

The Pacific Alliance and ASEAN: opportunities and challenges in the strengthening of ties

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Abstract

ASEAN countries have a limited impact on the trade of Pacific Alliance (PA) countries, although Chile and Peru have trade agreements with some of them. However, and parallel to an incipient growth in trade flows, there have been initiatives aimed at tightening links, both bilaterally and inter-regionally. The PA has stated its aim, in its Vision 2030, to promote external and inter-institutional relations, including deepening economic–trade cooperation with ASEAN. The objective of this study is to carry out an analysis of the trade and political ties between the Alliance members with the main ASEAN partners—Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore—taking into account the opportunities and challenges that arise. The research is descriptive based on a qualitative methodology that draws on the collection and interpretation of data, mainly secundar. In this regard, the documentary observation and document analysis techniques are used, among others.

KEYWORDS: Pacific Alliance, ASEAN, trade links, political links.



La Alianza del Pacífico y la ASEAN: oportunidades y retos para estrechar lazos

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Resumen

Los países que conforman ASEAN tienen un impacto limitado sobre el comercio entre los países miembros de la Alianza del Pacífico (PA), aunque Chile y Perú mantienen acuerdos de comercio con algunos de ellos. Sin embargo, y en paralelo a un crecimiento incipiente del intercambio comercial, ha habido iniciativas para fortalecer los lazos tanto bilaterales como interregionales. La PA ha declarado su objetivo, acorde a su Visión 2030, de promover las relaciones externas e interinstitucionales y la cooperación con ASEAN en el comercio. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar los lazos comerciales y políticos entre los miembros de AP con los principales miembros de ASEAN – Vietnam, Tailandia, Indonesia, Malasia, Filipinas y Singapur – tomando en cuenta los desafíos y oportunidades nacientes. La investigación tiene un carácter descriptivo y está basada en una metodología cualitativa que recoge e interpreta datos mayoritariamente secundarios. En ese sentido, se aplican técnicas de observación y análisis documental, entre otras.

Introduction

In recent decades, the surge in bilateral commercial and political ties with Asian countries has prompted Latin American states to rethink their relations with extra-regional actors. In the midst of what has been called “the Asian century”, linkages with this continent have become increasingly compelling because of the possibilities they open up for Latin American exports. China, given its economic, financial, and political power and its proactive foreign policy, has captured the attention of governments, businesspersons, and academics throughout Latin America (Rubiolo & Baroni, 2019).

The presence of Southeast Asia (SEA) on the Latin American stage has traditionally been limited and confined to the commercial sphere. This is due to divergent historical and political processes, cultural differences, and geographical distance. But over the last two decades the ties between the regions have been reinvigorated, expressed in diplomatic proximity and in the growing share of

some of the major SEA economies—especially Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam – in Latin American international trade flows (Sistema de Informaciones de Comercio Exterior [SICOEX], 2021).

The greatest impetus came during the 2008 international financial crisis, when the withdrawal of traditional partners compelled countries in both regions to seek out alternatives, exploring and capitalizing on underdeveloped markets (Rubiolo & Baroni, 2019). These developments show that now is the time to support other actors that could facilitate diversification and international integration, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The Asian region is a key part of the current international system, and the members of the Pacific Alliance (PA) – Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru – are highly involved. In particular, Chile, Mexico, and Peru enjoy advantageous positions. And in turn, Colombia has begun to develop and further its links with the continent (Rojas & Terán, 2017).

The PA was set up in 2011 and formally established the following year through its framework agreement. The alliance is an initiative for economic integration, trade, and development whose aims are to create an area for the free circulation of goods, services, capital, and people; promote the growth, development, and competitiveness of its member economies; serve as a platform for political articulation and economic-commercial integration; and achieve international reach with special emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region.

As at 2019, the PA had a population of 230 million and a GDP per capita (PPP) of US \$19,000. Moreover, its members received 38% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) in Latin America and the Caribbean (Alianza del Pacífico, n.d.). The main requirement for membership is to have signed a free trade agreement with all other members, which demonstrates commitment to unifying the rules and thus improving competitiveness, assuring stability, and enhancing bargaining power with external partners (Pastrana Buelvas & Castro Alegría, 2020).

The PA's outlook, based on a neoliberal model of economic integration and a geostrategic vision oriented towards Asia-Pacific, means that the alliance has a light institutional structure as well as flexible and pragmatic functionality, which facilitates the participation of members when it comes to trade and cooperation (Pastrana Buelvas & Castro Alegría, 2020). Relevant issues for the PA include the creation of new collaborative spaces with other integration mechanisms, such as ASEAN, Mercosur, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) (Alianza del Pacífico, 2012).

To this end, the AP founded its Foreign Relations Group (Grupo de Relacionamento Externo, GRE) in 2013 to design a linkage strategy and foster permanent and ongoing exchanges, whether with the observer or member states¹ or with other integration groups or international agencies, and thus promote the PA's objectives (Alianza del Pacífico, n.d.). This was reflected in the 2018 document *Visión Estratégica de la Alianza del Pacífico al año 2030* in which, as well as proposing further cooperation with ASEAN, the alliance stated its aims to strengthen ties with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and to progress South–South cooperation with the various actors with which the bloc has connections (Pastrana Buelvas & Castro Alegría, 2020). Currently, ASEAN is regarded as the most successful integration mechanism in the developing world, to which its economic indicators attest: real GDP growth in 2019 was 4.6%, totaling US \$3.166 billion in current prices, which is equivalent to 10% of the region's combined GDP. Meanwhile, in that same year, trade in goods amounted to US \$2.815 billion, while FDI increased year-on-year by 3.67% to US \$160.6 million. With an overall, disproportionately young

¹ The observer states can participate in the meetings to which they are invited, by consensus of the member states, and they have the right to speak but not to vote. The member states all undertake to apply high standards in commercial and economic matters, which contributes to the achievement of the alliance's objectives.

population of 655.9 million and a growing middle class, the ASEAN countries constitute the world's third-biggest market as well as its fifth-largest economy in terms of wealth (ASEAN Stats Data Portal, 2020).

