Chile's (Inter)National Identities: Framing the Relations with Bolivia and Peru

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National identities play a significant role in Latin American international relations. They affect the ways in which policy-makers view themselves and others, as well as influencing the ways in which their policies are 'received' abroad. In this way, identities create opportunities and constraints for foreign policy-making, framing the relations between Latin American countries. The author argues that, since 1990, three main patterns of Chilean identity recently affected the country's relations with its northern neighbours Bolivia and Peru: a 'neoliberal identity', a 'legalistic identity' and a 'progressive identity'. These three patterns of identity have created opportunities for cooperation as well as causes for conflict.

Keywords: Bolivia, Chile, international relations, national identities, Peru, social constructivism.

Contemporary Latin American international relations have generally been studied from a state-centred perspective, usually making use of realist or liberal approaches (Bernal-Meza, 2005). On the one hand, attempts towards regional integration have produced a booming literature, mostly liberal, on its opportunities and constraints (Bulmer-Thomas, 2001; Mora and Hey, 2003). On the other, Latin American states continue to guard their sovereignty 'jealously', as Dykman (2006:154) puts it. As a result, much of the literature on relations between Latin American countries seem to be on trade relations or state-level conflicts such as border disputes (Pope Atkins, 2001; Domínguez et al., 2003).

Recently, though, other aspects of Latin American international relations are beginning to be addressed. In particular social constructivists have focused on the roles that collective identities play in foreign policy-making (see for instance Lafer, 2000; Colacrai and Lorenzini, 2005; Kahhat, 2006). Even though this perspective is gaining ground, this area of study is still largely embryonic. Also, it tends to focus on domestic foreign policy-making exclusively. The question of how collective identities affect the *interactions* between Latin American states remains so far unexplored.

This article analyses the ways in which between 2000 and 2008 Chilean national identities have produced constraints and opportunities for the interaction between Chile on the one hand and Bolivia and Peru on the other. It will do so by determining three

dominant currents of Chilean identity that have become influential in its international affairs with its northern neighbours: a neoliberal identity, a legalistic identity and a progressive identity, which in different ways have created opportunities as well as constraints for Chile in its interaction with Bolivia and Peru.

The case of Chile and its northern neighbours is relevant as, since the restoration of democracy in 1990, relations between Chile and its northern neighbours have remained problematic. Especially in the period 2000–2006, when Bolivia and Peru were led by relatively unstable and weak governments, anti-Chilean popular sentiments in both countries strongly affected their relations with Chile. These developments cannot be fully understood by adopting a realist or a liberal analytical perspective. Even in moments where Chilean governments have been ideologically in tune with their Bolivian and/or Peruvian counterparts, and the countries shared strong economic and political interests, relations have remained problematic at best. Many scholars point out that national identities and idiosyncrasies, often constructed around historical traumas such as the War of the Pacific (1879–1883), have played a crucial role in these tensions (Rehren, 2004; Zalles, 2007). However, they have not been studied systematically yet. Before entering into the specifics of these dynamics, this article will turn to the notion of national identities and the ways they affect international politics.

National and International Identities

Taking as a starting point Benedict Anderson's (1983) point that national identities are 'imagined communities', it is important to stress the social character of their construction and reconstruction (Hopf, 1998; Schimmelpfennig, 2000). Like people, states can interact on the basis of national identities, which themselves are affected in the process (Wendt, 1992). For the analysis of this phenomenon, Whitman's (1998) concept of 'international identity' will be used. International identity can be defined as the ways in which national identities affect a state's external relations (Manners and Whitman, 2003; Manners, 2008). This includes not only the ways in which identities affect foreign policy-making, but also the ways in which external and internal perceptions of national identities come into play in international relations. As a consequence, the concept of international identity is a conceptualisation of how societies as a whole interact based on their identities. I argue that this takes place in three ways: through presence (which refers to the ways a country is perceived by others), foreign-policy making (how national identities affect a country's foreign policies), and foreign policy reception (how national identities affect a country's responses to external policies).

Presence refers to the international impact a country can have without actually doing anything. It is therefore not a consequence of purposive action, but rather that of simply being (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006). On the one hand, presence is based on the material existence of a state: its size, population, geographical location, the size of its economy, the strength of its military power, etc. These can generate perceptions and expectations abroad about the motives, actions and possible reactions of that state. For instance, Chile's geographical location, 'locked in' by the Andes mountains to the east and deserts to the north, has given the country an historic orientation towards the Pacific Ocean, 'looking away' from the other Latin American countries. This has had a significant impact on how Chile's neighbours perceive the country (Subercaseaux, 1964; Fernandois, 2005). On the other hand, presence has a non-material side. This can derive from the unintended consequences of its domestic policy-making (Bretherton and

Vogler, 2006). For instance, as will be seen, when a state such as Chile opts for an open market model instead of a protectionist approach, this may have significant influence on its foreign relations, even when that was not intended. Additionally, presence includes the perceptions and expectations that are generated by previous interactions between countries.

