

Colombia and Its Trans-Pacific Foreign Policy

—International Relations in the Pacific Rim

Julio César Cepeda Ladino

Universidad Piloto de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

Email: jccpedal@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Pacific Rim has become a high-value geostrategic region because of the growing interdependence in its dynamics of political and economic cooperation. The international and regional cooperation systems continue their transformation since the early twenty first century, therefore it is quite relevant to be attuned with these processes. In recent years, Colombia has designed various strategies for international integration in the Asia-Pacific region within its Trans-Pacific foreign policy. It is essential for actors and interest groups to make a diagnosis to establish a forward-looking strategy to diversify the agenda of relations with this region. The purpose is to ensure a better understanding of the next transpacific cooperation schemes.

Keywords

Pacific Rim, Cooperation, Colombia, International Relations, Foreign Policy

1. Introduction

The Pacific Rim has gained interest in the academic research as a result of the intense dynamics of political and economic cooperation, expressed in the growing levels of interdependence in the region. This fact is evidenced by the increasing studies on major regional forums such as the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Forum for East Asia Latin American Cooperation (FEALAC). Similarly, studies on the Colombian foreign policy have increased dramatically within and outside the country over the past decade to some extent by the gradual improvement of the position of the Colombian state in the international system. This situation is evident in the growing approaches to multilateral institutions and regimes such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trans-pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), among others.

In this context, the Trans-Pacific foreign policy of Colombia has been developed from the participation of actors and interest groups in the development of public policy strategies regarding international insertion of the country in the Asia-Pacific region. In the twenty-first century, government strategies have been designed and established which have become “roadmaps” for addressing actions related to the movements of the trans-pacific cooperation, and hence to the expansion and diversification of the relations agenda of the country.

By grouping these issues (foreign policy and political and economic cooperation), there is an opportunity where the foreign policy analysis becomes relevant as a public policy including the participation of actors and specific interest groups on issues related to the regional cooperation. Specifically, the importance from the geopolitical and socioeconomic point of view of the Pacific Rim, along with the relative backwardness of Colombia’s foreign policy in this regard, constitutes key inputs to go beyond the traditional issues of the trans-pacific relations agenda of the country.

Considering the above, the proposed research can contribute significantly to the understanding of the process cycle of this public policy (design, formulation, implementation, diagnosis and prospective), specifically considering the strategies developed by actors and interest groups regarding the international integration of Colombia in the Asia-Pacific region. Specifically, it seeks to develop public policy recommendations for Colombia’s national government with the Pacific Rim.

The central research question is: what is the current state and prospects of the construction process of the Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim and its relationship with the most recent dynamics of the trans-pacific cooperation? The main objective is to generate inputs and public policy recommendations for the actors and interest groups involved in the development of international integration strategies aligned with the Asia-Pacific dynamic, considering theoretical elements of the foreign policy and the regional cooperation analysis.

The key argument suggests that the Colombian foreign policy construction towards the Pacific Rim has an outdated vision regarding the political and economic cooperation developed in this region. The growing changes in the international system along with the next stages of the trans-pacific cooperation constitute inputs for actors and interest groups to coordinate a strategy for international insertion according to the reality of the early twenty-first century. It is time to propose alternative actions in order to achieve more comprehensive results across multiple dimensions in the structuring of the trans-pacific agenda of Colombia.

The methodology of the article includes the use of qualitative methods in social sciences, to the extent that consulting primary sources, such as semi-structured interviews to national figures on the subject and object of study, and secondary sources including review of specialized literature, are key tools for the analysis of the content developed by the actors, in the process of designing and establishing the Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim.

The article will delve into the background and the latest situation of the cooperation system of the Pacific, emphasizing on the visions built regarding economic and political cooperation. Likewise, it will present the latest status of the trans-pacific foreign policy

of Colombia (2010-2014), understood as a public policy of design and establishment of international strategies by actors and interest groups. Finally, as a conclusion, public policy recommendations to the national government on the prospective of Colombia's relationship with the Asia-Pacific region will be given.