In this context, ASEAN is looking towards the AP to serve as a gateway to the region, not least in economic and cultural terms. In turn, the AP covets the Asian bloc's markets for its exports, and sees it as an example to follow with regard to regional connectivity and the development of global value chains. Commercially, only Chile and Peru have bilateral trade agreements with ASEAN countries, but their impact on bilateral trade is negligible: the two countries receive only 1% of the bloc's exports, and also account for just 1% of its imports. A similar pattern is witnessed in the case of Colombia, while Mexico has an analogous share of exports but a somewhat higher share of imports: 2% in some categories (SICOEX, 2021). Moreover, it should be noted that the type of exchange for the first three countries and ASEAN is inter-industrial, while in Mexico's case it is intra-industrial.

At the policy level, all PA countries have agreements and initiatives with ASEAN members across a range of areas: diplomacy, science and technology, education, culture, tourism and mobility, agriculture and fishing, industry, and South–South cooperation. But it is Chile and Mexico that account for the largest proportion of agreements in almost every policy area. In total, the number of instruments in force since the start of diplomatic relations with ASEAN are: Chile, 92; Mexico, 85; Peru, 46; and Colombia, 22.

Inter-regionally, in 2016 a working group composed of GRE and the delegates of ASEAN's Permanent Committee of Representatives (PCR) was set up to promote economic cooperation and facilitate mutual investment and cooperation in education, culture, tourism, and sports. That year the Cooperation Framework was signed, which laid the foundations for inter-regional relations. Thereafter, in 2017, the ASEAN-PA Working Plan was adopted, which included specific actions and an implementation schedule (ASEAN Secretariat's Information Paper, 2021). There are two issues in the linkages between the two blocs that are especially salient: first, there is limited commercial interdependence despite economic complementarity and the possession by some states of FTAs; and second, although there have been interactions and actions on a policy level, they have had limited influence on commercial performance or on extending ties. The purpose of this study is to analyze the commercial and political ties between PA members and the major ASEAN countries – Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore – while delineating some of the opportunities and challenges that have arisen in their development and expansion. The selected time frame (2012-2019) starts with the foundation of the PA and ends just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the dynamics of trade and linkages at the bilateral and inter-regional levels.

Theoretical context

This study's underlying assumption is that a state's development model has a major influence on the type of external linkages that it forms. This entails

[...] the way in which policy and the economy, between the state and the market, are connected in a given context. Each model corresponds to a form of accumulation, production, and distribution of wealth, as well as an international integration strategy. Exchange rate patterns, foreign trade regulations, and the demands made in external negotiations will differ according to which is selected (Actis, Lorenzini & Zelicovich, 2016, p. 16).

Three dimensions in the development model can be discerned: production, financial and exchange, and social. To analyze the linkages between the PA and ASEAN, this study draws on the first dimension as that which has the greatest impact. Thus, Chile, Peru, and Colombia have

opted, since the final decades of the 20th century, for a neoliberal development model with a production structure based on comparative advantages and oriented towards the primary extractive sector (Rubiolo & Baroni, 2019). For its part, Mexico has had various development models over the past 50 years: so-called “stabilizing development” (until the 1970s), the “guiding state” (with attempts at opening up the economy), and the neoliberal model, featuring economic openness but a complex relationship between the political and economic powers (Martínez, 2019; Sandoval, 2020).

The production structure and international integration in neoliberal models is based on the market as the main driver of the economy, relegating the state to minimal participation as a guarantor of the roles of play. Centrality is placed on comparative advantages and commercial openness. For this model, FDI is important because it is assumed to generate a trickle-down effect down through society and the production system. Therefore, flexible frameworks are established to attract this investment. Mexico's system is a hybrid one that combines the traditional heterodox model – with a key role for the state in promoting economic development and a basis of competitive advantages – with the neoliberal model (Actis et. al, 2016). However, with regards to the latter element, both a lack of free competition and of economic deregulation can be discerned, even though several FTAs have been signed (Martínez, 2019).

The development model determines the type of commercial exchange that occurs between countries. Inter-industrial trade (based on comparative advantages) is the exchange of goods and/or services from different production sectors, through which countries can complement one another based on their respective advantages. Trade in goods and/or services in the same production sector (competitive advantages) constitutes intra-industrial trade, which involves competition. Therefore, the formation of global value chains is necessary.

Articulation between the development model and the integration strategy is an important factor. According to Lorenzini (2011), this strategy involves the selection by the state of guidance and guidelines designed for linkage with other actors in the international system. The relationship between the guidance and guideline under both the development model and the international integration strategy enables understanding of the way in which they interact. Thus, the development model adopted by a state can explain the foreign policy priorities in relation to certain other states and/or regions, the strategies adopted regarding integration processes, and those vis-a-vis global negotiations and forums (Van Klaveren, 1992).

Cross-regionalism, in this context, is the strategy that governments use to achieve goals in the economic-commercial dimension of foreign policy. It entails the signing of agreements between states belonging to different regions. These are primarily commercial in nature but also take into account other dimensions. This allows countries of similar capacities to access major global markets, attain trade diversification, gain control of the trade liberalization process, and expand their role as FDI destinations (Garzón, 2015). Moreover, the signing of agreements in areas such as education, the environment, and science and technology cooperation, among others, involves the transfer of financial resources and/or technical exchange from one country to another with the aim of promoting economic and social development (Lengyel & Malacalza, 2011).

Chile, Peru, and Colombia adopted an international integration strategy based on open regionalism, which gave rise to a dense FTA network. Mexico, despite being party to several FTAs, has given primacy to its relations with the USA (Actis et.al, 2016). In all cases, the signing of agreements to facilitate trade and the scope of South–South cooperation is evident.

Finally, ties between regional blocs are oriented towards the diversification of foreign relations, which may be economic and/or policy related. At the policy level, there are efforts to expand points of support; while at the economic-commercial level, the aim is to increase the number of trading partners to reduce concentration and vulnerability to external changes (Sahni, 2011). For Mols and Faust, diversification is the attempt “by a state to expand its relations with regions with

which so far only rudimentary contact is maintained, through the design of new policy fields or the modification of those already existing” (1998, p. 10).

Method

The method adopted is descriptive, in that it seeks to characterize the commercial and policy ties between PA member states and major ASEAN members over the period 2012-2019, as well as identifying some of the obstacles and opportunities in the development and furtherance of these ties. For the analysis, a qualitative methodological strategy was used. This approach seeks to identify, understand, and analyze the phenomena and facts, exploring them from the perspective of the participants in relation to the context in which they unfold (Valles, 1999).

