

Ecuadorian foreign policy during the War of the Pacific: An analysis from the balances of power outlook in Latin America

Política exterior ecuatoriana durante la guerra del Pacífico: un análisis desde la óptica de los equilibrios de poder en la región latinoamericana

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RESUMEN

La guerra del Pacífico (1879-1884) que enfrentó a Perú y Bolivia contra de Chile, representa un conflicto armado marcado por las políticas realistas de imponer el interés nacional, frente a otros Estados, alterando el equilibrio político regional, bajo la justificación de las reivindicaciones territoriales. Esta política no sólo afectó a los beligerantes, sino que a otros países que pudieron sumarse en la confrontación buscando cambiar su *status quo*. Ecuador representa esta consideración, en cuanto a que su participación pudo consolidar su frontera sur con Perú, pendiente desde de la emancipación. ¿Fue la debilidad política interna la que no permitió concretar una posible intervención? En las siguientes páginas se estudiará este proceso histórico, desde la óptica del realismo clásico presente en las relaciones internacionales, donde el escenario interno de un país, es determinante en la proyección de su política exterior. Palabras clave: interés nacional; Guerra del Pacífico; política exterior ecuatoriana.

ABSTRACT

The War of the Pacific (1879-1884) which pitted Peru and Bolivia against Chile, represents an armed conflict marked by the realism policies that impose national interest, in the presence of other states, altering the regional political balance under the justification of territorial claims. This policy affected not only the belligerents, but also other countries that could join the confrontation, seeking to change their status quo. Ecuador represents this reflexion, in that its participation could strengthen its southern border with Peru, pending since independence from Spain. Was it the internal political weakness that did not allow them to specify a possible intervention? This historical process, from the perspective of classical realism in international relations, where a country's domestic scene is a decisive factor in the projection of its foreign policy will be studied in the following pages.

Keywords: national interest; War of the Pacific; Ecuadorian foreign policy.

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TERRITORIES, INTERESTS AND DISPUTES BETWEEN THE SOUTH AMERICAN “POWERS”: THE BASES OF THE WAR

Between 1879 and 1883, this armed conflict was fought where more than 100,000 men and women from Bolivia, Peru and Chile were mobilised in a total of five military campaigns. After the occupation of Antofagasta by the Chilean forces, the struggle concentrated on obtaining maritime control, key for the development of future land action. The Tarapacá campaign consolidated the Chilean strategic political objective by obtaining control of the nitrate fields in Peru, strongly hitting Peruvian economic possibilities. After the Tacna and Arica campaigns, the process was considered to be at an end. The first conferences seeking peace were held but after their failure, Chilean forces attacked the capital of Peru and in two swift moves conquered and occupied Lima, the capital, a process which after all is said and done was spread out over more than two years. A war of resistance took place in this period in the mountain range area which ended in 1883 when the Treaty of Ancón between Chile and Peru was signed and then one year later, the Peace Treaty with Bolivia, who despite not participating in military action since the defeat at the Battle of Tacna, also known as the Campo de la Alianza, continued at war with Chile.²

In light of this, the shore of the South American Pacific transformed itself in this period into one of the main war scenes in Latin America, a situation which was not indifferent to other states in the region, especially when the chanceries from the warring states, sought to defend their position in front of the adversary. Because of this, no expense was spared in trying to obtain support for their cause, whether it be by means rejecting their opponent's hostile actions or by means of seeking more concrete support in the conflict. Both Peru and Chile therefore tried to get close to countries which could be useful to them where Ecuador, due to its geographic position on the Pacific coast, consequently, with commercial and shipping interests, along with the territorial definition problems which they had, specifically in the Amazon region of Peru, became an object of interest for both Peruvian and Chilean diplomatic missions with the aim of drawing their interests closer to their own.

Despite the efforts of both chanceries, Ecuador chose not to use the advantage it possessed and to protect its interests, especially given the nature of the power of the head of state at the time, General Ignacio de Veintemilla who declared himself to be neutral and with that shielded himself from possible negative consequences, depending on the winning side. Nonetheless, the conflict by the same token smelt of Ecuadorian interests since the government

sought to seek answers facing problems in which diplomatic representatives, businessmen and civilian population sat in cities or territories which would be transformed into parts of operation theatres in the war.

