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Role Theory, Narratives and Interpretation: The Domestic Contestation of Roles[1]

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This article assesses the possibilities for the development of foreign-policy role theory using the concepts of traditions and dilemmas from the interpretive approach to foreign policy, as well as narratives as an interpretative method for analysis. While role theory is rich in conceptualization, it still suffers from overt structuralism, inattention to domestic processes of divergence/convergence affecting national roles, and from methodological underdevelopment. This article goes beyond studies of national role conceptions that present foreign-policy behavior as determined by *the* national role, thus making it possible to understand the interplay of competing voices in determining a national role, the processes of role-change, and the resulting reorientation of foreign policy. This article illustrates the possibilities and limitations of merging role theory and the interpretive approach through the study of Chile's and Mexico's attempts to join APEC, their accession to APEC, and their performance once accepted into APEC.

Role theory in International Relations (IR) concentrates on the roles that individuals, states, and others enact on the international scene. Roles refer both to social positions in an organized group and to any socially recognized category of actors (Stryker and Statham 1985: 323). This theoretical approach has recently regained prominence in IR and foreign-policy analysis scholarship (see Harnisch, Frank and Maull eds. 2011; Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; Harnisch 2012; Thies 2012; McCourt 2012) after a previous resurgence in the 1980s-1990s (see Walker ed. 1987a; Le Pestre ed. 1997a). These waves of role theory scholarship had their origins in the seminal contribution of Kalevi Holsti (1970) on national role conceptions (NRCs) and foreign-policy analysis.

The intermittent attention that role theory has received through the years is a function of the theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of the approach. Despite a rich set of conceptual tools, its potential to bring together different level of analysis, and even to bridge the agent-structure divide, role theory has not always been in fashion. There are a number of possible reasons for the varied fortunes of the approach. The concept of role itself has lacked clarity in previous treatments as it has been used in various ways beyond the aforementioned definition.[2] The use of the role concept spans from a synonym for power and influence to the roles a state actually engages in as an international actor (Elgström and Smith 2006: 4-5). Moreover, role theory may have been seen as a redundant theoretical approach given the general stability of the system during the Cold War. This stability constrained the development of both agency-driven theories and more nuanced approaches, like role theory, that utilize both structure and agency. Further, there may have been confusion about which levels of analysis were appropriate for the use of role theory (Thies 2010a). In fact, its applicability has been

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[2] On a complete set of reasons for the past neglect of role theory in foreign policy analysis and international relations see Le Pestre (1997b: 3-5); Thies (2010a: 11-12).

demonstrated across the three traditional levels of analysis: people, states, and the international system (see Aggestam 2006; Thies 2013).

The previous neglect of role theory may also be a matter of timing as it may have been imported too early into IR from sociology and other cognate disciplines. Role theorists were analyzing NRCs long before the rediscovery of identity by IR scholars through constructivism in the early 1990s. Most importantly, the constructivist rediscovery of identity tends to conflate roles and identity by failing to set boundaries between two concepts that are intimately intertwined. More broadly, role theory as a middle-range theory may have been subsumed into the repertoire of grand theories (including constructivism) without necessarily being credited for the explanatory power derived from its conceptual apparatus. Scholars who do not appropriately acknowledge role theory's influence in their work impede cumulative development of the role theory literature in foreign-policy analysis (Thies 2010a). Finally, role theory has seldom been taught in IR academic programs, limiting its diffusion to new generations of scholars.

Although role theory's popularity has waxed and waned over time, this approach still has descriptive, organizational, and explanatory value (Walker 1987b; Thies 2010a). These values explain the renewed attention that role theory has received in recent years, especially within foreign-policy analysis works that seek to explain the behavior of states in the international system. For example, Thies and Breuning (2012) edited a special issue of *Foreign Policy Analysis* that collected papers from an International Studies Association workshop focused specifically on using role theory to knit together foreign-policy analysis and IR scholarship. Juliet Kaarbo and Cameron Thies launched a new Routledge book series devoted to scholarship rooted in role theory, further bridging this traditional divide in the subfield (e.g., Walker et al. 2010; Thies 2013; Walker 2013).