The data, primarily secondary, were compiled and interpreted based on an exploration of the information available and the unobservable relations within it (Vieytes, 2004). The statistical data were obtained from databases such as SICOEX from ALADI and the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade) and then systematized using Excel spreadsheets, privileging quantitative analysis. Other documentary sources were the OAS Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) for trade agreements, and the official websites of the foreign ministries of the PA member states, the embassies of these countries in the selected Asian countries, and vice versa. Moreover, the study drew on information available on the website of other government entities related to commercial promotion, as well as the PA and ASEAN websites. Finally, it employed academic studies on the subject area and journalistic sources from the countries concerned.

Documentary observation and analysis of written documentation techniques were used. The study used texts that explained the phenomenon in question at a given time and place. Moreover, a data triangulation technique allowed comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data, checking for convergence or divergence (Valles, 1999).

A first stage entailed gaining insights into the policy and economic conditions that promoted a tightening of links between both blocs, by way of official documents and academic studies on the topic. This enabled an understanding of the interests pursued by the PA regarding its international integration strategy and the role ASEAN can play in it. In the second stage, quantitative indicators – devised by other entities – were analyzed and qualitative indicators developed, which proved useful in determining the characteristics of the relationship. During the third, complementary stage, media sources from the base countries were analyzed.

The influence of the quantitative data was measured by analyzing the evolution of indicators such as export and import volume, trade balance, level of participation of the selected countries in mutual foreign trade, and level of investment, among others. In turn, the influence of the qualitative indicators, such as the influence of the development model and the role of ASEAN in the PA's international integration strategy, was measured based on the content of the available documents, as well as the nature and timing of non-commercial exchanges, for instance. The data obtained made it possible to analyze the policy commercial linkages, and to interpret the significance of the foreign policy actions by the units of analysis.

Results

Policy linkages:

When it comes to foreign policy, the signing of agreements and treaties provides a glimpse into the direction of travel when it comes to the relations between parties, going beyond dynamics that are merely economic-commercial. Therefore, this section outlines the instruments currently in force among the countries studied, including bilateral treaties and agreements, memoranda of

understanding (MoU), and consultation mechanisms, all of which help to elucidate foreign policy interests and dispositions².

In order to systematize the information and drawing on the contributions of Rojas and Terán (2017), eleven categories of analysis were defined by thematic areas. This helps to illustrate the priority sectors for cooperation. These are outlined in the table below.

Table 1 - Categories of analysis

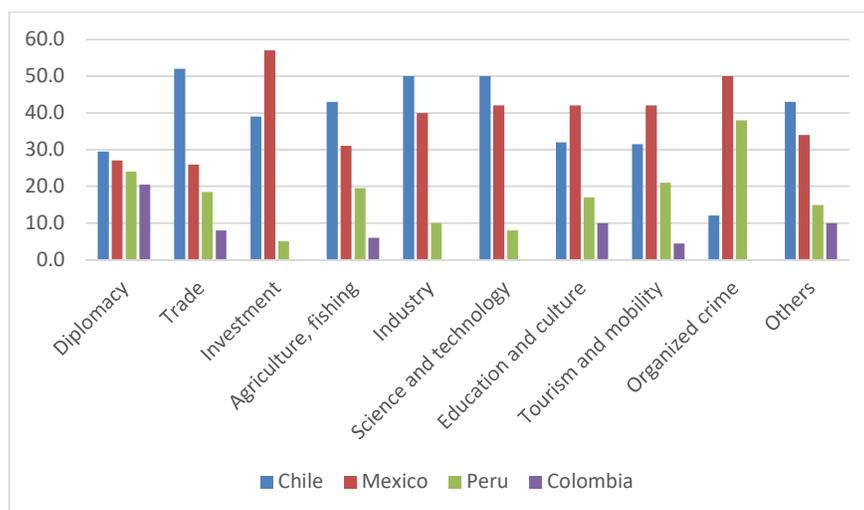
Categories	Areas included
Diplomacy	Initiation of diplomatic relations Visa exemption for diplomats Consultation mechanisms between ministries of foreign relations
Trade	Plant health cooperation FTAs Joint commission on trade
Investment	Tax and customs cooperation Mutual administrative assistance Avoiding double taxation and preventing tax evasion Bilateral investment agreements
Agriculture and fishing	Bilateral agreements Inter-institutional cooperation on agriculture and fishing
Industry	Mining Manufacturing Agreements between chambers of commerce
Science and technology	Energy sector Telecommunications Science and innovation
Education and culture	Institutional cooperation on education Agreements between universities
Tourism and mobility	Mobility of people, visas, and transport

² For ease of reading of this section, the citations are presented along with the bibliographical references.

Transnational organized crime	Drug trafficking Fight against illicit narcotics
Others	Scientific–technical cooperation South–South cooperation Triangular cooperation

Based on the categories defined, Figure 1 presents the percentage of current agreements and MoU that Chile, Peru, Mexico, and Colombia have entered into with the major ASEAN partners, from the establishment of diplomatic relations to date. As can be seen, Chile and Mexico account for the largest proportion of agreements in almost every policy area. The total number of instruments in force since the start of diplomatic relations with ASEAN are: Chile, 92; Mexico, 85; Peru, 46; and Colombia, 22.

Figure 1 – Percentage of agreements per country and category



Based on the above and taking into account bilateral initiatives and activities that are not categorized as formal instruments, it can be observed, first of all, that the development of diplomatic relations is common to all cases; this is one of the categories most covered by agreements and MoU, with broadly similar results for all the countries analyzed: Chile (30%), Mexico (26%), Peru (24%), and Colombia (20%). Agreements often concern visa exemption for diplomats, consultation mechanisms between foreign ministries, and cooperation for education in diplomacy and international relations. Moreover, it is worth considering other aspects that facilitate relations, such as official visits, diplomatic missions, and activities sponsored by embassies but which are not underpinned by an official instrument.