Many questions have come up on this stage which have guided this research. The first of them, the most general, is why did the Ecuadorian political authorities, who maintained an interest in solving their territorial problems with Peru, not take advantage of the military situation which was presented to them? From this question the following one is born: did the attitude of Ignacio de Veintemilla stand up to an Americanist policy or was it a decision based on the reality of their political-military possibilities? This leads to the third question: Was Ecuador in domestic conditions to enter a military conflict on a larger scale than the local conflicts which they had faced in the last few years? Finally, we have to question if the power of Ecuador, understood to be their material and symbolic forces, was on the same wave length so as to stand up to a military process abroad. Based on these questions, we can state that Ecuador does not join the war out of an Americanist feeling, as declared by official documentation, but it is limited to a domestic stage, in other words the political situation, which generates effects on the military capability of the country, decisive at the time of taking a stance in the presence of the war Chile was fighting against Peru and Bolivia.

From the theoretical point of view, for this research we consider that the nation state is the main actor in international relations, under the consideration of being inserted inside an international system, (Ortiz, 2002, p. 100ss.) where international society, understood in this case to be Latin America, was permanently seeking a balance between the interest of the State and the interest of the community so as to reduce threats to international peace, trying to maintain the best coexistence between the countries (Bull, 2005, p. 62ss.). Therefore, the idea that a society in constant tension between peace and conflict justifies that the states act out of their best interests in the search to modify the prevailing *status quo*, in pursuit of imposing their own international needs above those of the states in the region, in practice, the application of power was sought by means of international action, understood to be the ability to impose their will on others, without diplomacy being capable of maintaining its empire on its own, peace between countries. This essential characteristic of “classical political realism”, present in classical texts which define it, both from the sociological viewpoint of Raymond Aron (1963, p. 73) or the political science of Hans Morgenthau (1986, pp. 63-68).

From this point of view, national interest began to take precedence in the behaviour of the State representatives, having to take charge of how to tackle the territorial situation, especially considering the reality at home for the state, becoming aware of the material and intellectual abilities so as to establish a Duroselle and Renouvin foreign policy strategy (Duroselle; Renouvin, 2000, pp. 9-10). These deep forces are those which present themselves on the State action, bases on a territory defence speech, seeking to, by means of pep talks and propaganda actions, rally efforts around the common course, “the defence of the national territory” as part of the collective imagination (this being a display of the spiritual forces of the nation), all that, within the need to consolidate a national identity (Otero, 1996, p. 123). This strategy was certainly employed, both by the political authorities and by the opinion groups in the base of the antagonists so as to increase support and join forces in the dispute.

As part of national interest, the need to position itself as a state with more power was swiftly opted for, not only in internal structure, regarding politics, but also economic resources which would allow it to support this factor. In the 19th century, raw materials in the region were the main source of struggles between the States. Peru, Bolivia and Chile, who were facing each other so as to change *status quo*, through the control of saltpetre which would allow them to acquire a position of power in the region, especially in the case of Peru and Chile since both, maintained an interest in dominating the South American Pacific and therefore the conflict would resolve that the State would have more power. The justification was that Peru was an ally with Bolivia and that upon violating the 1874 treaty, military action broke out. Nevertheless, the background to all this was the possession of raw materials, in this case saltpetre and its international market, force being used so as to reach their objectives (Barbe, 2007, pp. 247-248).

The idea then of an alliance between countries was the idea of gaining benefits through this agreement. It was political realism, confirming the idea of a competitive international system where imposing will mean using all the possible strategies. Under this factor we will also use the concept *neighbour of the neighbour states*. This consists of a close link between countries with no borders with each other but among them a state which had a common border, or otherwise opposing interests (State A, State B, State C, State A and C are para-neighbours in the presence of State B). The application of this method is adjusted to interstate relations under the realistic consideration of defending the state's interests.

This decisive factor obtained a geopolitical nature regarding the existing interests between para-neighbours to coincide, generating *per se*, the idea of unity or of a potential alliance in the presence of others, involving the feasibility that in the presence of a conflictive situation, the link could originate from a military alliance. The case in study clearly represents this condition, to the extent that Chile and Ecuador have no common border, but both become to have rivalry with Peru. The para-neighbour alliance was then a valid strategy for Chilean authorities and a possibility for Ecuador to also satisfy their national interests.

