’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is housed in the Torre Tagle Palace in Lima.

regarding a solution to the border dispute with Ecuador (García, 2015). Therefore, given the circumstances of both countries in the 1990s, the rapprochement between Chile and Peru, although successful, remained primarily at a technical level.

As the new millennium began, the Chile-Peru relationship again focused on the issues of mutual conflict since the circumstances previously constraining both foreign ministries had been resolved. On the Chilean side, military influence in certain decision-making areas was no longer a reality, and Chile's economic-commercial vision significantly influenced its foreign policy. This cycle was further reinforced by the signing of free trade agreements (FTA) with the United States and the European Union. On the Peruvian side, the excessive influence of presidential decisions on certain political and social issues experienced during the Fujimori administration, had given way to a period of political transition after Fujimori abruptly left the country. As such, institutions such as the Foreign Ministry once again carried out an agenda of state policy instead of the authoritarian position of the former president (Basombrio & Rospigliosi, 2006). At the same time, the conflict with Ecuador was resolved and the internal insurrection movements using terror to achieve their political objectives were quashed, although they both remained fresh in the country's collective memory.

Therefore, while both countries thought they had an agenda for the future with "closed issues" at the beginning of the 21st century, the events described above created a different situation. In this regard, both countries produced instruments creating a rapprochement between the two, but structural elements were not addressed within the various negotiations. These elements included the differences in interpretation regarding a number of territorial spaces that became important in the bilateral agenda, such as demarcation of the maritime border and subsequently the sovereignty of the "terrestrial triangle" area.

The Maritime Boundary Dispute and its Underlying Features

At the beginning of the 21st century, the context of the past challenged both countries with the issue of whether a maritime boundary existed and with different interpretations of where the land border began. For the land border, the differences began after the ruling of the high international court. Regarding the controversy over the maritime boundary, the first precedent in this respect dates to 1986 when Juan Miguel Bákula, Peru's ambassador to Chile, sent his "Bákula Memorandum" to Jaime del Valle, then Chilean Foreign Minister (Bákula, 2002). However, the 1990s proceeded, and for the reasons mentioned above, this topic was not deliberated as such, especially from the official perspective of Chilean foreign policy. This situation ended after two specific events. The first was a Chilean nautical chart submitted in October 2000 to the United Nations delineating a maritime boundary with Peru. This boundary was

officially challenged by Peru, led by Valentín Paniagua's transitional government, who submitted documentation to the United Nations rejecting the existence of a maritime boundary between the countries (Sifuentes & Riepl, 2014). The second event is known as the "guardhouse" incident. This bilateral incident erupted because the Chilean Navy moved a guardhouse that was close to the land and maritime boundary between the two countries. This move was officially protested by Peru, claiming the guardhouse had been moved onto Peruvian territory and demanding its return to Chilean territory. Chile countered by officially stating the guardhouse had been moved to a location within Chilean territory. Finally, the Chilean Navy was ordered to move the guardhouse back to its original location (Rodríguez, 2006).

Apart from the background and incidents leading to the legal dispute over the maritime boundary, and despite the positive signals sent at the end of the 1990s, the territorial problems between the two countries were real and palpable. Furthermore, while the bilateral linkages produced by the commercial integration initiatives were sustained during the Fujimori administration, for multiple reasons considered an authoritarian government (Basombrio & Rospigliosi, 2006; Murakami, 2012), the conflict-related agenda topics were not touched. Furthermore, when they were touched, as in the 1999 Act of Execution, it was only in a technical sense. Therefore, as a consequence of the aforementioned events, the concept of "territorial conflict" was once again on the bilateral agenda in the 21st century, resulting in images and discourses reinforcing these stories that varied depending on the country producing them.

From Chile's standpoint, the "reopening" of a seemingly resolved territorial conflict had an impact on how Chile perceived Peru's foreign policy towards the country, and the perception was different than it had been in the 1990s. Thus, for Chilean foreign policy, the dispute over the demarcation of the maritime boundary was a case "fabricated" by Peru. Therefore, Chile began to create a narrative about Peru's "revanchist" policy towards Chile (Milet, 2005). Furthermore, a number of problems cropped up before the U.N. claim was presented that produced tension between the two countries, although these problems were not directly related to the problem at hand. Some of these problems included the building of facilities by the Chilean-owned company, Lucchetti, in an environmentally protected area of Lima (according to the municipal government of Lima) and the revelation of arms sales by Chile to Ecuador during the latter's conflict with Peru. The latter occurred, even though Chile is a sponsor of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol.