When it comes to education and culture, Mexico occupies first place (42%), with agreements with all countries in the sample besides Malaysia. Outstanding in this regard are inter-university cooperation agreements, such as those that Universidad de Colima upholds with the universities of Chulalongkorn and Thammasat in Thailand (2013) in order to promote mutual knowledge and undertake research through their specialized centers in the Pacific (Hidalgo, 2012). Moreover, in 2015 the first Educational and Cultural Education Program with Vietnam was initiated to promote

specialist academic mobility and cultural exchange through on-site experience. In second place is Chile (32%), which also led educational cooperation agreements covering higher and basic levels. In this regard, more than 200 Thai students have studied in Chile as part of an exchange program that has been ongoing for more than 20 years. In the case of Peru (16%), it is worth noting the advances made with Thailand and Singapore; four out of the country's five agreements on the matter are with the latter country. In addition, there are initiatives aimed at fostering understanding of Singapore's education system, as well as the use of information and telecommunications technologies in teaching. Finally, Colombia (10%) has cultural exchange agreements in place with Vietnam and Malaysia, as well as an inter-university MoU with Thailand.

In the field of tourism and mobility, although Mexico heads up the list (42%) and has entered into agreements with all countries in the sample, these agreements relate only to aviation services. In the remaining cases, the data show there are agreements of broader scope such as that of Chile (32%), which has cooperation agreements with Vietnam and Thailand. In addition, since 2003, nationals of both Chile and Thailand have been exempt from tourist visas. Peru (21%), for its part, signed MoU with Malaysia (2019) and Indonesia (2020) to revive the sector, while Colombia (5%) and Thailand are striving towards cooperation in tourism and health and wellbeing.

With regard to the productive sectors – agriculture and fishing – Chile has the most agreements (44%), above all with Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines – primarily in the field of agriculture. This is followed by Mexico (31%) which has close ties with Vietnam and Indonesia through initiatives aimed at combating poverty by way of food provision, and at transferring knowledge related to forestry and agriculture. Meanwhile, Peru's (19%), initiatives are concentrated on Thailand, and are oriented towards cooperation on fishing and land usage. Finally, Colombia (6%) signed a MoU with Vietnam, with the aim of fostering cooperation in the aforementioned areas through symposia and seminars on agricultural development policies, promotion of technological business and missions, exchange of experiences and information, joint pursuit of research, innovation, and industrialization, among others.

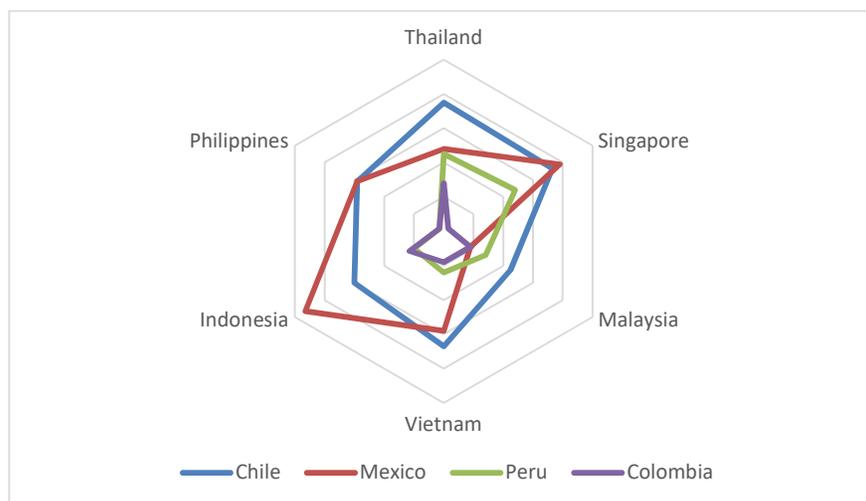
As regards the industry category, Chile accounts for 50% of the agreements. Given its model of primary extractive development, mining predominates in the MoU with Vietnam and the Philippines, followed by business and manufacturing cooperation with Singapore. On the other hand, the agreements with Mexico (40%) are focused on inter-institutional cooperation, especially between chambers of commerce and industry (Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand). This is also true of Peru (10%), catering towards industrial property (Singapore). The percentages are repeated in the sphere of science and technology; notable in the case of Chile (50%) is a digital economy partnership agreement between Singapore and New Zealand (2020), a global pioneer; a MoU between the Chilean company Sciencenergy SpA and the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (2018); and a scientific and technological cooperation agreement with Vietnam (2007). Along the same lines, Mexico (43%) signed a collaboration agreement with Singapore for an arbovirus diagnostic study (2019) and to promote smart cities in Latin America (2015), as well as another with Indonesia for energy cooperation (2008). Finally, Peru (7%) and Thailand signed an agreement on space technology and applications (2020) – the culmination of more than ten years of cooperation on the matter.

When it comes to transnational organized crime, Mexico (50%) and Peru (38%) are the countries with the most agreements, related especially to the fight against the illegal drug trade, followed

by Chile (12%), which concentrated, alongside Singapore, on the prevention and control of narcotics. In the Mexican case, there is evidence of strenuous efforts alongside Indonesia and the Philippines. Cooperation with the latter country was formalized in 1997 and intensified from 2015, with a MoU on cooperation and information exchange on the matter. Returning to Peru, it is worth noting its cooperation with Thailand on alternative development – as part of national and global strategies in the fight against drugs – and its global leadership in this area. At the start of 2021, the two countries were instrumental in securing the approval of a resolution related to the promotion of alternative development at the 64th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Finally, the category of “Others” covers scientific–technical cooperation framework initiatives (not pertaining to any specific sector), South–South and triangular cooperation, and agreements on issues that arise in single cases and occasions, such as defense between Chile and Singapore or disaster risk management between Chile and the Philippines. The data show that Chile (43%) and Mexico (33%) are the two that have signed the highest number of agreements in this category, followed by Peru (14%) and Colombia (10%).

Figure 1 – Existing agreements between PA and ASEAN countries



Note: compiled by authors

Figure 2 sets out the relationship between the countries in the sample based on the number of agreements between them. There it can be seen that Chile and Mexico are those that prioritize not only closer relations with most countries, but also the formalization of these ties through a range of instruments. At the other extreme is Colombia, with a notably smaller proportion. On the other hand, of the six ASEAN partner countries studied, the PA members have collectively entered into the most agreements with Singapore and Thailand.