The second way in which national identities create a country's international identities is through the process of foreign policy-making. Policy-makers do not exclusively act out of ideological or pragmatic motivations: they need to relate to domestic 'shared understandings' of what is proper behaviour. As a consequence, patterns of national identity function as normative structures that enable and constrain the actions of foreign policy-makers (Risse, 2004). Policy-makers are enabled by these normative structures because they lend meaning to their actions, provide them reasons for policy-making, and allow them to create roles that are considered legitimate by the public. Simultaneously, normative structures constrain the actions of foreign policy-makers by setting limits to legitimate behaviour. These constraints are particularly clear when looking at how foreign policy-makers justify, defend or legitimise their actions. (Hollis and Smith, 1990; Hopf, 1998). In short, foreign policy-makers may not be directly motivated by the constraints and opportunities that national identities create, but they surely will take them into account.

Finally, foreign policy-makers are foreign policy-receivers as well, having to acknowledge, interpret, and react upon the actions of external actors. However, as Hollis and Smith (1990) argue, the lack of information that foreign policy-makers have to deal with when it comes to assessing the motives, meanings and intentions of their external counterparts abroad makes it extremely difficult to interpret them rationally. As they lack the information that would allow them to perfectly 'calculate' the way in which they should react towards external actions, elements such as shared understandings and normative structures come into play in that assessment.

If international identities affect international relations through presence, foreign policy-making, and foreign policy-reception, the question is warranted of how these interact. As will be seen, some identities 'come to the light' clearly in policy-reception, while others stand out in presence or policy-formation. Intuitively, it would make sense to expect identities based on superiority discourses to affect policy-making more than identities that are not based on competitive logics. However, it is difficult to place these interactions in one single explanatory scheme. First of all, the relation between international identities and their influence on foreign relations is largely dependent on their foreign reception, making them historically and geographically contingent. As a result, we can not connect international identities with presence, policy-formation and policy-reception without taking foreign responses into consideration. Second, even though national identities certainly affect the interaction between states, they do not explain individual policy outcomes. Rather, they create opportunities for and set limits to legitimate behaviour of policy-makers (Hollis and Smith, 1990). This investigation therefore seeks to analyse the ways in which national identities have come into play in international interaction, and the ways in which they have produced opportunities and constraints for Chile's 'actorness' towards Bolivia and Chile.

Chile's International Identities

The case of Chile is particularly interesting for this study because, in contrast to many other countries in the region, its patterns of national identity, usually ethereal and difficult to assess, have become relatively salient. This is the result of five historical particularities that have set Chile apart from most of the Latin American countries.

To begin with, already in the colonial period (1530–1810), Chile's lack of valuable minerals, the near-absence of slavery, and the ongoing struggle against the unconquered indigenous populations in the south of the country have produced patterns of identity and (political) culture that contrast sharply with its Andean neighbours, which held large indigenous slave populations, whose economies were based on the extraction of minerals and who found themselves close to the centres of colonial rule (Eyzaguirre, 1974; Góngora, 1986).

Second, and partly as a result of the above, Chile's institutional order has remained relatively stable since the early nineteenth century. This does not imply that there have been no dramatic events in its history; however, in the context of Latin America such breaks (such as the 1973 military coup) have been few, and many authors have pointed out that the strength of the country's institutional order has been a defining element of Chilean identity (Godoy, 1976; Góngora, 1986). Furthermore, it has served to bind the Chilean people by providing them with a sense of 'exceptionalism', as most Chileans look at their country as a beacon of stability amidst a rather chaotic set of neighbouring countries (Larraín, 2006).

Third, the Chilean population has been relatively homogeneous in both ethnic and cultural terms, which stimulated the process of national identity formation. In contrast to many other countries in the region, the country does not possess a large indigenous minority (Góngora, 1986). Moreover, the country's indigenous population was perceived in more positive and inclusive terms than in the neighbouring countries, amongst other things as a result of their successful resistance to colonisation up to the 1880s (Palacios, 1988 [1904]).