2. Pacific Cooperation System: Background and Current Situation

At first, the concept of political cooperation will be considered as "that situation in which US policies fit together (in varying degrees) through a process of negotiation" (Steinberg, 2008). Meanwhile, economic cooperation can be defined as "the increase of the levels of efficiency, wealth and welfare and adequate provision of global public goods such as international financial stability, free trade or environment protection" (Steinberg, 2008).

These definitions show that the dynamics of cooperation at international level are of political nature, and it is evident in the intergovernmental negotiations of public policies in different States, which will be conditioned by factors such as its relative power, its persuasion skills, and opportunity costs, among others (Jiménez González, 2003), (Steinberg, 2008). To the extent that there is a greater level of compatibility among the different states, the possibilities of adjusting public policies at national level increase, thus achieving advantages for all parties (Steinberg, 2008).

The neo-institutionalist and constructivist approaches consider that international institutions promote and facilitate political and economic cooperation between the states and their governments. They mainly differ in their understanding of the interaction among these institutions and the policy at the nation-state level. In the first, the domestic interests have the greatest impact on the dynamics of national politics in international institutions. While in the second, there is a fundamental relationship between the state and international institutions, clearly seen in the causal effects each can have on the other, and vice versa. Recently, currents such as the new regionalism have claimed the importance of the state as a key player in the process of cooperation, where the interaction between the political and economic spheres is recognized within the intergovernmental policy negotiations (Jiménez González, 2003).

Specifically, the pre- and post-World War II context becomes the turning point for the generation of the dynamics of political and economic cooperation, currently evident in the intergovernmental negotiation of certain policies among specific groups of states in the region. The search for reducing potential threats resulting in conflicts over natural resources and access to markets becomes one of the most important drivers for implementing an institution of regional integration and cooperation in which states and companies join to tap the huge potential of this area of the planet. The precedents of existing forums of the Pacific Cooperation System are in the studies conducted by the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East of the United Nations (ECAFE), and the Pacific Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD). Initially, these proposals focused on the feasibility of a free trade area in the Pacific as a foundation for the creation of a community of states in the Asia-Pacific region. Since these initiatives were not welcomed by the governments of

the region, the alternatives were focused on prioritizing the economic cooperation on trade integration (Roldán Pérez, 2011).

After the creation of PBEC and PECC, the vision on regional begins to materialize in terms of intergovernmental negotiations on issues related to business facilitation, hence enabling economic and social development in the region. At the same time, in the Asian and American shorelines, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) are created respectively. While these international institutions have had a different nature, they become pioneering projects of cooperation and political and economic integration, in turn associated with regionalism and regionalization processes in the Pacific Rim. Subsequently, structuring the APEC and FEALAC has allowed strengthening the trans-pacific cooperation approaches to the extent that intergovernmental negotiations have diversified their political and economic agenda. From these forums, new initiatives have been developed on both sides of the Pacific Ocean such as the TPP (P-4 extended), the China-Japan-Korea Scheme (CJK), the expanded ASEAN, the Latin American Pacific Arch (ARCO) and the Pacific Alliance (AP). This renewal in the proposals for the consolidation of political and economic cooperation in the Pacific Rim has been accompanied by growing interdependence in the region, which is evident in its main economic indicators compared to other regions of the world.

Over the first decade of the XXI century followed by the global financial crisis in the US in 2008, the western economic model is beginning to be challenged by the emerging countries playing an increasing role in the global economy (Jiang, 2013). Additionally, the model of cooperation in the Pacific Rim is being favored by the current period of transition of the global economy, to the extent that the centers of geoeconomic and geopolitical power are increasingly shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Most countries and emerging economies are in this part of the world as shown by the latest statistics on economic growth from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This phenomenon has caused changes in the policies of political and economic cooperation developed around the Pacific Rim, particularly while restructuring the objectives set by multilateral forums in the region (Capling & Ravenhill, 2011), (Jiang, 2013).