Focusing now on inter-bloc relations, since 2016 AP-ASEAN have had a cooperation framework agreement that addresses cooperation pragmatically through specific proposals across multiple areas, with an emphasis on four core themes: economic cooperation, b) education and person-to-person contact, c) science, technology, and innovation, and d) sustainable development. It is worth noting the importance of student grants and cultural exchange activities as a means of overcoming shortcomings in mutual awareness. In turn, there have been seminars organized to analyze the

strengths in inter-regional work. One key example was a seminar on global value chains in which the academic, government, and private sectors from both sides took part.

Since 2018, both blocs have agreed to explore other areas of cooperation, such as e-commerce; micro, small, and medium sized enterprises; disaster management, smart cities, climate change, and others. Thus far, seven of the twelve lines of action established in the original plan have been progressed. At time of writing a working plan for the period 2021-2023 is being drafted, which will tackle some of the aforementioned areas as well as the fourth industrial revolution; trade and investment; education; science, technology, and investment; the digital economy; and gender and sustainable development. In September 2020, the CRP-GRE met again to assess cooperation and debate future areas of collaboration while also exchanging both regions' experiences related to the pandemic response – especially those measures aimed at economic revival.

Commercial linkage:

When it comes to trade links, FTAs are an instrument designed to further relations. The four members of the PA have FTAs with the USA and the EU. As to the Asian continent, Chile and Peru have agreements with China among other countries in the region, while Colombia only has such an instrument with South Korea and Mexico, with Japan. In the case of ASEAN, Chile has FTAs with Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. As far as Peru is concerned, there are treaties in place with Singapore and Thailand. Neither Colombia nor Mexico have FTAs with the ASEAN countries. However, Chile, Mexico, and Peru are members of APEC and the Comprehensive and the Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), in force since 2018, in which several ASEAN countries are also involved (SICE, 2021).

According to information from SICOEX (2021), the main destinations for Chilean exports are China, the USA, Japan, Brazil, and South Korea, which, since 2015, have accounted for more than 60% of the total. When it comes to imports, its main partners are China, the USA, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Germany, which together fluctuate around 60% of the total. A similar pattern is observed for Peru. The country's foremost destinations are China, the USA, Canada, Japan, Brazil, and Switzerland, which collectively exceed 55% of the total. In turn, China, the USA, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia make up the same proportion of imports. Colombia's trading partners are more concentrated: the USA, China, Panama, and Spain account for 50% of its exports. Meanwhile, over 60% of the country's imports come from the USA, China, Mexico, Brazil, and Germany. Finally, Mexico's trading partners are the most concentrated of all: the USA and Canada represent 80% of all exports, while the USA, China, Japan, and Germany provide around 70% of its imports.

The share of the selected ASEAN countries in the PA members' foreign trade is very low. The tables below set out the positions they occupy in the ranking of trading partners and their percentage share.

Table 2 – Chile and its main ASEAN trading partners (2012-2019) – Position and share percentage

Year	Vietnam		Thailand		Indonesia		Malaysia		Philippines		Singapore	
	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.
2012	28) 0.48	38) 0.27	29) 0.41	18) 0.97	40) 0.22	36) 0.27	34) 0.27	35) 0.27	49) 0.10	< 0.10	< 0.10	45) 0.11
2013	29) 0.42	30) 0.37	31) 0.32	19) 1.02	33) 0.30	35) 0.23	35) 0.23	31) 0.34	34) 0.29	< 0.10	44) 0.16	46) 0.10
2014	28) 0.50	26) 0.54	30) 0.39	19) 1.09	35) 0.27	35) 0.33	35) 0.33	32) 0.37	50) 0.11	< 0.10	< 0.10	50) 0.09
2015	29) 0.42	21) 0.98	31) 0.37	19) 1.18	34) 0.25	35) 0.30	35) 0.30	27) 0.51	37) 0.23	< 0.09	47) 0.14	45) 0.13
2016	30) 0.35	20) 1.12	26) 0.55	19) 1.12	< 0.10	36) 0.29	36) 0.29	33) 0.34	50) 0.12	< 0.10	48) 0.14	48) 0.12
2017	28) 0.43	18) 1.27	25) 0.51	15) 1.44	45) 0.15	32) 0.33	32) 0.33	33) 0.32	33) 0.32	< 0.10	< 0.15	47) 0.12
2018	28) 0.39	22) 0.93	24) 0.55	16) 1.35	47) 0.12	36) 0.27	36) 0.27	32) 0.34	< 0.10	< 0.10	< 0.10	47) 0.12
2019	27) 0.35	19) 1.06	24) 0.52	19) 1.06	38) 0.18	34) 0.28	34) 0.28	31) 0.36	35) 0.22	< 0.10	< 0.10	49) 0.12

Note: based on data from SICOEX (2021)

Table 3 – Peru and its main ASEAN trading partners (2012-2019) – Position and share percentage

Year	Vietnam		Thailand		Indonesia		Malaysia		Philippines		Singapore	
	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.
2012	34) 0.21	38) 0.27	28) 0.53	19) 1.07	32) 0.23	26) 0.58	< 0.10	30) 0.49	45) 0.18	< 0.10	< 0.10	47) 0.14
2013	44) 0.11	38) 0.31	29) 0.33	16) 1.51	33) 0.26	28) 0.48	42) 0.13	29) 0.46	30) 0.32	< 0.10	< 0.10	48) 0.13
2014	34) 0.28	27) 0.63	37) 0.23	18) 1.42	48) 0.14	26) 0.66	< 0.10	30) 0.40	27) 0.47	48) 0.10	< 0.10	46) 0.13
2015	37) 0.22	21) 0.90	38) 0.22	16) 1.64	46) 0.11	24) 0.64	< 0.10	30) 0.42	39) 0.18	43) 0.16	< 0.10	44) 0.16
2016	31) 0.26	18) 1.05	38) 0.17	16) 1.48	45) 0.12	25) 0.64	30) 0.31	27) 0.52	26) 0.46	47) 0.15	48) 0.10	38) 0.26
2017	28) 0.35	17) 1.01	33) 0.25	16) 1.15	50) 0.08	19) 0.89	32) 0.28	29) 0.41	22) 0.81	44) 0.14	43) 0.12	41) 0.20
2018	34) 0.25	20) 0.82	33) 0.26	19) 0.93	< 0.10	23) 0.66	24) 0.53	27) 0.54	27) 0.44	45) 0.14	< 0.10	42) 0.16
2019	30) 0.31	16) 1.16	27) 0.42	18) 1.00	44) 0.13	23) 0.57	33) 0.22	27) 0.48	24) 0.47	42) 0.16	< 0.10	41) 0.16