DOMESTIC ECUADORIAN SITUATION IN THE YEARS BEFORE THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC

The murder of Gabriel García Moreno in 1875 meant the end of a political-social process inside Ecuador, marked by the conservative vision that that head of state held, whilst at the same time holding a process of material modernisation in the country. It is true that with his death the period of conservatism linked to the Catholic church ended. The effect on domestic law and order did not lead to a radical transformation, more a balance between the conservative and liberal elites, opting for over the years to call themselves *progresismo*.³

The leaders of this school of thought stood for the conciliation of more liberal political thinking and economic development. We must also add another political actor decisive in political life, the Catholic conservatives who held economic power on the estates. A third component of Ecuadorian political life was the strong regionalism present in the country until 1884, especially the rivalry between Guayaquil and Quito (Manguashca, 1994, p. 414), a situation which manifested itself in the political backup and projects of the state and which stopped showing the individualism of the provinces in the presence of the central power since the situation of Guayaquil in the presence of Quito, replicated similarly although not with the same force in Cuenca and Esmeraldas. A demonstration of this was the 1859 crisis, where there were four political authorities at the same time (Ortiz, 1999, pp. 1-3). All of that in the territorial dispute context which had dragged on the Ecuadorian emancipation of Gran Colombia, generating rivalry for the borders between this republic and its neighbour Peru (Tobar; Luna, 1994, p. 133).

In institutional terms, this period of transition which began after the assassination was marked by the consensus of utilitarian nature so as to keep

order in the country.⁴ Since we are talking about governments which had no base nor strong political foundation, some groups quickly began to question the measures of President Borrero and to request some changes or reforms to the advantage of some economic and regional sectors. In Guayaquil a series of action aimed at weakening political power originated, led by General Ignacio de Veintemilla, who managed to oust the weapons commander in that port which he used as a strategy to swear loyalty to the central government but at the same time scheming against it with representatives from the local elite. The demands, with their own particular definitions, whether they were economic or political, reduced the government's capability, since it resisted to pressure. The consequences waited for no one leading the way to ever increasing rebellions, both in support and in violence, until leading to armed revolt and military incursion. Guayaquil named Veintemilla as head of state whereas the area in mountains recognised Borrero, leading to the Battle of Galte on 14th December 1866, leaving thousands dead on the battlefield, the greatest tragedy in Ecuador until then. Borrero and his closest allies were exiled. Veintemilla, at the time Military Head of Guayaquil, was proclaimed Head of State by that same province and the victor in the presence of military disturbance, took over power in the country. It is therefore not necessary to point out that the power on the coastal province in day-to-day politics, a situation which implied a double condition, on one hand the base of military power but at the same time a weakness for the new ruler since he had to carry out power from Quito where ideas and interests took precedence which countered those from the coast. Supposedly his arrival would give security to the rest of the political class that was being sought out for the country.

So towards 1978 in the *Asamblea de Ambatos*, his power was made official as part of the tools which would collaborate with order in the country. An alliance was once again sought between the powerful groups which meant reaching a consensus which brought with it changes through a new constitution. Despite the proclamation of the constitution, Veintemilla, was recognised as a head of state who did not stop taking into account the armed forces as his main backup. He did not therefore spare no expense in surrounding himself with loyal soldiers, associated to sectors from the traditional elite without efficient military preparation and rather linked to family clans with interest in political control. Regarding this we can point out that:

General Veintemilla's dictatorship, in which Urbina played an important role, would be in a way the continuity of the first period of national militarism,

although without its reformist calling. Therefore, despite Veintemilla declaring himself to be liberal, he was resisted by new liberalism, from the radical court, which Juan Montalvo fed with his writing and whose political leadership was taken on by an audacious young man from Manabí called Eloy Alfaro. (Kléver; Macías; Aguilar, 2005, p. 8)

From this viewpoint, it is possible to point out that politically the stability of the Ecuadorian government, hung from the favour of the political groups who supported him, where the army was part of a delicate political balance. Moreover, there were opposition groups stemming from other provinces, which added pressure to domestic stability, extending the crisis towards 1883, through a new military confrontation which ended the leader's term of office.