For Peru, the controversy regarding the maritime boundary was not a fabricated issue as it was for Chile, because the dispute in the 1980s had a clear and formal precedent. However, this position has even deeper roots. Chile's refusal to agree on the points of contention regarding the maritime boundary, especially Chile's position of "non-negotiation", created a perception that Chile was on a course of "expansionism", a perception supported by certain factors. Examples include the lawsuit filed by Chilean courts against the Peruvian-owned company, Aero Continente, as well as the prospect that Línea Aérea Nacional de Chile (LAN), the

Chilean-owned airline, would become the main passenger airline in the country (Milet, 2005).

However, the legal case for the definition of the maritime boundary between the two countries, although it was mainly handled through diplomatic channels, had subjective and geopolitical elements that would not be addressed by a new boundary demarcation, since they involved other factors. Some examples of these factors include the potential plans each country had for these maritime spaces, the dominance of one country's ports to the eventual detriment of the other, and the underlying historical-political notion of the "recovered" territories. In addition, although the problem was presented as a bilateral boundary issue, its root cause had underlying, hidden factors. These factors are mainly related to the geopolitical representations of each country involved in the dispute and made by their counterparts (Kahhat, 2008).

One of the points on which the two countries clashed—and continue to clash—was the future impacts on their port facilities and the vision for state control over commercial sea and land routes, especially towards Asia-Pacific. For this reason, at an official level, a discourse based on these underlying factors was built around how these two countries are seen. Chile should be seen as a "bridge country" for Asian markets, with trade routes linking them to South American countries on the Atlantic side of the continent. Similarly, Peru can be seen as a "pivot country", due to its connection with bodies of water directly connected to Atlantic countries and its geographical position in the center of the South American continent. This centrality demonstrates its advantageous location in relation to large, Asia-Pacific markets. Thus, although these positions were officially established by both countries through various instruments, they were mainly manifested through the maritime boundary conflict as a means of improving a geopolitical position while diminishing their counterpart's position (Cabrera, 2010).

One element of the academic discourse regarding the context of the maritime boundary dispute is that each party's view of its counterpart regarding the disputed territory is primarily based on centralist concepts. Ideas about international boundaries are derived from a centralist concept of the state, minimizing the impact the territory has for its populations. Thus, defeat is seen as a zero-sum game, in which the territory represents a degree of power in absolute terms. The centralist perspective of territory does not allow awareness or understanding of the importance of the border as a space for interaction and communication between countries and societies. For this reason, a number of authors in both countries, although they recognized the importance of socializing the maritime dispute in the directly affected areas, devalued or did not properly understand this important aspect of border regions since their arguments were based on a centralist concept of the state (Ovando & Zapata, 2016). This centralist interpretation of the territorial problem can be viewed as an example of classical geopolitics, while the recognition of other cultural realities involved in the representation of a territory is an analytical approach derived from critical geopolitics.

Although both countries recognized the bilateral problem of the demarcation of the maritime boundary, a new problem not necessarily considered in the bilateral agenda was created. This new problem was about where the land border began, known as the “terrestrial triangle”. While the new issue may be considered part of the maritime boundary issue, the problems are separate due to the nature of land-related processes, their interpretations by both parties, and the mechanisms for resolution if an agreement is not reached.

The “Terrestrial Triangle”: A Separate Issue for a Different Agenda

The currently unresolved territorial problem concerns the definition of the land border between the two countries on the Pacific coast. This problem is commonly known as the “terrestrial triangle”, which has different connotations for Chileans and Peruvians, especially in what it represents. First, while it can be viewed as an issue arising from the maritime boundary dispute, the management of this problem is different, and not even the ICJ has ruled on it. Second, since it is an issue concerning land, a different territorial dimension, the related connotations and perspectives are different from the maritime problem (Kahhat, 2017).

In this regard, this dispute even has a different origin. Although the “guardhouse” incident was a precedent, and the ICJ was asked to establish the starting point of the maritime boundary, this aspect was only minimally addressed due to its different nature. Thus, the land border problem was not necessarily birthed by the maritime boundary dispute but, for some authors, was created after the maritime boundary dispute from comments made by the Chilean President, Sebastián Piñera, immediately before the ICJ ruling was handed down (Wieland, 2014). President Piñera’s comments revealed an interpretation officially countered by Peru, highlighting the problem of interpretation of this geographical area. Therefore, although the demarcation of sovereignty over this territorial space had a history of problems, this new controversy was not placed on the agenda until after the ICJ ruling on the maritime boundary.

However, despite the clear connection of this problem with the maritime boundary, they have different natures. The land border between both countries was a highly complex process, involving factors directly related to the aftermath of the armed conflict between the two countries in the latter half of the 19th century. As previously mentioned, the land border negotiation lasted 50 years, and led to a number of complexities that brought the two countries close to another war (González, 2008). While the maritime boundary issue may be viewed as a consequence of the war, its management by both countries and the official documents presented to the ICJ do not reveal traces of the 19th century conflict. In addition, the bilateral negotiations to establish maritime boundaries began in the mid-20th century, although they had a limited scope and applicability.