Fourth, at the socio-economic level, twentieth-century Chilean society saw relatively little of the radical and structural exclusion of certain social groups that have characterised other Latin American countries (Larraín, 2006). The rise of the middle classes and the success of social democratic parties in the early twentieth century proved able to mitigate the most extreme forms of social exclusion, thus contributing to the formation and reconstruction of relatively stable and broadly shared patterns of national identity.

Finally, in comparison to most Latin American countries, Chilean elites have been relatively cohesive. This cohesion was already visible from the first half of the nineteenth century, as they accepted the rules of the game for political action; this had to be exercised from within existing institutions, respecting the institutional order, and a relatively high level of pragmatism when dealing with political differences (Collier, 2003). Even while there have been dramatic intra-elite clashes (such as the 1891 civil war), elites never became as dispersed and fragmented as in many other Latin American countries (Silva, 2008). As a consequence, elite-driven discourses of national identity have been relatively inclusive and complementary rather than contradictory. For instance, as Larraín (2001) shows, discourses based on racial, religious or military identities, which essentially contested one another, coexisted and at times even merged.

The cohesion of Chile's elites is directly linked to the important role played by the state. Authors such as Góngora (1986) and Jocelyn-Holt (1997) have pointed out that in Chile the state has been crucial in the formation of national identities, particularly

through its institutions, practices (especially warfare) and discourses. At the same time, changes in the state have produced fundamental changes of national identities. As a consequence, national identities are very closely tied to the state. As a consequence, political elites, making use of the power of the state, have been able to set in motion far-fetching projects that have profoundly affected patterns of national identity (Van der Ree, 2007).

As a result of the above, Chile has known a favourable climate for the formation of strong patterns of collective and even national identity. This focus of this study will be three identities that have proved to be particularly influential in Chile's relations with Bolivia and Peru: a neo-liberal identity, a legalistic identity and a progressive identity.

Chile's Neo-Liberal Identity: Cause of Cooperation or Conflict?

Neo-liberalism as a constitutive element of Chilean identity is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back to the implementation of a neo-liberal economic model since the mid-1970s, during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990). This does not mean, however, that it has no historical precedent. Between the 1870s and the 1920s, Chile based its model of development on a strict adherence to economic liberalism and free market values, with a particular focus on the export of primary products. In fact, this neo-liberal phase *avant la lettre* received similar critiques to those that Pinochet's project would later provoke: a dogmatic approach to free trade, with an obsessive emphasis on material modernisation and an almost complete negligence of the negative social consequences of the model (Encina, 1912; Pinto, 1962).

Being in place for only three decades, the question is warranted of how the neo-liberal model has become such a prominent element of Chilean identity. This is mainly a result of the radical and all-encompassing nature of the neo-liberal reforms, affecting Chileans' identities in significant ways. Collective identities, which had been particularly strong in Chile during the 1960s, became highly individualised. A deep sense of citizenship made place for consumerism, while the previously strong identification with the state made a place for an orientation towards the market (Moulian, 1997; Silva, 2004; Tironi, 2007). As the 2002 report of the United Nations Development Programme in Chile showed, the neo-liberal model had affected Chilean patterns of identity profoundly, particularly in the dissociation of traditional values, the individualisation of risks and opportunities, and the need to deal with increasing insecurity (PNUD, 2002). So even though many Chileans do not identify positively with neo-liberalism, it certainly has affected and created their collective identities.

Chile's neo-liberal international identity has a material as well as a discursive side. Materially, it is based on the success of Chile's open economy model. This has given the country a regional presence through the relative wealth it has produced, as well as its stable-yet-dynamic markets, which are interesting to foreign investors. This economic presence has been enhanced through Chilean foreign policy, which has prioritised economic relations with its neighbouring countries (Fermandois, 2005). At the state level, this strategy was welcomed by the Bolivian governments of Sánchez de Lozada (2002–2003) and Carlos Mesa (2003–2005) and the Peruvian government of Toledo (2001–2006), all of whom followed liberal policy lines. One of the highlights of Chile's strategy has been the signing of free trade agreements between Chile and the European Union (2002), the United States (2003) and even Peru (2006). Being the fourth largest economy in South America, with an exceptionally dynamic and open

structure, combined with a very active foreign policy in this field, Chile has been able to construct a considerable economic presence in the region (CEPAL, 2007).