For the TPP, there is a more active role from the United States in order to achieve greater participation in the Asia-Pacific cooperation, noting that East Asia (China, Japan and South Korea in particular) has been the region with the highest growth and economic dynamism in recent decades. For the United States, this strategic agreement has been helpful to create a competitive platform in the region, along with countries like Japan and Australia whose priorities include increasing exports to this region of the planet along with the containment of China's design leadership and the establishment of policies for the trans-pacific cooperation (Capling & Ravenhill, 2011), (Jiang, 2013). Meanwhile, Japan has a coordinated presence in both the TPP and the CJK, as a strategy to lead the process of regional cooperation in Asia-Pacific, given the close political, economic and military ties in a greater or lesser extent with the United States, China and South Korea. Through its participation in the TPP, Japan aims at changing its passive position on the trans-Pacific cooperation, given its pioneering role in these initiatives, and being at the level of regional leadership of United States and China (Jiang, 2013).

Regarding ASEAN, this international intergovernmental organization also claims to lead the dynamics of political and economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region by the “Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership” (RCEP), which was established as a platform for regional integration allowing member countries to achieve liberalization of trade and investments, including areas such as intellectual property protection, competitive economic policies, among others. Additionally, this integration project among the major economies of East Asia and Oceania is in a context of accelerated economic growth and development in the region, where ASEAN can maintain its positioning within the trans-pacific cooperation policies (Jiang, 2013).

Briefly, the CJK has a valid institutional agreement on investment to enable the creation of a free trade agreement aimed at favoring an investment environment, to a greater trading operation, and eventually promoting the common growth and prosperity among the three countries in areas such as “clean” energy, electronic technology and heavy industry in general. Indeed, the political negotiations on the possibility of a free trade agreement have become a dialogue mechanism for Japan and South Korea to overcome deficits in exports as a result of the international economic crisis of the late first decade of the XXI century (Jiang, 2013).

The American Pacific has been the geographic area within the Pacific Rim with lower participation in the dynamics of the trans-pacific political and economic cooperation. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ARCO is created as an informal mechanism for consensus and political dialogue among the riparian Latin American countries in the Pacific to enable a dialogue with the Asia-Pacific region regarding economic, social, cultural and environmental issues. Activities aimed at the creation of the Reflection Group, the design of the General Guidelines, the Criteria of Flexibility structuring and the “two-speed integration” begin between 2007 and 2010. Additionally, it is proposed to move through ministerial meetings on strengthening the working groups on trade convergence and integration; Promotion and protection of investments; Infrastructure, logistics and trade facilitation; Economic and technical cooperation to improve competitiveness (Cepeda Ladino, 2012).

Later on, the Pacific Alliance emerges as a deep economic integration within the ARCO framework, with the purpose of fostering the growth of the economies of the member countries and becoming a platform for trading operations with regions such as Asia-Pacific. Since 2011, the measures around the free movement of goods, services, capital and people arise, including the implementation of the Trade Protocol (convergence and harmonization of existing trade agreements) tariff reduction of all goods (intra-regional market access), the search for the integration of capital markets and investment (unification of stock exchanges), and the elimination of visas for citizens of the countries of the regional bloc (labor, professional and academic mobility) (Echebarría & Estevadeordal, 2014). At present, it includes working groups on Institutional Matters; Trade and integration; Expert Committee, the Pacific Alliance Business Council of (CEAP); public procurement; Cooperation; Mine development; Education; Communication strategy; Innovation; Regulatory Improvement; Mobility of persons; Intellectual property; SMEs; Foreign relations; Services and capital; International tax transparency; and Tourism (Francke, 2014).

3. Colombia Trans-Pacific Foreign Policy: Current Status

The concept of “public policy” will be considered as a process involving an action field of the state with its respective lines of action expressed in plans, programs, projects and strategies (Tomassini, 1988). Within the existing literature on public policy, the following approaches listed below can be found.

(Velásquez Gavilanes, 2009) defines the concept of “public policy”:

Public policy is an inclusive process of decisions, actions, inactions, agreements and instruments, conducted by public authorities with the eventual involvement of individuals, and intended to solve or prevent a situation defined as problematic. Public policy is part of a certain environment from which it is nurtured and also aims to modify or maintain (Velásquez Gavilanes, 2009).

(Anderson, 2003) presents the following definition of “public policy”:

A policy is defined as a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. This definition focuses on what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended; differentiates a policy from a decision, which is essentially a specific choice among alternatives; and views policy as something that unfolds over time (Anderson, 2003).

