

The Path of Undergraduate International Relations Studies in Chile: Stumbling Under the Umbrella of Political Science

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In Chile, the study of international relations is very limited both in the number of programs and in its scope. Furthermore, it is still a country where international relations are under the umbrella of political science and political science itself is heavily influenced by the study of the law. This paper looks at the development of international relations both as a tool for training diplomats and as a topic of study within political science in Chile. It does so within the framework of the social sciences. Using interviews as a complimentary tool of research, it concludes that, along with a marked influence of economics in the study of social sciences in Chile, the country's political and social history has shaped the advent of social sciences at the undergraduate level and has dwarfed the growth and contents of both political science and international studies, in spite of the country's successful embrace of globalization.

Keywords: international studies, political science, Chile, diplomatic training, international relations (IR) programs

Introduction

Chile is a country with a long international tradition and the Latin American country with the largest number of free trade agreements; however, as a consequence of a traditional political science approach to international relations and a curriculum focused on economics and security, the study of international relations is not big in the country. There is only one undergraduate program in international relations in Chile and related degrees amount to a dozen¹. Looking at Alianza del Pacifico countries—Colombia, Peru and Mexico—where there are a significant number of undergraduate degrees in international relations or international relations related fields², this is a puzzling question. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to attempt and explain the reason by looking at the Chilean view of international studies from the perspective of university scholars, diplomats, and that of political science students.

International relations are a part of that most intimate layer that conforms the identity of a country (Fernandois, 2005, p. 18) and Chile is no exemption. Chile is a country that approaches international relations from the perspective of security, a realistic approach, and from that of economics, a neoliberal perspective. Chile's international vision deals with commercial and border issues, its identity constructed between the two

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¹ The information in this paper is accurate up to August 2017. At the time, there is a study on the part of Universidad de Chile to launch an undergraduate degree in international studies.

² Colombia has over 90 international relations or international relations related degrees; Mexico has close to 125; Peru has close to 30.

models... the commercial paradigm... [and]... the territorial questions (Colacrai, 2008, p. 59); and, always under the umbrella of political science. Both scenarios are the result of the dwarfing of social sciences during the military regime.

Political Science and International Studies in Chile: A Brief History

Throughout the 20th century and before the military coup in 1973, Chile experienced a period of socio-economic growth and an expansion of its middle class. This led to a politically active society—a society that understood the complexity between the right and the left and the importance of the international arena. The country swayed between the Christian Democratic principles and socialism during most of the century, lived through 17 years of military dictatorship, and finally, saw the return to democracy in 1990. It is important to stress that, throughout the last century and more so in the present one, international trade has been at the cornerstone of Chile's development as well as its connection to the world.

During the second half of the 20th century, Chile's politically active society led to an increased interest in the social sciences, and consequently, to a boost in the study of political science and political related fields. Moreover, throughout that period, to deal with “the economic and sociopolitical diversification that increased the complexity of Chilean society there emerged the necessity of creating academic structures for research on those processes, which involved the different social disciplines as well as the formation of specialists” (Garretón, 2005, p. 367). Consequently, the social sciences experienced a boost in Chile in the years prior to the military coup.

Political science institutes were created in the two major universities in the country, Universidad de Chile (1954), and Universidad Católica (1970) as well as in Universidad de Concepcion (1957). The Chilean Diplomatic Academy was also created during this period (1954). However, the study of political science was still under the umbrella of the departments of law and law studies dominated the study of political issues and international questions (Fernández, 1997).

Despite the interest in the social sciences that arose from the socio-economic changes in the 1960s and 1970s both in Chile and the Latin region³, “the institutionalization and the consolidation of social sciences... collapses with the 1973 military coup” (Garretón, 2005). In addition, the passing of “the University Law produced a period of deterioration of the social sciences: only economics was officially and exclusively taught at universities, [and]... the disciplinary development in the universities was seriously hurt, as was the training of new social scientists” (Garretón, 2005, p. 383-384).