However, this new wave of role theory scholarship continues to be subject to some of its past criticisms. In this article, we focus on three central criticisms that are of major concern for the advancement and sustainability of role theory. The first criticism focuses on the study of NRCs as the expression of a unified view or national consensus, neglecting the domestic contestation that occurs as actors debate the role that is ultimately selected to represent the state externally (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012: 6).

A second criticism highlights the predominance of both structure and material power in determining NRCs—at the expense of agency (see Bevir, Daddow and Hall 2013a: 165; 2013b). In other words, the claim is that the study of NRCs should move beyond structural explanations for state foreign-policy behavior, particularly structure conceived primarily in material terms. A third recurrent criticism of role theory is that while it offers a conceptually rich toolbox, it remains methodologically poor (see Walker 1987b: 2), in the sense that there have never been attempts to develop systematic ways of studying roles. As a result, we lack models for developing a coherent method of evidence collection and analysis. In fact, most studies use process tracing, content analysis or historical analysis (see Aggestam 2004; Elgström and Smith eds. 2006a; Harnisch, Frank and Maull eds. 2011; Thies 2012). This is so even within interpretative works on role theory using symbolic interaction where discourse analysis could also be appropriately used. The principle of encouraging discourse analysis is not only a given because of the theoretical approach, but also because of the apparent similarity between discourses and some versions of content analysis and process tracing (McCourt 2012: 381). Whereas similarity in the treatment and analysis of data is often found in the different methods employed by role theorists, we still lack systematic and coherent ways of studying roles. In this sense, the use of narrative analysis seems to provide a promising method to link these different ways of doing role theory. Narrative analysis can provide an alternative way to collect and analyze information by first conducting 'thick' description as the foundational step for 'thick' interpretative analysis on the roles states enact.

Thus, this article attempts to explore these three criticisms further by critically engaging in the debate over the possibilities of the interpretive approach developed by Mark Bevir et al. (2013a, 2013b) for foreign-policy role theory.[3] There are many variants of interpretative work but Bevir et al. provides us with a number of concepts such as beliefs, traditions and dilemmas that can be incorporated into role theory, especially as it pertains to the need to develop a research agenda on domestic sources of roles for the process of foreign policymaking. We also show how foreign-policy traditions related to NRCs are constantly challenged, and experience adaptations and changes when dilemmas and historical contingencies become salient. The interpretive approach also offers the use of narratives to role theory, which are deployed by those speaking on behalf of the state to identify NRCs that speak to both new dilemmas and traditions. While our attempt is to bring together these two approaches, we emphasize the potential benefits for role theory by examining domestic role contestation and international role enactment. Role theory is quite amenable to the importation of concepts from other theories (e.g. Walker 1981), and in fact it is one of the ways suggested to develop stronger versions of role theory in this new wave of scholarly attention (see Thies 2010a).

The starting point of this article is based on the criticism that role theory should focus on the agency capacity of states, or more accurately, those who speak on behalf of states, including the diverging voices and contestation surrounding the selection of an NRC. However, the interpretive approach suggested by Bevir et al. (2013a, 2013b) also experiences tension as the priority it places on agency cannot come at the complete expense of structure. One of the fundamental conceptual strengths of role theory is that it is precisely able to bring together both sides in the agent-structure debate (Aggestam 1999; Thies 2010a). In fact, we argue in the subsequent section that the aforementioned interpretative approach does not really set aside structure entirely. Hence, narratives and the key concepts from the interpretive approach can be a means for observing and interpreting

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[3] On the foundations of the interpretive approach see Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes *Interpreting British Governance*, *Governance Stories*, and *The State as a Cultural Practice*.

the process of role conception, the subsequent role location process and role-play/ enactment in the international scene, and also the processes of role change set against the background of existing traditions.[4]