(Muller & Surel, 1998) define “public policy” as follows:

A public policy designates the process by which public action programs are developed and implemented, that is coordinated administrative political instruments at first, around explicit objectives (Muller & Surel, 1998).

(Mény, Thoenig Morata, & Lane, 1992) have this definition of “public policy”:

The action of public authorities within society ... public policy becomes a program of action of a public authority ... the product of the activity of an authority vested of public power and governmental legitimacy (Mény, Thoenig Morata, & Lane, 1992).

(Roth Deubel, 2002) defines the “public policy” as follows:

A set of one or more objectives, means and actions that may be necessary or desirable and which have been treated wholly or partly by a government agency to guide the behavior of the actors and for changing their current situation (Roth Deubel, 2002).

Similarly, the concept of “foreign policy” will be considered as the strategy or the contribution chosen by the national government to achieve its goals in its relations with external or international entities, including decisions of not doing anything in specific cases (Hudson, 2008). In the literature on international relations and foreign policy, some of the following definitions are found.

(Hudson, 2008) defines the “foreign policy” as:

The strategy or approach chosen by the national government to achieve its goals in its relations with external entities. This includes decisions to do nothing. The ob-

servable artefacts of foreign policy; specific actions and words used to influence others in the realm of foreign policy; may include the categorization of such behavior, such as a long conflict-cooperation continuum, which categorizations could be used to construct data, including event data (Hudson, 2008).

(Parker Gumucio, 2004) has the following definition of “foreign policy”:

Foreign policy can be defined as a State policy that defines the relationships and actions that the State intends to develop in terms of its interstate and international relations. It is a first order public policy, the more essential and prominent the greater influence and the hegemony of the state in the international affairs (Parker Gumucio, 2004).

(Carlsnaes, 2013) offers this definition of “foreign policy”:

Foreign policies consist of those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed toward objectives, conditions and actors—both governmental and non-governmental—which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy (Carlsnaes, 2013).

(Petrič, 2013) states about the “foreign policy”:

Foreign policy is an activity of the State with which it fulfills its aims and interests within the international arena... There are many other definitions of foreign policy which are similar in their basic outline in that they are all trying to define a very complex phenomenon in a very condensed form (Petrič, 2013).

In other words, the analysis of foreign policy is a process that generates the evidence needed for the appropriate authority to produce patterns of behavior that define the most appropriate course of action, to face general or specific situations in interstate relations (Hudson, 2005; Hudson, 2008). Overall, the establishment of foreign policy is, in short, that in which the international agenda is built in order to draw the attention of the foreign policy of a country, and the issues or interests included in this agenda will be operationalized and the objectives and foreign policy options will be determined (Tomassini, 1988).

At first, the analysis process of the foreign policy consists of identifying the main issues and opportunities faced by a country in the different areas in which its external relations occur (perception of different actors on the issue, emotional or political reasons, the multidimensional and extended view of the issue, quantification and qualification of both external and Internal context, the influence of interest groups on the definition of the subject) (Carlsnaes, 2013; Hudson, 2005; Hudson, 2008; Tomassini, 1988).

Later, when the objectives are drawn into the process of foreign policy establishment, the work is to determine the available options in terms of courses of action, and their possible pathway to achievement (Carlsnaes, 2013; Hudson, 2008). These alternatives can be chosen from a reduced approach—actions already tested from the state or extended combination of past and innovative actions of possibilities, which constitute an

integral part of the process of analysis and planning of foreign policy (Carlsnaes, 2013). In any case, planning, design and prospectively projection, in terms of diagnosis and retrospective of public policy, is mainly related to the finding of the most essential issues and problems of the foreign policy (Hudson, 2008; Tomassini, 1988).

Due to its presence in the Pacific Ocean, Colombia has had historical ties with this region, including the Chinese migration for the construction of the Panama Canal, the opening of diplomatic relations with Japan (1908), the participation in the Korean War (1950-1953), the establishment of political, economic and cultural ties with East Asia since the late 1970s, in addition to the participation in the main cooperation forums from the last decade of the twentieth century (Cepeda Ladino, 2011). Some of the actions developed while monitoring the activities of regional forums since the late 1980s include the arrival of PBEC and PECC (both in 1994) as part of a strategy for the formal application to join APEC (1995), together with the entrance to FEALAC (1999) as a measure to strengthen the relations of political, economic and cultural cooperation with this region. Likewise, it is important to note the role played in the creation and strengthening of ARCO in 2007 and Pacific Alliance in 2011, acknowledged platforms for political and economic dialogue towards the countries in both the Latin American and Asian shores of the Pacific Rim.