In the period prior to the war and during the war, the Ecuadorian economy had a benevolent period in terms of the medicinal herb and cocoa bean trade, which allowed a financial breather and to calm the tension at home, at least for a time because the constant disturbances and bad administration weakened the fiscal safes (Hurtado, 2010, pp. 101-102). Despite this, the elites were not unaware of the demands for benefits, especially in that boom period, especially taking into account that these raw materials were native to provinces or specific territories, marking with them, a strong region regionalist policy, In the words of Jorge Núñez after the 1859-60 crisis they had achieved “a ‘conflictive balance’, having Quito as the capital of the country, Guayaquil as the only port and Cuenca has the decisive regional power” (Núñez, 2015, p. 29). Therefore, the relationship between Guayaquil and Quito in light of the former being a privileged port, gave a relevant political importance, even with autonomist resemblances. Regarding this, we must point out that in 1859, in the context of a domestic Ecuadorian crisis, the provinces founded political leaders and in the case of Guayaquil moreover, the possibility of joining Peru.

These three factors were decisive in the context of the war since the Ecuadorian state had to take a position and defend it with the weight of the government, the power inside the country being exactly what was weakened.

THE ECUADORIAN STANCE IN TERMS OF THE WAR FOR CHILE AGAINST PERU AND BOLIVIA

While that is true, the trigger for the War in the Pacific was the 1874 Bolivian Border Treaty which was born out of Chile granting territories which according to the decrees from colonial times had been handed out. In other

words, from the Loa river to the south, it is possible to point out that the most evident conflict of interests is identified between Peru and Chile, essentially for the rivalry in the investments associated to saltpetre mining which was in full flow in those years and which had investors from both countries, as well as the capital from the United States and Europe, awaiting the negotiation process and subsequently the war (Ravest, 2008, pp. 63-77).

In this context, after Antofagasta was taken by Chilean military forces, an intense diplomatic movement was produced where Chile, on one hand, sought to approach Bolivia while they clang onto the mutual support treaty signed in 1873 with Peru. On the other hand, Bolivia sent a delegation to Chile under the command of the plenipotentiary José Antonio Lavalle with the mission of offering his services so as to seek a negotiated way-out to the neighbouring crisis. Nevertheless, on 1st Abril, Peru declared war on Chile based on the agreement signed with the Bolivia whereas Chile replied declaring war on both states on 5th Abril 1879. As of this moment, the war speech (Rubilar, 2013, p. 3) became part of everyday language between the three countries, reaching other capitals in the region where a campaign to gain international support from the outlook of the causes which were born out of military action, the search for solidarity for denouncing the assailant and also for gaining support for facing the war. In all three cases, the role of Ecuador would be relevant, but especially in the third aspect quoted both for the coastal state situation in the Pacific as a para-neighbour and their border situation with Peru, which was characterised for maintaining a territorial dispute between both countries and in a war setting this struggle could have an incentive for being able to take advantage of imposing its national interest.

During the first few years of the War of the Pacific, Chilean-Ecuadorian bilateral relations had been maintained within what could be classified as conventional. From Ecuador, President Veintemilla was collecting votes so as to manage to finish the conflict by reaching an agreement which would re-establish peace in the region, declaring itself neutral. Nevertheless, the theme of negotiation with Spain which had been dragging on from the 1865-6 war, was a sign that was interpreted in Chile as an act of closeness, which, by reporting the negotiations which Peru were carrying out, who had at the same time invited the Ecuadorian government. The dilemma then for Ecuadorian diplomacy was to take part or not in this game, especially for the long-term consequences which it could generate, discomfort which was overcome when Ecuador unofficially informed of these conversations and propositions which were considered an indication of neutrality. The process was therefore in

Santiago noted even if they were not overly concerned given the focal point that at that time the representatives of Chilean foreign policy had taken (AMRREE Ecuador, 1879, s/n).

Indeed, among the worries of the Chilean political authorities there was a threat factor, especially during the first few months of the war, the possibility hits the mark as well as facing allies from Peru and Bolivia, Argentina joining the conflict, given the border problems which were still pending.⁵ As if this the unfavourable stage was not enough, there was also the pressure of staying away from possible interventions by other powers, both from America and from Europe, who sought to maintain some degree of meddling in the armed conflict given the interests which they had or wished to have. This is why the strategy in Chile in terms of its international relationships, sought to establish rapprochement with allied nations or at least keep them neutral, thinking especially in the region.