Note: based on data from SICOEX (2021)

Table 4 – Colombia and its main ASEAN trading partners (2012-2019) – Position and share percentage

Year	Vietnam		Thailand		Indonesia		Malaysia		Philippines		Singapore	
	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.
2012	< 0.10	29) 0.38	< 0.10	24) 0.57	43) 0.22	28) 0.45	37) 0.37	30) 0.35	< 0.10	< 0.10	26) 0.71	36) 0.23
2013	< 0.10	25) 0.53	< 0.10	26) 0.52	< 0.10	30) 0.37	40) 0.18	31) 0.33	< 0.10	< 0.10	43) 0.10	18) 0.39
2014	< 0.10	24) 0.60	< 0.10	26) 0.54	< 0.10	30) 0.35	< 0.10	31) 0.35	< 0.10	49) 0.09	32) 0.42	37) 0.23
2015	< 0.10	20) 0.91	< 0.10	25) 0.55	< 0.10	30) 0.40	40) 0.28	33) 0.31	< 0.10	< 0.10	24) 1.02	38) 0.18
2016	< 0.15	19) 1.05	50) 0.15	24) 0.65	< 0.15	30) 0.40	38) 0.30	30) 0.36	< 0.15	< 0.10	47) 0.21	40) 0.21
2017	< 0.15	19) 1.21	< 0.15	24) 0.64	< 0.15	30) 0.40	35) 0.54	32) 0.37	< 0.15	< 0.10	20) 1.21	38) 0.24
2018	< 0.15	19) 0.99	< 0.15	24) 0.63	< 0.15	29) 0.41	36) 0.40	30) 0.39	< 0.15	< 0.10	22) 0.98	40) 0.21
2019	< 0.10	18) 1.24	< 0.10	25) 0.57	< 0.10	29) 0.40	47) 0.14	30) 0.40	< 0.10	< 0.10	29) 0.58	33) 0.29

Note: based on data from SICOEX (2021)

Table 5 – Mexico and its main ASEAN trading partners (2012-2019) – Position and share percentage

Year	Vietnam		Thailand		Indonesia		Malaysia		Philippines		Singapore	
	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.
2012	< 0.05	25) 0.31	35) 0.11	12) 1.03	< 0.05	24) 0.32	45) 0.05	9) 1.28	< 0.05	20) 0.37	28) 0.20	21) 0.37
2013	< 0.05	20) 0.39	37) 0.11	11) 1.13	45) 0.06	26) 0.30	48) 0.05	9) 1.41	< 0.05	19) 0.42	31) 0.15	31) 0.38
2014	50) 0.04	18) 0.52	36) 0.09	12) 1.09	< 0.05	24) 0.34	46) 0.05	7) 1.64	< 0.05	20) 0.48	31) 0.13	25) 0.30
2015	50) 0.04	15) 0.93	36) 0.08	10) 1.25	< 0.05	24) 0.34	< 0.05	7) 1.89	< 0.05	18) 0.50	31) 0.14	23) 0.34
2016	20) 0.28	14) 1.04	32) 0.13	9) 1.40	< 0.05	24) 0.34	34) 0.12	7) 2.11	< 0.05	16) 0.58	25) 0.23	24) 0.33
2017	39) 0.07	14) 1.10	33) 0.14	10) 1.41	42) 0.06	24) 0.36	29) 0.17	7) 1.88	< 0.05	18) 0.56	25) 0.22	27) 0.33
2018	46) 0.05	14) 0.95	36) 0.08	11) 1.37	< 0.05	26) 0.34	44) 0.05	7) 2.02	< 0.05	16) 0.60	23) 0.26	34) 0.36
2019	< 0.05	11) 1.33	36) 0.09	12) 1.33	< 0.05	24) 0.36	45) 0.06	6) 2.54	< 0.05	16) 0.69	34) 0.13	22) 0.37

Note: based on data from SICOEX (2021)

Another dimension is the type of commercial exchange, and the composition of this exchange. For Chile, the main products exported include: ferrous waste and scrap; copper and articles thereof; fresh fruit (grapes); fish and crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic invertebrates; and wood, charcoal, and articles of wood. As for the products imported by Chile, the following stand out: nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; mineral fuels, mineral oils and distillation products; electrical machinery and equipment; motor vehicles, tractors; plastic and articles thereof; and pharmaceutical products (SICOEX, 2021).

Colombia's export basket is composed primarily of mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals; coffee; live plants and products of ornamental horticulture; and plastics and articles thereof. Some of the most salient imports from ASEAN are nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; motor vehicles, tractors; pharmaceutical products; and mineral fuels, mineral oils, and distillation products (SICOEX, 2021).

The composition of Peruvian exports to this bloc includes metal ores, slag and ashes; natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals; fresh fruits (grapes); copper and articles thereof; mineral fuels, mineral oils and distillation products; and residues and waste from the food industries. Foremost among Peru's imports from ASEAN are nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical machinery and equipment; mineral fuels, mineral oils and distillation products; motor vehicles, tractors; plastics and articles thereof; and cereals (SICOEX, 2021).

The case of Mexico differs from those of the other PA members. Notable imports from ASEAN include vehicles other than railway or tramway rollingstock, and parts and accessories thereof; nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; optical, photographic, cinematographic, measuring, checking, precision, medical and surgical instruments and apparatus; and mineral fuels, mineral oils and distillation products. In the bracket of exports, the manufacturing, electronics and communications sectors prevail (SICOEX, 2021).

Mutual investments are negligible and, in some cases, non-existent. The following table outlines the data on investment areas and amounts.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the commercial and political ties between PA members and the major ASEAN countries – Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore – while taking into account some of the opportunities and challenges that have arisen in their development and expansion. Much of the existing research addresses this issue from the economic-commercial point of view, thereby overlooking other aspects of foreign relations and equally important dimensions in their analysis of the PA countries' actual level of integration in Asia-Pacific (Rojas & Teran, 2017).