Discursively, Chile's neo-liberal identity is based on the imagery of Chile's economic success since the late 1970s. The imagery of Chile as a 'model country' was first put forward during the dictatorship of Pinochet, heralding the achievements of the neo-liberal model that had been implemented. The country's political and economic elites mounted a powerful discourse that portrayed Chile as a 'jaguar', a 'Silent Revolution' and as a 'miracle'. This discourse was maintained after the return to democracy, this time including the successes in poverty reduction in the exaltation of Chile's free market successes (Larraín, 2006). Chile also became a showcase for international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which gladly used the country's achievements to promote their free-market policies, proclaiming the Chilean 'model' to be an example for the region. Thus, in public, economic and even political discourse, Chile came to be represented as a model for the region (Nef, 2003). As a consequence, the discourse of Chile's neo-liberal identity fortified the already strong economic presence in the region (Fernandois, 2005). It also created new opportunities for foreign policy-making in the form of trade agreements and the promotion of exports. As in the period 1939–1973, when the success of the inward-looking strategies of CORFO bolstered new roles for the Chilean state, now the success of the neo-liberal model created foreign policy opportunities for the governments of the Concertación (Rodríguez, 2006).

Despite Chile's economic presence, strengthened by its foreign policy and discourses on its success, the country's neo-liberal international identity did not help to improve its relations with Bolivia and Peru. Both countries, run by liberal governments between 2000 and 2006, faced powerful opposition from indigenous movements, labour unions, and other social movements resisting globalisation and neo-liberalism. This opposition made use of anti-Chilean discourses on the basis of Chile's neo-liberal identity, pressuring their governments into steering away from deepening cooperation. In these discourses, Chile was portrayed as an imperialist and aggressive actor and as an enemy of the Bolivian and Peruvian people, based on three interlinked interpretations of Chilean identity.

To begin with, Chile's neo-liberal identity was interpreted, as well as discursively reconstructed, as a form of historic imperialism, by identifying it with the period of export-oriented growth the country experienced in the period 1870–1930. By linking the two periods, Chile's current-day neo-liberalism was placed in the light of its nineteenth-century expansionism, which lied at the root of anti-Chilean nationalism in both countries. Particularly the War of the Pacific (1879–1883), in which Chile proved victorious over both Bolivia and Peru, is still an important source of *anti-Chilenismo*. Peru not only saw Chile take possession of a significant part of its territory, but also had to accept how, during the following decades, the country became wealthy on the basis of the nitrate-exploitation of that area. The same went for Bolivia, which additionally lost its access to the Pacific Ocean. In both countries, the humiliation of this experience has developed into a powerful identity marker that has had significant influence on their relations with Chile for more than a century. In this case, it has contributed to the interpretation of Chile's neo-liberal identity as being imperialist.

By linking Chile's free-trade boom of the nineteenth century, the War of the Pacific, and the country's neo-liberal identity, nationalist movements, the media, and political elites in Bolivia and Peru have created discourses that have become widely popular, portraying Chilean investments as a continuation of nineteenth-century Chilean

expansion. For instance, Ollanta Humala, a nationalist and former Peruvian presidential candidate in the 2005 elections, put it in the following terms:

Were are an invaded country; economically, by Chilean capital, and physically as well [since the War of the Pacific, GvdR]. I want to put a stop to Chilean investments. What does it mean to be anti-Chilean? To be a good Peruvian, nothing else. (Humala 2007: 73)

In the case of Bolivia, a similar association has been made between Chile's neo-liberal identity and the loss of access to the sea in the War of the Pacific. During the so-called 'gas wars' in 2003, a government proposal to export Bolivian gas to the United States through Chilean territory met with furious opposition from opposition parties, labour unions, and indigenous groups (Reid, 2007). In this conflict, which eventually led to the ousting of Bolivian President Sánchez de Lozada, the opposition discursively mixed Chile's neo-liberal identity with negative images of US imperialism and the defeat in the War of the Pacific. Bolivian newspaper headlines read 'No deals with Chile without an exit to the sea', while protestors wore placards stating that 'not even a drop of a Bolivian rat's blood will go to Chile', echoing a Bolivian high official's claim that 'not even a molecule of oil' will be sold to Chile (St John, 2004).

Second, Chile's neo-liberal identity has been interpreted by its Andean neighbours as a form of economic exploitation. This interpretation emphasised the negative effects for Bolivia and Peru of trade with Chile. In the case of Bolivia, the commonly used argument was that Chile, while blocking Bolivia from economic development by not granting it access to the sea, is additionally hurting the Bolivian economy through trade. This is the consequence of the trade balance between the countries, which is extremely uneven, and in favour of Chile: in 2002, Bolivian exports to Chile mounted to US\$ 23 million, while Chilean exports to Bolivia soared over US\$ 140 (Milet, 2004a).