As part of foreign political action, the Chilean authorities opted to look for rapprochements in para-neighbour states, such as the mechanism to counteract pressure, since achieving greater rapprochement or even political support achieved the objective of maintaining a balance of power, allowing them to concentrate their political and military efforts in the north. This is, therefore, how they tried to seek closer communication with Brazil. On that subject, there was plenty of Chilean historiography which makes reference to a liking on behalf of Brazil towards Chile (Fernández, 1959, p. 90), but in more recent pieces of work, we can find that such a situation was no more than a one-sided Chilean vision without real foundation inside the Brazilian authorities (Villafañe, 2007, p. 131), with the idea that this would stop Argentinean action, a situation which turned out to be. At the same time and following on from this same strategy, Chilean representatives tried to achieve greater backup for their cause in the Pacific Republics, a situation which was not easy if the weight of Peruvian diplomacy in the same intention is taken into account. So as to be successful in this task, Joaquín Godoy was appointed as the Chilean plenipotentiary in Ecuador whose mission was focused on trying to persuade Veintemilla's government to join Chile in a military alliance against Bolivia and Peru. It would be useful for their territorial aspirations which had been dragging on from 1830 and which had not been solved yet. If they had been unable to reach this aim, neutrality from that country in the confrontation could at least have been achieved (Barros, 1990, p. 404).

The task would not be easy at all since in the same way that Chile sought it. From Peru the effort was similar, a situation which was made easier by the

existing trade relations between both states, especially links between the ports of Callao and Guayaquil, where close links were maintained regarding the exchange and transport of merchandise, which generated once the War of the Pacific began, a variation in the process which for some representatives from the commercial elite in Guayaquil would be negative in terms of navigation, although in what was related to trade could be favourable to the sale of products. Moreover, Peruvian diplomacy did not skimp on efforts also to seek that Ecuador joined the Allied cause. This statement, more than representing the logic of the tasks that the Foreign Office had to undertake was endorsed by Emilio Bonifaz's report whilst he was representative in Quito between 1879 and 1880 in his report to his country's chancery, first, questioning Joaquín Godoy's opportunism for trying a Chilean-Ecuadorian Alliance, at the same time pointing out the good relationship Veintemilla's government had with Peru confirmed the idea that from Guayaquil there was a political rapprochement towards the Peruvian position, an act confirmed in meetings with representatives from the government where likings would be shown towards the cause for their neighbours to the south. But even more important were the instructions that Bonifaz pointed out having received from his government regarding his role in Ecuador: "to establish an alliance with Ecuador ... to avoid an Ecuadorian alliance with Chile ... to request from the government of that republic the lending of their flag so as to obtain ships and weapons and to request in the last case a declaration of absolute neutrality" (AMRREE Peru, 1884, s/n).

Veintemilla then had in his hands a decision which could alter his political power, territory, commercial opportunities and relations with his neighbours; three alternatives of which two could change the future of Ecuador, having the third possibility, which was to take the box seat and wait for the end of the war to unfold. All the options had benefits and costs, therefore, their own domestic scene had to be analysed. Characterising Ecuadorian power, from the outlook of realism, it was possible to point out that regarding their economic capacity, Ecuador went through a period of commercial expansion but the administration of the state was inefficient and marked by personal favours, a situation which was replicated on the political stage with an instability manifested through the constant clashes between the more liberal, progressive and conservative. In terms of military power, this was limited taking into account the groups of interest in the different provinces. Veintemilla's army was characterised by enlisting loyal liberal and troops stemming from Carchi, faithful to the leader (Kléver; Macías; Aguilar, 2005, p. 9). From this point of view where domestic power in Ecuador could not guarantee the possibility of a successful

participation, on the contrary, it could weaken his power more, he resolved that his government be declared neutral in the War in the Pacific.

For the antagonists, mainly those fighting for maritime control, Ecuadorian neutrality was the less harmful alternative for their interests and foreign policy strategy. Joaquin Godoy's Chilean mission was considered to be accomplished hence the government's concern focused on other scenarios despite the failed attempt to create an alliance with Ecuador under the idea that "it was the moment to finally solve out the Ecuador-Peru disagreement occupying the territory in dispute" (St. John, 1999, p. 92). On the other hand, Peru attempted to get close to Ecuador, in spite of its neutrality, especially because of its commercial nexus which would be a part of the problems faced during the war, but not the only one.