Table 1 shows the figures related to Colombia's trade balance with APEC economies in 2010-2014.

Similarly, the interactions resulting from processes of political-economic cooperation and integration led by Colombia through its foreign policy, may be observed from the contributions made by authors like Carlsnaes (2013), Hudson (2008) and Tomassini (1988), who have pointed out the importance of studying both state and non-state actors, as well as the complexity proposing positions designed by people and groups with multiplicity of perceptions and interests on foreign policy strategic issues. Based on these contributions, the participation of the national government, the private sector and the academia will be discussed from the analysis of foreign policy, understood as a process of public policy, considering the theoretical approach of the actor-specific theory (Hudson, 2005). At this point, the current situation of the establishment of Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim will be reviewed, particularly in the role they have developed as actors and interest groups in relation to international integration strategies in the Asia-Pacific region.

3.1. National Government

In the construction process of the trans-pacific foreign policy of Colombia, the national government is primarily responsible for designing and developing a coordinated strategy for international integration in the Asia-Pacific region, where the agenda of relations has mainly focused on the admission of APEC as a panacea for the trans-pacific politics. Failure to understand the political and economic cooperation dynamics in this region, has not allowed seizing the full potential offered by this geostrategic area for the country, considering the diagnostic and prospective component that can lead by the national government with the support of actors and interested groups involved in this process. Within this series of initiatives of the transpacific cooperation, it is important

Table 1. Trade Balance—Colombia and APEC countries (2010-2014).

Partners	Balance in value in 2010	Balance in value in 2011	Balance in value in 2012	Balance in value in 2013	Balance in value in 2014
World	-862,979	2,278,694	2,185,764	-559,327	-9,232,798
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Aggregation	-1,642,244	-5,115,020	-5,500,986	-11,014,612	-18,715,250
United States of America	6,611,464	8,285,197	8,076,122	2,264,472	-3,785,584
China	-3,510,804	-6,187,379	-6,221,609	-5,260,617	-6,035,250
Peru	345,591	372,328	670,134	403,752	-18,184
Chile	170,422	1,303,375	1,234,839	667,794	59,674
Mexico	-3,218,459	-5,354,089	-5,527,072	-4,632,152	-4,358,216
Canada	-291,316	-345,329	-665,726	-611,075	-499,847
Korea, Republic of	-567,839	-957,829	-952,131	-1,066,413	-980,795
Japan	-645,585	-909,746	-1,293,860	-1,090,949	-1,104,542
Singapore	334,896	169,601	291,320	-51,117	85,702
Russian Federation	-87,379	-145,969	-279,794	-187,881	-290,276
Hong Kong, China	-9480	-19,844	330,078	-23,956	-17,734
Australia	-2247	-15,732	-12,923	-16,094	5252
Taipei	-151,178	-389,858	-509,048	-517,050	-579,716
Thailand	-349,289	-380,557	-294,393	-264,765	-305,821
Malaysia	-88,075	-200,276	17,170	-91,622	-201,868
Viet Nam	-84,964	-158,422	-210,878	-297,161	-421,252
New Zealand	538	2314	6952	271	2242
Philippines	-3381	-14,433	-31,563	-34,889	-48,357
Indonesia	-95,261	-168,479	-128,615	-205,338	-220,691
Papua New Guinea	3	51	11	130	18
Brunei Darussalam	99	56	0	48	-5

Source: ITC calculations based on UN COMTRADE statistics.

to note the participation of the national government as a social actor who has intended to guide and lead the establishment of the foreign policy in order to make concrete efforts for a coordinated strategy between the President of the Republic along with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Industry and Tourism (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, 2015*).