Therefore, the maritime issue can be considered as much more contemporary than the land issue, with fewer problems in its resolution.

As a problem rooted in the interpretation of one of the points of the Treaty of Lima (1929), the problem's complexity also arises from the significance of this instrument for the two countries—the definitive demarcation of the shared border. Although this significance is equally acknowledged in each country's official discourse, in reality its significance for Peru is different than for Chile, since Peru ceded territory to Chile. Thus, the prospect of opening a closed topic not only revives and amplifies negative images of the past but also supports the view that, from the Chilean perspective, open issues will always exist regarding the neighbor to the north due to ongoing and unresolved "territorial trauma" inflicted by Chile (Leyton, 2007). However, the Peruvian perspective has a nontrivial aspect, which is the feeling of territorial loss and all its accompanying emotional and symbolic baggage; these are responses to the Chilean occupation and the fact that these territories used to be Peruvian (Mc Evoy, 2016). Therefore, although the territory is small in size, its symbolic significance is not small, because the territorial space is directly related to the outcomes of the War of the Pacific (Salitre War), especially for Peru.

However, another aspect differentiates these territorial interpretations from those presented by both countries to the ICJ. Since the problem is addressed by the terms of the 1929 Treaty, any related issues and disputes are to be resolved differently. The treaty text explicitly states that if any discrepancies arise regarding any of the points included in the treaty, the president of the United States will settle the matter. Both parties consider this a key point, and given the current political situation of the United States, including a third actor in this dispute is not considered viable and could potentially be detrimental to the interests of both parties. This stance stands in clear contrast to the ICJ judicial process in which, although again an arbitrator was involved, both parties could pursue a framework of international processes.

The problem with the land border issue is that the concept of the "terrestrial triangle" is directly related to a conflictive past that weighs more heavily than the maritime boundary dispute. Therefore, the conflictive discourse over the land border has been addressed differently not only by the authorities responsible for foreign policy planning and preparation but also by the academic world (Rodríguez, 2014). In this sense, the "terrestrial triangle" has been viewed from two broad perspectives: as the actual value of the land in geographical terms and as the issue preventing both countries from making progress in its bilateral relationship after concluding an international legal process on a territorial dispute. The "terrestrial triangle" is a different problem than the maritime boundary because it pertains to land, and the benefit of that land for either country is minimal. This interpretation changes the priority of this territorial dispute and, added to the undertones directly connected to the outcome of the 1879 war, results in a much more complex problem, both politically and socially (Roncagliolo, 2017). Second, the persistence of a territorial problem leads to a tendency to "territorialize" the bilateral agenda, converting it into an

agenda with “separate strings”, much like at the beginning of the ICJ process in 2008 (García- Corrochano, 2012).

Regardless of these two territorial disputes, the two countries have established various mechanisms at different levels to reverse the negative course of territorial conflicts and to enable progress in other aspects of the bilateral agenda. Although progress has been made, it has not been independent from the relationship’s structural issues, similar to the case of the territorial disputes. For this reason, beyond some specific initiatives, the relationship has patterns of conflict that are structural in nature and that extend beyond the present circumstances.

A Structural Problem

In the bilateral Chile-Peru relationship, history has a heavy influence on the formation, persistence, and reinforcement of a certain image over the years, especially regarding the negative perception of the counterpart. The points of view of the winner and loser in the War of the Pacific, most strikingly manifested in the respective historical narratives of Chile and Peru, are not only stories about an event but are part of the development of a national identity (Parodi, 2010; Villalobos, 2002). It is the product of an often-heard historical narrative that not only defines the current border between the two countries but also establishes heroes, specific events, and portrayals of the counterpart, derived almost exclusively from the War of the Pacific (Salitre War). The process is not trivial, while the significance of the armed conflict for the bilateral history must be acknowledged, a large part of the conflict-related agenda, especially regarding territorial disputes, feeds on the consequences of that war even today.

Furthermore, by visualizing the historical narrative of conflict, one can develop an interpretation of a number of past events through the lens of the influence of the 1879 armed conflict. For example, while the Chile-Peru bilateral relationship was not born during that war, most of the events prior to that conflict have been reinterpreted to amplify historical disagreements in support of arguments contending that the conflict between the two countries was not limited to a specific point in time (González & Parodi, 2014). Two examples should be considered in this regard. The first is related to the successful defense of the southern Pacific coast against Spanish attacks (1864-1866) jointly organized by Chile and Peru and including other coastal countries. This event was a historical instance of a united South American effort to defend common interests but has been interpreted as a way to divide efforts, and as a direct precursor of the 1879 war. The other example is the signing of the 1952 and 1954 international treaties, which, although subjected to legal scrutiny in the 21st century as to whether the treaties established the maritime boundary between Chile and Peru, their nature and spirit were clearly to promote integration. Thus, these treaties were signed to protect Chile, Peru, and Ecuador from the activities of transnational corporations pillaging the natural resources of their coastal waters. However, both of these examples have either

been interpreted negatively or have not been acknowledged as positive events in the history of the Chile-Peru relationship.