The Chilean diplomatic environment had several tasks both in America and Europe, but the situation with the rest of the countries in the region was vital; particularly because of the abovementioned details with Ecuador, moreover because of the solidarity expressed once the conflict started by the Ecuadorian agent in Lima towards Peru and Bolivia, pointing out these should be the allies prevailing against Chile (AMRREE Ecuador, 1879, s/n).

During such a complex process, these statements given in Lima were the first setbacks for the Chilean strategy. They asked the Ecuadorian government for explanations for such an unfriendly act in a moment of discussion about Ecuadorian neutrality. The answer came soon from Quito and stated "those acts do not correspond to the Ecuadorian government's vision, which strictly maintains its neutrality and were basically a personal comment given by such diplomat despite being a representative of the country's policies (AMRREE Ecuador, 1879, s/n).

Veintemilla's government therefore tried to disassociate itself from those statements removing its relevancy and sending guidance and orientations to its foreign representatives and consuls (AMRREE Ecuador, 1879, s/n). All the aforementioned was accompanied by a strong speech defending neutrality and the interest of keeping peace in the region, along with the votes to end this dispute. On the other hand, Chile constantly issued statements and letters about its position towards this war, which later on became part of the chancery's memories. One important reference was the note sent from Santiago to the Ecuadorian Foreign Office stating:

[Chile] ... unfairly provoked by Bolivia and Peru, my government hurried to express to all allied nations the powerful arguments which forced it to seek its

honour and seriously harmed interests through weapons, previously impossible to obtain by conciliatory means despite its persistent efforts. (AMRREE Ecuador, 1880, p. 273)

This quote represents two relevant aspects of the Chilean position towards the conflict, the first and well known is related to the vision that this war started due to the responsibility of the allies of Peru and Bolivia and the second linked to the pursuit of acceptance of the Chilean position by the neutral countries. The last part of the extract has special relevance since it could be interpreted as a message to the Ecuadorian authorities in relation to the territorial problem with Peru. On the other hand, despite the constant statements of absolute neutrality in Quito, they had to face the problem caused by the capture of Ecuadorian ships at the hands of Chilean vessels because of acts considered to be unfriendly or even hostile. In fact, the first of these cases was the capture of the ship “Isluga” in the hands of the vessel “Amazonas” of the Chilean navy under the command of Manuel Thompson, generating important tensions in bilateral relations (AMRREE Chile, 1879, s/n).⁶

During 1880 following the capture of the ship “Isluga”, the Ecuadorian government presented a formal complaint to the Chilean government stating that they had violated international law when capturing a boat with an Ecuadorian flag since Ecuador had declared itself as neutral in this war. Nonetheless, the Chilean government justified itself saying the Ecuadorian ship was found serving Peru and transporting war supplies and stores (AMRREE Ecuador, 1880, s/n). However, the complaints continued due to the new capture of the ship “Alay” under the same accusations, carrying war supplies and stores from Guayaquil to Peruvian ports. The affected traders continued demanding their country’s government to act through the exchange of letters (AMRREE Ecuador, 1886, p. 150).

As the Chilean troops moved forward, another issue that could strain bilateral relations with Ecuador appeared: the harm suffered by Ecuadorian merchants and citizens in the city of Antofagasta, Iquique, Chorrillos and Lima following acts of war. The initial response of Chile was to face anti-Chilean speeches, especially the ones generated in Guayaquil which forced the government of Chile to “cultivate friendship and eliminate negative feelings” (AMRREE Chile, 1881, s/n). All this took place in the political groups related to this seaport. Moreover, there was an intense *lobby* to accuse Chileans of being responsible for the war and all the atrocities committed by troops on

Peruvian soil and of course where Ecuadorian citizens were also affected (AMRREE Peru, 1881, s/n).

After the Lima campaign, the confrontation was thought to be over and a new peace negotiation process started with all the implications generated both in the defeated countries and those people and companies who considered that Chilean military action affected its particular interests. Hence several foreign merchants started claiming processes for war damage from the Chilean authorities during Patricio Lynch's administration in Lima (Tapia, 2009, p. 32).