Its “roadmap” within the insertion in the Asia-Pacific region has focused on the diversification of relations with the countries of the region, especially those in East Asia and Oceania, as shown in the annals of bilateral and multilateral behavior of the country in the region (*Barbosa, Posada & Serrano, 2011*). The key points of the strategy include the strengthening and extension of political dialogue and channels of cooperation, cultural exchange between Colombia and the countries of the region, ensuring

compliance with commitments, along with the active participation in Forums and institutional arrangements for cooperation and regional integration. Its coordination is done by the Foreign Ministry from the Department of Asia, Africa and Oceania, and its objectives include consolidating the bilateral strategic relations with the momentum of the integration process, the defense and promotion of national interests in the multilateral arena, and the diversification of relations and the international agenda. For the Asia-Pacific region, the relations agenda focuses on the coordination and articulation of integration initiatives in the region in the areas of economic and trade, political and cultural cooperation, to ensure a comprehensive strategy to seize opportunities in this part of the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, 2015).

The Colombian government intends to lead almost exclusively the strengthening of the relations with the countries of the Pacific Rim, understanding the economic cooperation from an intergovernmental policy coordination approach in specific areas. This situation becomes evident in the active participation of working groups in forums such as AP and FEALAC, along with the invitations to attend some APEC working groups. With the closing and re-opening of embassies, consulates and trade offices in Asia and Oceania, during the administrations of Pastrana (1998-2002), Uribe (2002-2006, 2006-2010) and Santos Calderon (2010-2014 2014-current), the changing importance of the Asia-Pacific region within the Colombian foreign policy becomes evident. On one hand, the bi-regional actions of FEALAC and the announcements of lifting the moratorium on APEC (2007, 2010, 2012), and on the other, the initial institutional dynamism in ARCO and AP, have significantly influenced the course change on these foreign policy key issues (García, 2011). Regarding economic cooperation, the national government (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism in interinstitutional coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) has promoted the vision of macroeconomic adjustment policies of liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment. So far, the work has been done in PBEC and PECC, although it will be essential to join APEC in order to strengthening these perceptions on trans-pacific cooperation¹. Regarding political cooperation, and as a complementary way with the cooperation, the stage of regional forums is suitable for the negotiation of intergovernmental policy, and this idea is beginning to gauge the national government to strengthen its capacity of “final decision maker” in foreign policy decisions. The perception regarding political cooperation has been based on the content of the annual meetings of government and business leaders from the region, becoming a space for dialogue to informally discuss key issues of the actual international politics (human security, anti-terrorism) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, 2015).

Within the establishment of the foreign policy there are many “players” within the government, which may or may not have unified visions and languages on these issues. For this reason, it is more relevant to size the national government as a heterogeneous social actor in which different entities are interacting from multiple perspectives. One example has been the intention of strengthening political, trade and cultural relations, which should be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (García, 2011). How-

¹Interview with Esteban Restrepo Uribe, Advisor of the Department of Asia, Africa and Oceania of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

ever, the complexity of the state allocation of international roles is leading to risks such as lack of coordination between Foreign Service officers and the “artificial” separation between the political and economic dimensions of the Colombian foreign policy.

In short, the participation of the national government in the development of Colombia’s foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim understood as public policy, has been articulated through the design of a coordinated strategy for international integration in this part of the world in which an agenda of foreign relations on specific topics has been planned. Perceptions built on cooperation and trans-pacific integration in terms of coordination and negotiation of intergovernmental policy, have shown that the national government, through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Industry and Tourism can play a leadership role in achieving foreign policy objectives proposed, based on the opportunities offered by the Asia-Pacific region.

3.2. Private Sector

In the construction of the trans-pacific foreign policy of Colombia, the private company—more specifically trade associations and chambers of commerce—constitute one of the few actors and interest groups that have participated in designing and developing this governmental strategy for the Asia-Pacific international integration. As the national government, the private sector has focused its attention mainly on the efforts to join APEC), however the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI) is focusing exclusively on joining APEC, while the Chamber of Commerce of Bogotá (CCB) has been analyzing the whole spectrum of the transpacific cooperation system. Their lack of coordination and duplication of activities has not allowed to make good use of all potentials and capabilities offered by this region for the diversification of the trans-pacific relations agenda.