The University Law, passed in 1981, regulated the study of social sciences within the framework of the military view of the world. This law included in its articles 11 and 12 the titles that universities are allowed to confer. There were 12 academic titles permitted and only *Licenciado en Ciencias Económicas* came close to a social sciences degree. Moreover, according to article 13, titles not mentioned in the previous articles could only be conferred by institutions of superior education that were not on the same level as universities. This was the case of technical institutions and similar places. This fact diminished the importance of political science and international relations as fields of study for they were not included amongst the undergraduate programs awarding a title. Furthermore, article 15 of the same law allowed for the creation of new universities (Ley

³ This is the decade of Castro's consolidation of power in Cuba, the decade of Che Guevara and the advent of numerous guerrilla groups throughout the region. In Chile, the Frei Government (1964-1970) introduced a strong agrarian reform policy as well as other leftist expropriation measures that were the starting point of a radicalization of politics in the country. The process continued to escalate under Allende (1970-1973) until the Military Coup led by Pinochet in 1973. These processes led to an increased interest in political topics.

General de Universidades, 1981). This led to the establishment of 11 more universities but no international relations or political science programs.

This lack of social science programs coupled with the number of social scientists that left the country as expatriates meant that the number of social science professors was very low, and those who stayed met only in private between them (Fernández, 2005, p. 72), in silence, and, sometimes, even in secret. In the case of political science, it meant that all seminars and conferences were held in closed spaces and thus was born what can be called the endogamy of the Chilean political science. Political science being the “parent” in Chile of international relations, it meant that the development of international relations also suffered a setback.

During the Pinochet years, the study of international relations was relegated to the Diplomatic Academy. Nevertheless, students in both, the years after the military coup and during the years of Pinochet, faced a curriculum dominated by international law questions, territorial issues, and international trade. It was very specific and it was oriented towards working in the ministry from a practical perspective. There was and still is very little international analysis in its courses. Aside from their academic knowledge, students are recruited more on the basis of their vocation for serving the country.

Political Science and International Relations in Chile: State of the Art

Chile’s return to democracy in 1991 set the stage for the recovery of the social sciences within the academic world. Nonetheless, nowadays, international relations as an undergraduate program are taught in Chile in only one university, the University of Santiago (USACH), a public university. Aside from that program, there are three different universities that offer international relations as a minor and eight that include international relations courses as part of their political science program—12 universities total (see Table 1). These undergraduate programs in political science and international relations related topics are quite new, and, with three exceptions, they date from 2002. Moreover, only one predates 1991, in which year Chile became a democracy again⁴.

The USACH program in international relations is a 10-year-old program that grew out of Chile’s increased international globalization. It is under the wing of the history department and its professors come mainly from the sociology area. As to its curriculum, its emphasis is on theory of international relations, Chilean foreign economic policy, security and defense (confidence building measures), and the relationship with Bolivia, Argentina, and Peru. Security and defense have been at the core of the Chilean diplomatic, military, and political studies for the last 50 years (C. Garay, personal communication, June 14, 2017). Within the diplomatic course of study, security is understood as a territorial question encompassing border disputes and relations with neighboring countries.

From the economical perspective, the study of international topics in Chile is very much associated to the success of the free trade agreements that were the economic cornerstone of the military regime and its *Chicago boys*⁵. In Chile, there is no Minister of Foreign Trade and all related issues are part of the agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As such, aside from border security and territorial questions, the Ministry deals

⁴ It is a program on history with an option for a minor in political science at Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. Its curriculum is oriented more towards the history of Chile and its political challenges than to the study of political science per se.

⁵ When Chile faced obstacles in its relations with the outside world due to its human rights standing during the years of the dictatorship, the country turned to a group of young economic students that advocated free trade known as the Chicago Boys. They not only kept the country going but led the foundations for an open economy that prevails to date. To 2016, Chile has signed 26 Free Trade Agreements and is the South American country with the most agreements.

with all trade matters. This fact means that students of international relations must have a comprehensive view of both security, territorial, and political economic topics, in other words, international public law and economics.

Table 1

List of Political Science Undergraduate Programs in Chile 2017

UNIVERSITY	DEGREE	YEAR CREATED
Universidad Diego Portales	Political Scientist	2002
Universidad Central	Political Scientist	2002
U Academia de Humanismo Cristiano	Degree in Political Science and International Relations	2003
Universidad de las Américas	Degree in Public Administration and International Relations	2004
Universidad del Desarrollo	Political Science	2001
Universidad Miguel de Cervantes	Political Science	2011
Universidad Alberto Hurtado	Political Science and International Relations	2007
Universidad Católica	Political Science	1995
Universidad Católica de Valparaíso	History with political science	1976
Universidad de Concepción	Public Administration and Political Science	1992
Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana	Political Science	2004
Universidad Santiago de Chile (USACH)	International Studies	2006

Source: Compiled with information from the Ministry of Education, Chile.