On the other hand, the Ecuadorian government proposed the need to maintain and extend relations with Chile by also expressing the responsibility of defending Ecuadorian citizens' interests affected by war (AMRREE Ecuador, 1884, p. 16). Between 1883 and 1884 Chilean-Ecuadorian bilateral relations started having important changes marked by a slow but ongoing process of approach especially in terms of the economy between the two countries. This was seen from two different points of view. First, the fact that Chile was the winner in the conflict proposed the idea of having certain international power within the region and because of that the Ecuadorian government would have preferred to approach therefore avoiding having any type of conflict in the future.

Nevertheless, once the war process had ended the claims were an important bilateral exchange between the two chanceries. These were on certain occasions accompanied with comparisons related to European citizens in relatively similar situations in which French, English, German and Italian citizens negotiated in arbitrary courts making quite an easy process of arrangements (Soto, 1950, p. 239). The Ecuadorian authorities tried to obtain a similar deal for its citizens but had nothing but unsuccessful attempts (AMRREE Chile, 1882, p. 316). Ecuadorian citizenship therefore affected by war had no response from the Chilean authorities who simply postponed this issue under the argument of being civilian courts the ones with jurisdiction in those matters. For Chile the resolution of disputes with European countries was more relevant to attend since they were thought to be closer to the country than the ones in the American region (AMRREE Ecuador, 1892, s/n).

Besides, in terms of the Ecuadorian state, this could be seen as a possible sanction for not cooperating in the conflict. This also allowed them to build an image for the victorious country which allowed it to despise in some way the rest of the countries in the region, basically thinking of itself as a greater power. Meanwhile, Ecuador restarted the negotiations with Peru according to the American historian Robert Burr motivated by the Chilean government to be a distractor towards the Chilean-Peruvian issues (Burr, 1965, p. 146). This

would then be another tool used by Chilean diplomacy to concrete its national interest. On the other hand, Ecuador assumed the encouragement as a way to count on support when dealing with the border situation which would later on take several years including the armed conflict in 1941 (Ramiro; Sánchez, 1995, p. 10).

CONCLUSIONS: INTERNAL WEAKNESS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE PACIFIC CONFLICT

In a war scenario in the region in which a certain state is involved, the concern of the government's authorities implies a detained analysis on the possible consequences. This became even more relevant in this war where the belligerents had a political-strategic objective to dominate the seas, vital for the troops and supplies and stores transport and intervention in sea trade.

Beyond any doubts from a realistic point of view in terms of interstate relations, the war process allowed them to change the balance of power in the region especially in the Pacific Ocean although also affecting the Atlantic.

Therefore, the pending issue between Ecuador and Peru of defining its borders in the Amazonia region also pretended a change in the *status quo*, since the territorial unclearness originated in 1830 was still in dispute and every certain decade it was strongly raised in the country as a priority for the Ecuadorian state. In this aspect the armed confrontation between the Peruvian-Bolivian alliance concretely implied an opportunity to solve its border issues.

In light of all, we can state that Chilean diplomacy tried to take advantage of the military conflict by showing Veintemilla's government how advantageous it could be to establish a rapprochement with Chile. This would allow them to pressurize the Peruvian government for the expected decision of the territorial disagreement between both of them with chances of gaining advantages in the negotiations since if they were not to prosper, the Chilean government would offer military support which would imply going to war on a second front in the Peruvian north, weakening the allies' forces.

In spite of how tempting the offer may seem, the Ecuadorian government finally discarded that possibility under the argument of being neutral before two brother-countries, although offering its services as a mediator through a special mission but rejected by all the belligerents.

The aforementioned is just a reflection associated to the concrete relations among states and marked by the most classical view, where the rivalry within

an international system of constant instability, generated an atmosphere which forced the diplomats to double their efforts in achieving and scheming the national interests in foreign policy.

The strategy which was used in this diplomatic process, clearly describes the political game which was produced at the end of the 19th century, representing the permanent rivalry between the states keen to modify their *statu quo*, looking for this purpose to unfold a foreign policy shelter with the idea that national interests must be defended at any cost using all the tools which diplomacy gave them, even more so if we consider the Latin American stage which vouched for this.