For Peru, the economic argument came to the forefront when the debates started on the signing of a free-trade agreement with Chile, in 2005. The fear of Chilean investments increasingly taking over key sectors of the Peruvian economy produced a discourse on the 'Chilenisation of the Peruvian economy'. It focused on the dominance of Chilean investors in the Peruvian market and the subsequent drainage of capitals to Chile. It even included a negative analysis of Peru's military position towards Chile. When the influential Peruvian television programme *Hoy con Hildebrandt* dedicated an entire show to the 'Chilenisation' of Peru's economy, the only live studio guest was a military expert, insisting that Chilean investments were secretly weakening Peru's military forces. Linking Chilean investments to military rivalry in this way, the popular images of Chilean aggression were effectively reinforced. In 2004, for instance, 60 per cent of the Peruvian population wanted to end all Chilean investments in their country (Milet, 2004b).

Finally, Chile's neo-liberal identity has been interpreted as a form of 'cultural plunder'. Both in Bolivia and Peru, Chile became increasingly perceived as a *robaculturas*, a 'culture thief', appropriating national symbols and traditions and exploiting them for its own gain. This imagery has been provoked and sustained by a series of incidents, each of which seemed to reinforce the kleptomaniacal nature of Chile's politics, business and culture. In 2002, for instance, a debate arose on the liquor called Pisco (Titingier, 2005). Originally a Peruvian drink, it had become very popular in Chile, where it had been locally produced since the War of the Pacific, and on a much larger scale than in Peru. When in 2002 Chile opposed a Peruvian attempt to patent Pisco for the US market (most of the Pisco in the US comes from Chile), the Peruvian media were outraged,

accusing Chile of theft of Peru's national heritage. The discourse was soon picked up in the political realm, where Pisco was declared national patrimony, which quickly complicated Chile's substantial Pisco exports.

A similar conflict arose recently over the origins of the potato, after a statement from Chile's Minister for Agriculture that 'few people know that 99 per cent of the world's potatoes have some type of genetic link to potatoes in Chile'. This remark provoked outraged responses from, amongst others, Peru's foreign minister, asserting that the potato is, and always has been, Peruvian (Romero, 2008). In Bolivia, a comparable wave of outrage broke out over the *charango*, an indigenous instrument, after the Chilean government had presented U2 singer Bono with one (Peger, 2006).

Linked to this image of 'cultural plunder' is the perception of Chilean 'arrogance' towards Peru. This perception, which is held widely among the Peruvian population but is simultaneously reinforced 'from above' through nationalistic discourses of the country's political elites, is based on the above-mentioned Chilean discourses of being a 'successful', 'model' and 'modern' country, which will soon lose the status of a developing country. However, in Peru, Chile's success stories are generally interpreted as 'arrogance' or 'superiority discourses', putting down the Peruvians as backwards, uncivilised, and poor (Milet, 2004b). For instance, tensions between both countries flared up in 2005 when Chilean-owned airline LAN-Peru showed an in-flight movie that portrayed Peru as a very poor country, with filthy streets and homeless people urinating in them (*Economist*, 2005). The Peruvian outrage over this proof of 'Chilean arrogance' eventually had significant political and economic consequences for Chile. Even though the movie was directly withdrawn, the airline apologised, and the responsible managers were fired, the Peruvian Congress implemented a series of punitive measures towards Chile, amongst others banning its investments from port and airports (*Economist*, 2005). While among the Chilean population these debates did not stir up significant interest, the country's government was painfully aware how damaging this perception of arrogance and superiority was to its relations with Peru. When in 2007 the national television station TVN planned to broadcast a documentary on the War of the Pacific called *Epopeya* (Epic), the government directly pressured the station into postponing it for several months, in order to gain time for damage control (Muñoz, 2007).

Chilean Legalistic Identity: Keeping the Peace?

Chile's propensity towards legalism has been widely recognised, both inside and outside of the country (Bernal-Meza, 2005; Colacrai and Lorenzini, 2005). Dating back to the nineteenth century, this aspect of Chilean identity is reflected by a deep respect for institutions, a proclivity for working within existing institutional frameworks and a strong inclination towards formal arrangements. Being a relatively rare characteristic in the context of Latin America, where institutions are notoriously weak and contested, Chile's legalism has become a strong identity marker in the region (Larrain, 2001).

There are many ways in which Chilean legalistic identity expresses itself. Godoy (1976) emphasises the low levels of corruption in the country, the general respect for order, acceptance of authority, and the historical stability of political institutions. Ayres focuses on Chile's 'virtual obsession with constitutionalism', which has acquired an 'aura of the fetishistic' (Ayres, 1973: 507). Several outside observers have been surprised to find that Santiago bookstands generally sell copies of new as well as existing legislation.