Up to 2016, only four of USACH's international relations graduates had joined the foreign service—a small number. Most of the students that join the diplomatic corps are law students and more than 70% of the Chilean foreign service is made up by lawyers⁶. Moreover, despite the fact that international relations courses in the country and in the region, started as places to prepare diplomats and foreign policy experts (Murillo Zamora, 2012), diplomatic academies have become the place where international public lawyers flourish. Latin Americans tend to be very “legally centered” when it comes to choosing a profession, and Chile is not an exemption. Usually, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs... the work emphasis is on the tools provided by the law and history (Ross & Artaza, 2015, p. 43). Consequently, the idea of the international relations has been traditionally imbedded in the history of the law, as a tool for security (C. Garay, personal communication, June 14, 2017).

Moreover, according to Professor Rodriguez Elizondo (2015), the actual state of the Chilean diplomacy still rests on the study of the law as a foundation for its actions.

The Chilean diplomacy has missed its opportunity to modernize and most of its career diplomats are engaged in commercial negotiations... The State has forced them into a reactive group that finds solace and comfort in the use of legal sentences and the precedence of international law. (p. 95)

In countries like Colombia, the idea that the study of international relations is solely a seeding ground for diplomats has begun to change with alternatives such as Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO) positions and consultant jobs in both the private and the public sector. What's more, with the end of the Cold War, the number of programs in international relations increased as Colombians saw an opportunity to enter a new job market, that of a world without political divides. In Chile, however, Chileans took on a more cautious approach to setting up international relations programs. They felt their law and economic programs were sufficient to

⁶ Informal conversation with students of the Diplomatic Academy in 2014.

prepare Chileans for the new challenges arising globally.

In addition, in Chile, there is still the idea that political science students and students in related areas of study are militants of the left or activists (Fernández, 2005, p. 70). They are met with suspicion. Political science students in 2017, still talk about the fact that their program of study was affected by the dictatorship and the Law of Universities from 1981 as if it was a current and very much alive issue (Male political science student 1). In a country that doesn't easily forget, the past is still an issue. Furthermore, the fact that the only undergraduate program in international relations is in a public university associated with left means that its students are even more categorized as radicals. The political effervescence inside the universities... especially the public ones, left a negative mark... and its political scientists are... met with suspicion (Barrientos del Monte, 2013, p. 124). This fact accounts for a low enrolment.

Moreover, the idea that an international relations degree offers limited job opportunities is very much alive. Most social sciences students, including those in political science and international relations programs, worry about their joining the labor force. In Chile, as in most Latin American countries, graduating from international relations, without a postgraduate degree, [is] not considered to be promising in regards to job offers. In all these countries, there is the idea that international relations graduates [are] jacks of all trades, masters of none. (Murillo Zamora, 2012).

This last belief has led to the idea that if a student is interested in political science or international relations, they must look at the practical side first. This is true even if studies have shown that regardless of how difficult it is to pinpoint a specific stimulus [when choosing political science or a political science related career]... it seems to be clear that neither money nor fame are the main incentives. Instead, a certain fascination with power or a strong motivation to change and reform the system seem to be the driving forces (Fernández, 2005, p. 60).

This search for impact and power means that careers and programs dealing with more practical questions and the capability to change things such as public policy and public administration lead the students' choices. They reflect a discipline that is based on three thematic axes: theory of political science, social sciences [and economics], and public policy/administration (Fuentes & Santana, 2005, p. 34). International relations discipline is a difficult topic to integrate in a public policy program. In addition, when public policy or public administration students have to choose their mandatory internship in order to graduate, they are forced to look, for example, at the operational/managerial side of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as opposed to the thematic one, even if their interests are in international relations (Female Political Science Student 1). As a result, there is in Chile, as in South America a tendency to create programs that adapt to the labor and market necessities and characteristics as opposed to the global and regional tendencies of the [international relations] discipline (Murillo Zamora, 2012).