The private sector, seen as a heterogeneous social actor has had its role in this process through a recent attempt to articulate a strategy among trade associations (ANDI) and chambers of commerce (mainly CCB Bogotá) in order to have a common vision on issues such as trade facilitation, investment and business with different Asia-Pacific entrepreneurs. The work conducted in order to lead and actively advise recent administrations in building a foreign policy of this region, is evident in the growing participation of interest groups with business lobbying capacity to influence the national government as “final decision maker” regarding foreign policy decisions (Ardila Ardila, Montilla, & Garay Vargas, 2009).

In 2006, the ANDI opened the Focal Point Asia Office in order to guide and advise Colombian entrepreneurs in starting commercial approaches in the countries of this region, and thus contributing to the economic growth of the country’s integration strategy into the world’s economy. Recently, their strategies are linked to the ideal of supporting a multidimensional observatory in the region, disclosing contacts and opportunities for entrepreneurs, facilitating business activities for their members, in addition to supporting the national processes aimed at achieving the economic integration of Colombia in the Asia-Pacific region². The ANDI has had a “business diplomacy” based on the lobby of its own interest groups, participating as an active actor in the

²Interview with Sandra Salamanca Rosas, Asia Focal Point Director of ANDI.

Colombian foreign policy process. The fact of leading the involvement of some national businessmen in meetings of the CEAP and the APEC CEO Summit shows its commitment in government strategies related to the diversification of trading partners, where economic growth in Asia is a key driver to participate in these political-economic dynamics (National Association of Industrialists, 2011).

Regarding the CCB, it is quite relevant to mention the creation of the Colombian Pacific Foundation in 2005, which was founded as an organization to support and promote trade between Colombia and the Asia-Pacific countries. Its background is in the Colombian Committee of the Pacific Basin Economic Council—PBEC Colombia (Chamber of Commerce of Bogotá & Pacific Economic Basin Council, 1991), and currently supports the business and academic community in the country, through information and business advice, studies and publications, business contacts, business conferences, courses and seminars. On August 2011, this work was consolidated with the launch of a joint strategy to strengthening trade ties in Bogotá (City-Region) with the economies of the Asia-Pacific region. The CCB's proposal focuses on the following points: access to reliable data of the economic status of the region, support to the participation of business groups in forums such as APEC, FEALAC, PECC, PBEC, ASEAN and TPP besides working with embassies and trade offices to identify business opportunities³.

In both cases, the construction process of the Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim began to materialize in the middle of the last decade after the designation made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the ANDI with the purpose of representing part of the country's business sector in the APEC CEO Summit⁴. After the creation of the Non-Governmental Group for the Coordination of International Relations (CRI) in August 2008, and further participation in the APEC meetings since 2012, the ANDI gains interest as a trade association with the ability of influencing the vision of the transpacific cooperation developed from the country, and therefore, in structuring the agenda of relations with this region (Roldán Pérez, 2011). Both the CCB and the ANDI are regarded as supporting entities in this process and have a clear perception about the regional cooperation in which economic issues such as seeking trade and investment liberalization and facilitation are priority, along with network consolidation with entities in East Asia and Oceania. However, they differ in the capacity of participating in the foreign policy decision-making, to the extent that by being a trade association representing the economic interests of its members, ANDI has become its representative while dealing with government decision makers. Its influence on this process has been more relevant due to its experience as stakeholders within the Colombian foreign policy, with the support of the opening and internationalization of the economy since the 1990s, including the insertion strategy in the Asia Pacific region. For its part, the CCB is a chamber of commerce that has focused on advising various governmental entities and civil actors in activities such as providing information on policy options⁵. Its participation in this process has been conditioned to factors such as its organization

³Interview with Maria Monica Conde Barragan, International Business Director of the CCB.

⁴Interview with Esteban Restrepo Uribe, Advisor of the Asia, Africa and Oceania Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

⁵Interview with Maria Monica Conde Barragan, International Business Director of the CCB.

and internal actions, along with the relationships controlled by the national government as the “last political decision maker” (Ardila Ardila, Montilla, & Garay Vargas, 2009).