Today, Chile's legalistic identity is mainly reflected in the country's political stability and its formalistic approach towards cooperation and problem solving.

In two ways, Chile's legalistic identity has produced opportunities for its relations in the region. First, its institutional stability has given the country a reputation for reliability and continuity (Bernal-Meza, 2005). This has made the country an attractive partner for cooperation and trade. Domestically, the strength of the rule of law makes it a safe market for foreign investments. First, Chile has a reputation internationally for its strict adherence to treaties and agreements, thus creating an 'institutional presence' that strengthens its regional position (Fernandois, 2005). Second, Chile has been a very active promoter of the international cooperation in the region. This has been fortified by the country's prominent participation in international organisations. Not coincidentally, the region's most prominent international institution, the Organisation of American States (OAS), has been led since 2005 by Chilean former Vice-president José Miguel Insulza—despite resistance from both Bolivia and Peru.

While Chile's legalistic international identity has created opportunities for the its international relations, it has simultaneously complicated them—particularly in the case of Bolivia and Peru, and the territorial claims both countries hold on Chile. Bolivia's claim dates back to the War of the Pacific and concerns the country's loss of access to the Pacific Ocean. Having formally accepted the existing situation in 1904, when both countries signed a treaty confirming the status quo, nationalist discourses on the 'return of the access to the sea' have regularly emerged, and have often been initiated 'from above' by the Bolivian state (Burgos, 2005). The conflict has flared up repeatedly, leading for instance to the breaking off of diplomatic relations between the countries in 1978, but has gained particular salience around the 100-year anniversary of the peace treaty in 2004. The combination of the anniversary, external support for Bolivia's claim, for instance by Hugo Chávez who proclaimed he wanted to 'take a swim in the Bolivian sea' (Oppenheimer, 2004: 7), and the weak political position of President Carlos Mesa culminated into a series of crises between the two countries that seriously affected their relations.

In the case of Peru, the conflict revolves around the demarcation of the maritime borders. In 2005, the Peruvian government introduced a law proposal (which was ratified later that year by Congress) that marked the maritime border at right angles with the coastline, instead of following the parallel, which had been the status quo. As a consequence, Peru would gain over 40,000 square kilometres of sea. The tensions on the matter rose to such heights that newspapers started speculating about an armed conflict (Elizondo, 2006).

In these conflicts, Chile has mostly acted as a policy-receiver, responding to the claims that came from its Andean neighbours. In doing so, the government has consistently acted in accordance to the country's legalistic international identity. Chile has done in two ways: by focusing on existing treaties and by presenting itself as a legal, non-political actor.

Both towards Bolivia and Peru, Chile has given bilateral treaties a central position in the response to their claims. For Bolivia, this is the 1904 peace treaty; for Peru, the peace treaty of 1929, which set the territorial demarcation, and two bilateral treaties that were signed in the 1950s and that deal with the maritime demarcation. Chile's position has been to argue that these treaties have resolved the issues once and for all, and that, as a consequence, no conflict exists. For instance, in 2004, Chilean President Ricardo Lagos, addressing Bolivia's claim of access to the sea, stated that: 'there exist no pending issues of sovereignty ... This matter has been resolved in a treaty that we

have signed over a century ago' (Orias, 2004: 52). Similarly, Chile has maintained, on the basis of the existing treaties, that 'there are no unresolved issues' regarding the maritime border with Peru (Setterfield, 2007: 3).

In addition to emphasising treaties, Chile has consistently presented its position as a legal and rational one, which does not let political considerations get in the way of its judgement (Zalles, 2007). As Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley graphically put it:

In contrast to what seems to be happening with our counterpart, which takes up a polemic attitude, this is a matter for lawyers and we have to present ourselves, like always, seriously. (Foxley, 2008)

By responding according to the country's legalistic identities, the Chilean government implicitly framed Bolivia's and Peru's claims as being both illegitimate and irrational; as they are covered by the treaties, there is no rational ground for them. This has become the dominant line of response since. For example, Foxley, when speaking on the Peruvian claims, implied that they reflected an 'outdated' way of doing politics:

When President Alan García was here, we gave Peru a proposal on how to design a policy between Chile and Peru for the 21st century, not for the 16th century. (Becker, 2007: 8)

In short, Chile's response can be interpreted as a refusal to 'play the game of Latin American international politics', which is so often characterised by sabre rattling and symbolic negotiations. Zalles (2007) emphasises this point, suggesting that Chile's legalism is in fact an attempt to avoid political negotiations—why else, he argues, would Chile pretend that existing treaties are not re-negotiable? It is not unusual within the international community to do so.