What's more, when it comes to post graduate studies, the numbers of international relations related programs increase, and, in the case of the Universidad de Chile, Universidad Catolica, and the Academia Nacional de Estudios Estrategicos (ANEPE), the quality does as well. ANEPE is part of the Escuela de Guerra de Chile and is run by the military. Its focus is on defense and geopolitics while that of the Universidad Catolica and Universidad de Chile is more liberal. As mentioned before, in a country still divided between leftists and non-leftists, these institutions encompass the different sides of the political spectrum, and, whereas they are all well respected, ANEPE is on one end of the spectrum, associated with ideas that come from the dictatorship, and the Universidad de Chile is on the other end seen as an activist breeding ground. Universidad Catolica leans towards the center/right.

Nevertheless, the best international relations professors in Chile attend events at all three universities as well as participate in conferences and seminars. It is a case of *juntos pero no revueltos*⁷. Chilean professor Maria De Los Angeles Fernandez, in her study of the development of political science in Chile, quotes Berndtson (1991), and argues that the history of a discipline has to be seen through the differences in views that arise from the socialization process of its political scientists (Fernández, 2005, p. 59). In the case of Chile, this socialization process swings from left to right depending on where you are standing; however, the legacy of the military coup and dictatorship has left an indelible imprint.

Conclusions

In Chile, international relations are under the umbrella of political science and political science is still in a process of growth and institutionalization. This process started before the military coup but was dwarfed by the dictatorial regime. As a result, it began anew in 1991, building on the skeleton of what had developed prior to 1973 and adding what they could salvage from the years under Pinochet. This last fact meant that the economic opening the country underwent under Pinochet, its only international success, was added to the core structure of political science studies. Consequently, international economic topics became embedded in Chilean political science and assimilated as the largest portion of the international curriculum. “The new economic model established the predominance of market mechanisms... [as a societal base, and on] this basis, a line of action was developed to control... research and teaching” (Garretón, 2005, p. 380). The study of international relations was “economized”.

Likewise, following the impact of the military regime, a further look at the curricula in international relations in Chile, leads to the idea that, in addition to neoliberalism and global economics being central to the international focus of study, security and defense are also an integral part. In addition to its border issues, Chile experienced a securitization of its agenda during the years of Pinochet and that securitization has followed into the democratic transition, adding an extra challenge to academics and researchers interested in the international relations. It has impacted on international relations studies and “geopoliticized” them, as can be seen in professor Garay’s statement that security and defense have been at the core of what Chilean diplomats study and practice (C. Garay, personal communication, June 14, 2017).

Labor markets have also shaped the study of international relations in Chile since its beginnings. In Chile, the first courses in political science that emerged in the 1950s were... more concerned with forming statesmen, therefore emphasizing public administration and law (Rehren & Fernandez, 2005, p. 41), rather than forming political scientists and even less internationalists. This idea is yet another obstacle surrounding the growth of social sciences in the early 1990s, after the military regime. It is also a tendency that has continued into the 21st century and one that has resulted in the strengthening of public policy and public administration programs over international programs despite Chile’s rampant internationalization. Consequently, in Chile, even if political science and international relations courses grew rapidly in the 2000s, they did not become as popular as those focused on public policies and administration (Medeiros, Barnabé, Albuquerque, & Lima, 2016; Fuentes & Santana, 2005; Rehren, & Fernández, 2005). Students still see public administration as the path that leads to all government jobs including those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

7 Together but not mixed as one. Each one retains its own independence.

The history of a country sets its political road, and in the case of Chile, the military regime left its mark and is very much visible in the academic world and the social sciences even after 26 years. As David Easton proposed, when there is a lack of instruments that allow for the integration of theories acceptable to a discipline, ... the use of historical tools make it possible to describe and pretend to understand the discipline as it is today (Fernández, 2005, p. 59). Consequently, to understand the study of international relations in Chile it is necessary to understand the historical tools that led to the development of political science as a social science in the country, and it is necessary to understand the imprint of the military coup.

Finally, in Chile, the potential growth of international relations as a field of study, has been diminished by its political history and thematically dwarfed by the very same economic globalization process that is supposed to have fostered the development of international studies in other countries.

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