In brief, the participation of private sectors—namely the ANDI and the CCB—in the construction process of the Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim has been developed from the recent “autonomous” international strategies in which the foreign affairs agenda has focused on the economic, commercial and business issues. In this sense, the perceptions of both entities regarding the transpacific economic cooperation and through their influence as stakeholders, enable the establishment of a joint and coordinated strategy with the national government—and the academia—aiming at availing the economic and political opportunities of the Asia-Pacific region.

4. Conclusion: Foresight Guidelines

Observing the construction process of the Colombian foreign policy towards the Pacific Rim, understood as a public policy in which different actors and interest groups participate, has evidenced the efforts made to date to overcome the existing delay around the establishment of a joint and coordinated strategy for the international integration in the Pacific Rim, which allows to have a broad agenda of external relations with this region characterized by a high degree of political and economic interdependence within their cooperation dynamics and regional integration.

Regarding the economic and political cooperation with the Asian and Latin American Pacific Rim, it has been useful to review the extent to which the business sector has contributed in this process as stakeholders, as well as observing the academic and university sector through its cooperation and consultancy hired by government agencies. Considering the vision of economic cooperation as the main axis of trans-Pacific relations, the national government has defined the scope of its actions, which have been conditioned to the participation in the working groups in the forums. Likewise, the private sector has been characterized by strengthening this government point of view by seeking direct contacts with counterparts in the region. Similarly, the academy has also been monitoring these activities in order to give feedback to these ideas from other industries. Regarding political cooperation, the national government has been the main social actor developing this view, considering forums such as AP and APEC as scenarios for informal political dialogue with leaders of the region. Some indirect hints have been found in the private company regarding political issues within regional cooperation, more exactly in the geostrategic and geopolitical sizing of the Pacific Rim. At this point, the academy has tracked these perceptions through studies conducted by students and teachers from different universities, and a fresh impetus to the creation of a Centre for Studies and Thinking on the Asia-Pacific region has been planned in Valle del Cauca.

Thanks to the contributions of foreign policy analysis, it has been possible to size the interactions of state actors (national government) and non-state (private enterprise and academia), which have different strategies to promote their interests and influence the national government as “the last political decision taker”. The latter continues to maintain the centrality of the decision-making structure, but increasingly the business and

academic sectors are strengthening their presence in this process. Beyond the organizational and bureaucratic differences between entities, the aim of coordinating joint government strategies in the Asia-Pacific region persists. Regarding the private sector, in addition to its traditional trade union power, it has been possible to appreciate the use of public relations including the organization of international events on the subject, finding direct links to trade associations and chambers of commerce and even governments in the region. On the side of the academy, there is still a joint action required to overcome its historical-structural weakness in order to become a think tank able to actively participate in government decisions.

Finally, guidance on possible strategies that actors involved in this process could take during the second decade of the century, is related to the identification of the following suggestions applied to the Asian case: institutional capacity building, human resources training, permanent official information creation, high-level diplomatic negotiations, broadening the agenda, economic diplomacy, increased diplomatic presence, human resources training, sustainable development, internal and regional dialogue, preference towards FEALAC (García, 2011). For the national government, the purpose is to be able to channeling perceptions on trans-pacific cooperation of the private enterprise and the Colombian Academy, which from their perspectives contribute to the social construction of the perception of political and economic dynamics in the region. The challenge is aimed at focusing on the search for a “centralized coordination” of international duties at the Foreign Ministry, through the creation of the Bureau for the Asia-Pacific region, as well as a qualified foreign service specialized in Asian issues. Regarding the private enterprise, it is necessary to strengthen the role of interest groups in which their points of views become unified within trade associations and chambers of commerce in the country. Because of its background and experience, ANDI and the CCB can become coordinator and interlocutor along with the national government and the academia in trade policy issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Its importance will lie in combining economic and political dimensions of the transpacific cooperation, and thus meeting the current and future dynamics in the region. Finally, it is required to unite researchers from Colombian universities, in order to strengthen a community of internationalists able to take a proactive participation in decision-making in foreign policy. For the Asia-Pacific region, both the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana of Cali and EAFIT University can become the institutions that bring together scholars to discuss the current and prospective situation in the region, and thus having agreed criteria to enable influence the decision-making structure focused mainly in the national government.

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