Thus, in the policy dimension, this study analyzed current bilateral treaties and agreements, as well as MoU and other instruments that reflect the intentions of the countries analyzed. Of the instruments analyzed, 88% were found to refer to non-commercial issues. Discounting investment treaties, which are closely linked to trade, the percentage is still high: 80.5% do not cover trade and investment.

The results show that Chile and Mexico are the two countries with the largest number of agreements with the selected ASEAN countries. Chile's cooperation priorities have centered on science and technology, agriculture and fishing, and a series of agreements on education, tourism, and South–South cooperation. Outstanding trade partners include Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, and, to a lesser extent, the Philippines and Malaysia, though the differences are not as accentuated as the cases of Colombia and Peru (see Figure 2). At the multilateral level, Chile's involvement in APEC, its accession in 2015 to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), and its recognition as an “ASEAN development partner” have helped the country to strengthen ties with its Asian partners, as well as seeing it promote “a constructive dialogue between Latin America and ASEAN for the mutual benefit of both regions and, particularly, between ASEAN and the Pacific Alliance” (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Gobierno de Chile, n.d., par. 6).

Mexico has prioritized cooperation in inter-university education and student mobility, with an average of 300 Mexicans having studied in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (Morfin & Derzavich, 2016). Other spheres of cooperation such as forestry and agriculture and that involving chambers of commerce are also part of the shared agenda. The analysis shows that Indonesia and Singapore are the country's two biggest partners (see Figure 2). This is partly a result of Mexico's Foreign Relations Sectoral Plan 2013-2018, which classified these two countries as “relevant partners” with which ties ought to be strengthened (Uscanga, 2019). In this regard, at the multilateral level, Mexico has recognized the importance of “addressing the issues on the regional agenda and offering greater value added with MIKTA as a consultation forum, which intensified the nexus of dialogue and cooperation with the countries that comprise it” (Uscanga, 2019, p. 874)³.

Peru, for its part, has notably fewer non-commercial agreements than Chile and Mexico, which can be attributed to the centrality of foreign trade in its foreign policy. Existing agreements are concentrated on the fight against drug trafficking, tourism and mobility, fishing, and land use, primarily with Singapore and Thailand. With the former, other areas of mutual interest are cooperation in defense and security, especially on maritime matters, science and technology, education, environmental issues, and sustainable management of water resources (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú, 2021). It is important to note that important strides between the two parties have been made: for example, the signing of an agreement on aviation connectivity, which is intended to bolster the trade and tourism in both countries (El Comercio, 2018). In addition, Peru has expressed an interest in acceding to the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement promoted recently by Singapore along with Chile and New Zealand, while the city state attained PA observer status (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú, 2021). As far as Peru's links with Thailand are concerned, cooperation is focused on tackling illegal drug use, and a key milestone was the approval of the Alternative Development Resolution in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (ONUDD, 2021).

Finally, it is clear that Colombia is the only member to have recently integrated (Rojas & Terán, 2017), despite its clear pattern of international involvement, especially with the USA. In recent years the country advanced in its projection towards Asia-Pacific with the aim of positioning its products in the region. This has led to initiatives with Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia across

³ MIKTA is an informal partnership between Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia, formed with the aim of supporting effective global governance. <http://www.mikta.org/>

a range of topics such as political consultation, tourism and visa exemption, agricultural cooperation, cultural and educational exchange, health, and money laundering and the financing of terrorism, among others. This concerted effort to strengthen ties with the Asian region opened the doors to ASEAN membership following Colombia's accession to the TAC in late 2020 (Cancillería de Colombia, 2020).

Analyzing the policy dimension, the most notable element is the four PA members' concentration on a few trading partners. In the case of Chile and Peru, there is emphasis on China and the USA, which corresponds not only to the FTAs signed but also to the active policies pursued by the parties involved. For Chile the two countries account, on average, for 45% of exports and 30% of imports, and for Peru, 41% of exports and 42% of imports (SICOEX, 2021).

In the case of Colombia, between 25% and 30% of its exports go to the USA. The second place is occupied, by turns, by Panama and China, both of which achieved rates in excess of 10% in some years. When it comes to imports, from 2015 China's share rose, to 20% in 2019, while the USA's fell progressively, to 25% in the latter year. This is because of the country's pattern of international integration oriented towards the USA, which owes above all to agreements related primarily to security issues such as the drug trade and terrorism. The case of Mexico is more compelling, in that its geographical position results in a foreign policy centered on the USA for economic, migratory, and security reasons. Indeed, more than 60% of Mexico's supply chains are integrated, and over 50% of its FDI comes from its northern neighbor. The treaty between Mexico, United States, and Canada (T-MEC), renegotiated in 2018, is an example of this.

Therefore, historically, the USA and, more recently, China have turned their attention to PA countries, and thus their level of diversification is limited. This has meant that, for Colombia and Mexico, international integration in Asia-Pacific has not been extensive. In the Colombian case, the recent increase in ties with Asian countries has been framed by a foreign policy diversification strategy that stems from the stagnation of trade links with Europe and the USA's declining share in regional trade (Pastrana & Castro, 2017).. On the other hand, Chile and Peru have been more active in the Asian region, with mixed results. Chile's economic internalization policy in the 1970s, in addition to global condemnation of the Pinochet regime's human rights violations, paved the way for closer links with SEA governments, which did not encroach on the internal affairs of other countries given their own authoritarian characteristics (Rubiolo & Baroni, 2019).

Peru has close and long-established relations with Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, and China, and also pays special attention to continental multilateral agencies as part of its international integration strategy (such as APEC and CPTPP). This corresponds to the expansion of its neoliberal development model, put in place by the Fujimori government, based on free trade with Asian states (Pastrana & Castro, 2017). Finally, Mexico remains commercially and economically dependent on the USA and has thus limited its ties to other Asian countries, despite the initiatives launched and agreements signed by the Peña Nieto government with the region (Uscanga, 2019).

In the case of ASEAN, agreements have been signed with Chile and Peru but not with Colombia and Mexico (SICE, 2021). For the first two countries, the agreements have impacted trade to a limited extent; but for the latter two and especially Mexico, bilateral trade has barely been affected at all. This is a result of the international integration strategy selected by these countries, but also to the importance that SEA places on them.