Chile's legalistic response to the claims of its northern neighbours has complicated its relations with them in several ways. First of all, it has provoked irritation in government circles as well as the media in both countries, where Chile's refusal to negotiate their claims has contributed to the imagery of Chileans as 'arrogant'. The Chilean dismissal of these claims as non-issues, as well as its implicit suggestion that they are of an irrational nature, has not contributed to the improvement of the relations (Milet, 2004b).

Second, it has weakened Chile's role as a regional and institutional actor. Particularly Bolivia's claim on access to the sea gained considerable support from Latin American leaders of countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. Even Kofi Annan and Jimmy Carter intervened on behalf of Bolivia, isolating Chile, at least on this issue, from large sections of the Latin American and even global community (Pinochet de la Barra, 2004). Mainstream international media, up to then not very sympathetic to Bolivia's claims, started to become critical of Chile's legalistic response, which itself now started to sound, in the words of *The Economist* (2003), 'a touch anachronistic'.

Paradoxically, Chile's legalistic identity has provided its two neighbours with a strategy for their claims. Instead of fruitlessly insisting on the political and bilateral nature of the conflicts, they, too, have started to follow a legalistic strategy. By making use of international institutions, presenting their issue as a legal rather than a political problem, they could attempt to beat Chile at its own game. Bolivia has tried to do so by appealing to the 2004 Latin American summit organised by the OAS in Monterrey, where its claims met with much support but were neutralised by Chilean President Lagos, who took a formalistic position and insisted that they had to be dealt with bilaterally (Pinochet de la Barra, 2004). Peru, instead, has taken the maritime issue

to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, where it is currently under consideration. The Peruvian government legitimised this move by arguing that its claims have 'constantly met with a refusal from Chile to enter into negotiations', and that since 2004, the Chileans officially have closed the door for future negotiations (ICJ, 2008). Chile's position has become complicated by this strategy: hardly in a position to protest Peru's 'legalistic turn', Chilean policy-makers fear that the ICJ will seek a compromise instead of completely supporting the Chilean position (Hirsch, 2008).

Chile's Progressive Identity: Fitting into the *Barrio*?

Despite Chile's authoritarian and conservative order in the nineteenth century, the country has been able to construct a strong progressive identity during the twentieth century based on the rise of the working classes and the formation of a basic but functional welfare state. As a result, while in countries such as Peru, the Left was blocked from access to power until the late twentieth century, Chile started to develop a significant welfare state from the 1930s onwards, extending its democratic system to sectors such as women and illiterates, and setting in motion an ambitious state-sponsored project of industrialisation. These developments reached their peak during the socialist Unidad Popular government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973). However, the notions of workers' rights, state protection for the poor and deepening of the democratic system had become entrenched in Chile's national identities long before that (Silva, 1993).

After the military dictatorship of Pinochet, during which the country had returned to conservatism and authoritarianism, Chile's progressive identity slowly regained strength. This was visible in the priority the governments of Patricio Aylwin (1990–1994) and Eduardo Frei (1994–2000) gave to social policies and poverty reduction in particular. In contrast to the regional trends, Chilean poverty rates halved between 1990 and 1997, and have since dropped further to some 14 per cent in 2006, while massive housing projects have virtually eradicated the once common *poblaciones* (Casen, 2006). Moreover, since Socialist President Ricardo Lagos came to power in 2000, serious attempts have been made to once again set up a welfare state. In particular, the so-called Plan-AUGE, which provides nationwide state-sponsored treatment for many frequent and dangerous illnesses such as cancer and AIDS, and the Chile Solidario (Solidary Chile) programme, which provides welfare to the poorest sectors, have been cornerstones of this new role of the state. Further steps have been taken by President Michelle Bachelet, who came to power in 2006, and who has introduced a generic, state-sponsored pension system, as well as free health care for all Chileans over 60.

The rebirth of Chile's progressive identity has provided the country with many opportunities for its international relations with the region. It has particularly helped to maintain good relations with several other progressive leaders in South America, such as Ignacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay and Rafael Correa of Ecuador. In general, Chile's progressive identity has linked into the broader 'move to the Left' of Latin American politics, which has taken place through the ascendancy of left-wing presidents in nearly every South American country. In many ways, their 'shared progressive identities' have proved to be a stimulus for cooperation (Montecino, 2006). Additionally, the memory of the Allende government in many ways provides left-wing governments, such as that of Evo Morales in Bolivia, with a historical example for their projects (Policzer, 2006). As a consequence, Chile's progressive identity has generated a considerable presence by generating sympathy and shared understandings.