This negative perspective has had an impact on the societies of the two countries. Here, according to José Miguel Flórez (2007), the greatest differences can be seen. Thus, although countries can try to minimize negative perceptions of events, those efforts do not have a lasting impact because “the problem” is rooted in society. Negative perceptions are manifested in various social acts and discourses as a consequence of the previously mentioned elements. Despite all the possible official initiatives to foster dialogue and rapprochement, distrust has built over the years within societies. This distrust is even manifested in official acts by both countries, such as the processes used to resolve territorial conflicts.

The academic discourse and geopolitical positions that can be identified in these processes, although they establish new parameters and processes that produce new perspectives in the relationship, are based on factors that are part of that structural conflict while focusing on the territorial disputes. As such, the conflict has a highly relevant role in the discussion on the bilateral relationship, but it also highlights that the narrative about the counterpart, while built on the issue of territorial conflict, has produced a number of approaches to resolve disagreements. Perhaps one of the main examples was the academic and other approaches in various matters affecting both countries promoted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. This situation resulted in different actors, both Chilean and Peruvian, exchanging perspectives on the context of the bilateral relationship, as well as experiences in their respective activities (Guerra, 2014). Another example occurring in the elaboration of an official discourse but resulting in positive geopolitical consequences for the bilateral relationship was the establishment of the policy of “separate strings” in 2008 after Peru filed the claim against Chile before the ICJ. This policy allowed both countries to maintain an open channel for dialogue regarding their significant commercial linkages, while leaving the issue of maritime boundary demarcation to be decided by the ICJ (Vidarte, 2017).

Therefore, while the structural comprehension of the problem is reflected in the academic discourse, the concept of conflict is minimized when new processes and actors involved in the bilateral relationship appear and become known. However, the official discourse and discourses from other sources such as the mass media interfere by building and sustaining a negative perception of the bilateral relationship as a whole. That perception is reinforced whenever a counterpart, either Chile or Peru, appears in the context of a territorial dispute. Therefore, although the discourse establishes a social reality, the discourse is directly derived from the perceptions of territorial conflict and their significance for a significant sector of society, both in Chile and in Peru.

Conclusions

The Chile-Peru relationship is complex, similar to any bilateral relationship with a shared border component. However, unlike other situations in which countries

have had negative experiences with each other but have also created areas of trust and cooperation at a high level, the bilateral relationship examined in this study has not developed in this way, especially regarding the “sensitive” aspects of conflicts related in part to territorial issues. The current relationship has strong elements of cooperation and integration, especially regarding cross-border communication and increased commercial exchange. However, these elements remain subject to “sensitive” issues, as previously indicated.

In this regard, while the two countries have sought peaceful means within the international system to resolve disputes, such as the ICJ claim, doing so resolves only part of the overall problem and does not necessarily address its root cause. This type of problem (i.e., territorial disputes with a strong underlying geopolitical component) is not resolved by a court decision or by an agreement at the highest political level. Solving these problems involves actors extending beyond the state as an institution and involves different levels of society. Such problems cannot be solved by focusing on a narrow aspect of the problem, as do the foreign policy decision-makers. The underlying problems in the Chile-Peru relationship have a strong social component that should not be overlooked.

However, failing to incorporate other sectors of society is not the only issue. The inability to recognize the importance of the underlying elements of conflict as part of a larger problem is also to blame. This is, perhaps, one of the most difficult parts of building a real and consistent process of rapprochement between the parties, due to the potential political cost and the time it takes to establish such an environment. However, other analytical and explanatory perspectives are needed to recognize those underlying elements of conflict. These perspectives could enable demonstrating the relevance of those elements and their recognition and comprehension by foreign policy decision-makers and at the societal level. Therefore, a refreshed understanding of the territorial conflicts is also needed, one that extends beyond classical positivist concepts such as classical geopolitics or the absolute, monolithic (in terms of sovereign power) state. In this way, academic discourse can contribute significantly to the improvement of relationships, from a structural point of view.

If that kind of process is not achieved, it is likely the events of the late 1990s will be repeated, when an official speech on “healed wounds” was made, but a much broader and more structural process of producing trust and mutual understanding was not considered. Therefore, if a new dispute arises in the future, the lack of such a process will allow the ghosts of the past to once again infect the entire relationship, thereby confirming the relevance of these topics for multiple areas of rapprochement and cooperation that can and should exist between Chileans and Peruvians.

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