Chile, Peru, and Colombia engage in inter-industrial exchange (raw materials and goods with low value added for intermediate and end goods with high value added), which replicates the pattern previously witnessed vis-a-vis industrialized countries (center-periphery). This has led to increasing “primarization” of export patterns, which represents a new form of subalternization in that these exports depend on the international prices of commodities and on foreign capital's inclination towards extractive activities (Natch, 2013). Mexico is different, because it does not depend on a primary exporter model and upholds intra-industrial exchange. This situation, above all, creates a context of competition, which affects bilateral trade and, especially, exports.

In Chile's case, the best placed ASEAN countries since 2012 have been Vietnam and Thailand, though their involvement has still been negligible. Neither of the two achieved a share of more than 0.60% of Chile's exports, and barely surpass 1% as a source of imports. In the former case, the main products imported are cellphones and footwear; and the latter, footwear (SICOEX, 2021). Although is the best example of commercial openness, there is no correspondence between the number of agreements signed and their impact on bilateral trade.

For Peru, interactions with ASEAN countries are also of limited impact on bilateral trade. Philippines is the country with the largest share, accounting for 0.81% of Peru's exports in 2017. In turn, as a source of imports, Thailand and Vietnam stand out; on several occasions, each had a share of more than 1%. The main products imported from Thailand are vehicles for tourism and the transportation of goods, while Vietnam largely sends cell phones, portland cement, and footwear. Colombia's foremost export destinations are Singapore and Malaysia, even though neither has exceeded 1% except for the former in 2015 and 2017. In these cases, the export products are almost entirely fuels and mineral oils. Vietnam accounts for the largest share of Colombian imports, going beyond 1% in 2016, 2017, and 2019 with sales of cell phones and footwear (SICOEX, 2021).

On the other hand, Mexico is more of a competitor to the ASEAN countries. Therefore, their share of the country's exports is negligible: none exceed 0.30%. But the situation is different when it comes to the origins of its imports. Malaysia's share of Mexican imports went beyond 2% in 2016, 2018, and 2019, with products related to integrated electronic circuits (processors and controllers); Thailand's has been above 1% since 2012 with memory devices; and Vietnam's has exceeded 1% since 2016 by way of integrated electronic circuits and cell phones (SICOEX, 2021). Thus, it can be concluded that in the cases of Chile, Peru, and Colombia the selected development model (neoliberal, based on competitive advantages) leads to inter-industrial exchange, with underdevelopment of manufactured products. This has resulted in the extensive participation of these countries in global value chains as suppliers of inputs for the exports of third countries. This is known as “downstream linkages.” As noted earlier, Mexico's case is different, in that it employs a hybrid development model based on competitive advantages (intra-industrial exchange), which enables the development of value chains integrated into the North American market. This dynamic is one of “upstream linkages” and entails a larger share of foreign inputs in a country's exports. It explains the paucity of sales to the SEA market as well as the importation of intermediate goods from that region for inclusion in final sales to the North American market (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe [CEPAL], 2016). As a result, it is necessary to take into account intra-firm trade, which is that conducted between subsidiaries of a single transnational company. In Mexico's case, this is observed in the automotive and electronics industries.

Despite the neoliberal development model demanded by FDI, the concentration of partners – with China's predominant role at the Asian level, followed by Japan and South Korea – as well as the FTAs with the USA and China also affect investments. Table 6 shows that mutual investment is minimal and, in some cases, such as that of the Philippines, non-existent. This means there is enormous potential in various areas, such as the exploration and exploitation of natural resources and raw materials, electronics and manufacturing, infrastructure, telecommunications, technology, and others. In the case of Mexico, Asian investment can be targeted towards global value chains integrated into the North American market. As such, not all PA countries have a significant level of integration into Asia-Pacific despite having foreign trade policies oriented towards this end.

It is therefore important to identify the multitude of issues related to cooperation, in that integration also takes into account agreements pertaining to this field. Unlike commercial ties, non-commercial agreements allow for a departure from competitive dynamics and for progression in issues related to development, which promotes intercultural knowledge and prepares countries for a future strengthening of relations. In the framework of this study, “the characterization carried out can serve as another indicator of the integration of PA member countries in Asia-Pacific, which contains, but goes beyond, commercial relations” (Rojas & Terán, 2017, p. 269).

Conclusions

A first reflection is that the development models selected by PA members directly influence the way in which they engage commercially with ASEAN. The neoliberal model of Chile, Peru, and Colombia, based on comparative advantages, promotes inter-industrial exchange and the signing of various agreements, including commercial ones (cross-regionalism). Mexico, for its part, has a hybrid model based on competitive advantages. This generates intra-industrial exchange, and the competition affects trade with SEA countries. The international integration strategy of each the four countries is currently oriented towards the Asian region, but is largely concentrated on China (because of the commercial, economic, and financial opportunities it offers) as well as the USA. Therefore, there is no apparent diversification at the commercial level, although there is at the policy level. The variety of agreements signed therefore attests to a political inclination towards closer relationships, though this has yet to be borne out in the strength of the ties.

The second reflection is that there are opportunities across numerous spheres for the development of ties between both parties.

The PA member states are in a position to diversify their goods exported to ASEAN countries. Thus, they need to:

- improve regional conditions in order to attract FDI from the Asian region and generate regional supply chains.
- activate and continue implementing the agreements signed on a range of non-commercial issues with ASEAN countries.
- utilize the inter-regional cooperation framework as a platform to strengthen ties.

In barely eight years, intersected by a pandemic, the objectives outlined by both parties have gradually been achieved, even though there are bilateral and multilateral ties that predate and fall outside the PA. The development and strengthening of AP-ASEAN relations means working at a

commercial level to increase commercial exchange and mutual investment, as well as bolstering individual and collective roles in the interests of mutual development.

Limitations and future lines of research:

Among the limitations that arose in this study, the biggest has been access to information – or, at any rate, information that is kept up to date on the aforementioned websites. This was compounded by the pandemic, which made it impossible to obtain responses to enquiries made to several entities. Second, the number of dimensions and countries adopted as units of analysis meant that more time was required for information retrieval, systematization, and analysis. And the time available was limited by other commitments.

Inter-regional relations constitute a worthwhile line of research to pursue, as it is a relatively new phenomenon and its impact on international relations is yet to be determined. Finally, the participation of countries in both blocs in the CPTPP could impact bilateral trade.

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