However, Chile has only been able to capitalise partially on its progressive identity in its relations with Bolivia and Peru, for two reasons. First, Chile's progressiveness is not easily combined with its neo-liberal identity. Even while the governments of Lagos and Bachelet have set up a basic welfare state, the country's economic order remains neo-liberal in essence, being based upon private enterprise, the privatisation of public services, and the individualisation of opportunities and risks. This tension between state care and market logic is reflected in the country's socio-economic inequality: despite having the lowest poverty rate of the continent, its inequality is among the highest (Casen, 2006). As a consequence, Chile's progressive identity has often been interpreted in progressive circles in Bolivia and Peru as a farce, a form of window-dressing, or as a naïve attempts to mitigate the exploitative nature of capitalism.

Second, Chile's progressive identity is decidedly non-populist. Its content is constrained by the country's neo-liberal and legalistic identities, together with the traumatic memories of the fall of Allende. To the country's political elites, social policies and economic redistribution are legitimate as long as they do not negatively affect economic growth and take place from within the existing legal and institutional framework. As a consequence, Chilean progressiveness is technocratic rather than populist (Silva, 2008). This has affected the country's international relations, as Latin America's Left turn has had a strong populist element. Rather than strengthening shared understandings and ideologies, the division between the populist and non-populist Left has proved to be a source of contention (Castañeda, 2006; Seligson, 2007). For instance, Chile consistently shies away from the radical anti-capitalist and anti-United States discourse that characterises the government of Evo Morales in Bolivia and the opposition movements in Peru. Its technocratic progressiveness also provoked clashes with Venezuela, currently Bolivia's main ally, whose ambassador Victor Delgado accused the Chilean Christian Democrat Party of having supported the 2002 coup against Chávez, just as they had been 'opposed to Allende's Socialist, progressive, and renewing project' (quoted in *La Nación*, 2006).

Notwithstanding these limitations, Chile's progressive identity has created a presence that has played a role in the relative improvement of its relations with Bolivia and Peru since 2006. The figure of Michelle Bachelet, who became president in that year, has strengthened the country's progressive identity significantly, even if largely at the symbolic level. Being a woman and a relative outsider, her election symbolised change, emancipation and a move to the Left. This coincided with the almost simultaneous election of Evo Morales in Bolivia, which carried the same emancipatory connotations. From the Bolivian perspective, Morales, who had come to power by mobilising popular movements on the basis of (amongst others) anti-Chilean discourses, needed to demobilise his constituencies in order to consolidate his power. By embracing Chile's new found progressiveness, symbolised by Bachelet, he was able to improve Bolivia's relations with Chile and downplay popular anti-Chilean sentiments, which could have complicated his rule. Peruvian president Alán García, who came to power in the same year, also made use of Bachelet's progressive image. On the one hand, it allowed him to fortify Latin America's moderate Left block, as a counterweight to Hugo Chávez (Noriega, 2006). On the other, it served to strengthen his domestic progressive image, for instance by forming a gender-neutral cabinet, as Bachelet had done some months earlier.

Conclusion

National identities create collective understandings that have affected Chile's international relations with Bolivia and Peru. Externally, they have influenced the popular perceptions of Chile (often reinforced through top-down nationalist discourses). Internally, they have shaped boundaries for legitimate ways of making and receiving foreign policy.

Chile's neo-liberal, legalistic, and progressive identities have created opportunities and constraints for the country's ability to act towards Bolivia and Peru. They have done so by affecting the processes of Chilean policy formation and policy-reception, as well as by the shaping of external perceptions of the country. In the process, they have interacted, sometimes mutually reinforcing, as in the case of the neo-liberal and legalistic identities, but also weakening each other, as was the case of the neo-liberal and progressive identity. They have been reflected in different ways in the interaction with Bolivia and Peru. Chile's neo-liberal identity, partly based on superiority discourses, has given way to a significant presence and policy-making, while its legalistic identity (much more inward-looking and less competitive) has had more influence on policy-reception, in particular regarding Bolivia's and Peru's historical claims. As for the country's progressive identity, it is notable that a change in leadership can 'bring out' a certain identity and regional presence, affecting the relations with other countries even without policy changes. All this does not mean that no questions remain open, though. For instance, the role of Bolivian and Peruvian identities, which falls outside the scope of this article. Also, the question arises whether we would find similar interactions with, for example, a country such as Argentina. It is hoped that future research on the social construction of Latin American (inter)national identities will be able to address these issues.

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