Therefore, in terms of the domestic Ecuadorian situation at the time of the War of the Pacific, it is possible to determine that the situation inside General Ignacio de Veintemilla's government was vital in determining its outmost behaviour, composed of three factors: the first related to the role played by Guayaquil and the political nets in the government, which explains the shivery statements of the Ecuadorian diplomat in Lima at early stages of the war. Simultaneously, the vessels from Guayaquil tried to maintain trade with Peru, transporting raw materials and food, an activity which occurred before the war but afterwards intensified due to the demand of the troops. This also implied that certain providers delivered weapons and supplies and stores strictly prohibited by the declaration of neutrality and then being caught by Chilean forces, confiscating the vessels and merchandise stressing even more absolute neutrality declaration towards this conflict. On the other hand, more than just a few specialists pointed out in Quito that there was a positive posture towards the Chilean position which even considered a possible alliance seeking to define the southern limits with Peru. These were surprised by Chilean forces, capturing them and confiscating vessels, stretching the government's declaration of absolute impartiality in the confrontation.

The second factor, the internal weakness of the political system in Ecuador constantly stressed due to disputes between the local and the regional aristocracy, permanently trying to obtain larger benefits for their particular interests and not for a more modern state, furthermore including in their movements military forces, which is the third factor to mention. In effect, the military power of Ecuador was very limited at the time and also subjected to the political power dynamics which took it to participate in different actions, especially the ones taken place in the provinces and towards the capital (worth mentioning this was the way Veintemilla took over). Therefore, being in power implied a closer relationship with the troops needing their support and then avoiding

being overturned by these forces since the principle of loyalty could easily be modified when different leaderships appeared or the support for a certain authority meant to change this loyalty.

It is possible to consider the neutrality declaration of Veintemilla to be based then on his internal issues more than peace in the region, losing the opportunity of defining the southern-eastern borders with Peru, not because he refused to do so, since in 1887 the discussions about this again took place, but because of the lack of internal unity and a geopolitical vision towards a national task as the consolidation of its territorial limits.

Finally this institutional weakness shows that in 1883, when the Pacific war was in its final stage, an attempt to establish an authoritarian mandate took place, which led to new mobilisations against him where part of the political and military class including all benefactors rose against him bringing him down and establishing a transition government led by a board trying to be similar to the Chilean government, due to both the claiming processes caused by war to the citizens and the commercial interests established at that moment and consolidated with the arrival of the liberals led by Eloy Alfaro in the first Ecuadorian Magistracy in 1895.

SOURCES

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- > MRREE Chile. FH. Vol. 55-B. 1879.
- > MRREE Chile. FH. Vol. 82-A. 1881-1882.

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- > MRREE Ecuador. FM. Vol. A.7.2. 1880-1922.
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- > MRREE Peru. AC. Box 280, File 48, 1881.
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NOTES

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² There is a huge biography on the War of the Pacific. However, it is essential to check: Gonzalo Bulnes (1979), Heraclio Bonilla (1980), and Roberto Querejazu (1979). These three authors are considered to be classes and therefore permanently read and included in more modern research which refers to the theme of war, both by historians from the involved countries and researchers from other parts of the world.

³ The concept of *progressism* can be found in Gonzalo Ortiz Crespo (1996, p. 241). None-

theless, other historians and specialists on the topic set out that this period of time is known as *Catholic Liberal Civilism* (see Jorge Salvador, 1995, p. 404).

⁴ It was that dynamic which allowed Antonio Borrero to reach the president's office in Ecuador. As an initial task, this head of state tried to leave behind him the idea of a conservative state and repressive of his predecessor, beginning a strengthening process of public liberties among the most relevant, the relationship with the press, by the same token, he gave into the pressure which they wanted to reform the 1869 Garciana constitution, although he also sought to maintain the development plan propelled by the deceased president.

⁵ Despite efforts, negotiations were held back practically from the end of 1978 which along with the border situation, generated some expectations in the presence of the war. However, after the first few months of the campaign and with results favourable for Chile in the conflict, they ended up convincing most of the Argentinean politicians that it was better to choose diplomacy to reach an agreement which would replace the 1856 treaty. Negotiations were therefore sped up, confirmed for July 1881, reaching the conclusion that an agreement had been reached which would maintain peace in the region following the signing of the Border Treaty.

⁶ Ecuadorian complaints about Chilean naval action were a recurring them in bilateral communication that year which were maintained in the following years. These can be found registered in documents from both chanceries in following years.