Furthermore, we illustrate the possibilities and tensions of the interpretive approach in the process of role conception, location, and enactment in two Latin American countries, Chile and Mexico, in their attempts to become members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Chile and Mexico are certainly not Asian countries, but each developed new narratives to match the possibilities for integrating into a regional platform when the Asia-Pacific was framed as a project for Asian and North American countries. More specifically, we focus on the making of new narratives within these two countries foreign-policy traditions as the result of confronting new trade and political dilemmas in the light of existing, adaptable, and competing beliefs.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows: We begin by developing an analytical framework establishing the link between the concepts in the interpretive approach and those of role theory. Moreover, we will discuss the importance of narratives to role theory and how the interpretive approach also provides a blueprint for their use in role theory. We also discuss the use of evidentiary material (interviews, primary and secondary sources) to reconstruct narratives of states expressing foreign-policy goals, interests, and actions. In the third section, we present Chile's and Mexico's respective historical foreign-policy traditions and how each tradition has adapted to contingent events and the dilemma of becoming part of the APEC and economic globalization as a whole. Each country will be analyzed separately followed by a

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[4] *Role conception* defines who you are and encompasses both self-conception as well as others expectations (see Elgström and Smith 2006b: 6). *Role location* 'refers to the process whereby a social actor locates a suitable role in a social structure' (Thies 2012: 29). *Role enactment* or *role-play* is the actual behavior of the state once a role has been selected.

comparison of their narratives. In the conclusion, we highlight the weaknesses and strengths of the interpretive approach and narratives as a possible way for role theory's methodological enhancement. Thus, this section will also highlight future research avenues made possible by our incorporation of narratives into role theory.

The Interplay of Roles and Narratives: Theory and Method

The Focus on Structure

Roles consist of patterns of appropriate or expected behavior that are drawn from the actor's social position in an organized group or the kinds of people it is possible to be in a given society (Elgström and Smith 2006b; Thies 2010a; Harnisch 2011: 8). Roles are therefore a combination of self-conception and social recognition prescribed by Others. In fact, role conception involves the Ego's own perception of her or his social position vis-à-vis Others' position(s) and expectations (Kirste and Maull 1996: 289).

Structure, as much as agency, is at the core of the very definition of roles. However, most of the current works on role theory prioritize structure in shaping and determining the role to be selected and enacted. The state's location in an interstate social structure is also typically seen as dependent on the material capability of a state to locate itself according to a master role—defined as the most salient attribute of an actor (Wish 1987; Thies 2001). Walker (1987c: 256) and Thies (2010b) have also offered ways to make explicit the connection between structure, defined in material terms, and roles, by incorporating roles into structural realism (cf. Breuning 2011: 18).

The predominant focus on structural explanations of roles is also present within some constructivist and sociological accounts (Wendt 1999). Barnett (1993), for example, advances the notion of roles being constrained by institutional settings. In addition, Aggestam (2006: 25) states that "role theory applied to foreign-policy analysis stresses how foreign policy is both

purposeful and shaped by institutions and structures." In fact, the institutional settings in these approaches often appear to completely determine the expectations of role behavior. Yet role behavior is not always consistent with the expectations given by the setting. This incongruity opens up space for the creativity and agency that is inherent in role theory when using a symbolic interactionist approach as opposed to more exclusively structural approaches; that is, by focusing on role-making as process of learning in which the agent initiates action shaped and constrained not only by Other's expectations, but also by its own judgment of the situation (Harnisch 2012: 49; McCourt 2012: 379). A symbolic interactionist approach to role theory therefore brings both a focus on the agency capacity of the actor and on the reification of structures in other versions of the theory. Thus structures are subject to changes by the agents in the symbolic interactionist approach (Harnisch 2011: 11).

Rather than advancing a new argument, this article seeks to avoid the exclusive focus on structural explanations of roles while simultaneously recognizing the inevitability of structures for role theorizing and the process of foreign-policy-making. We must refer to structures *even if* the interaction between agents can induce their change as new "patterns" (or structures) will be produced and reproduced by such processes. This view contrasts with the interpretive approach as the interplay of material and social power and structures is also at least tacitly present within symbolic interaction accounts on role theory as the closest variant to the interpretive approach. As McCourt (2012: 381) notes, "while not any role can be played by a state—a state's military and economic capabilities therefore place limits on these choices— crucially, where there are differing viewpoints, these should be clear from the arguments used by foreign policy-makers and other parties to the debate." However, a possible synthesis between role theory and the interpretive approach can build on the consensus of avoiding the reification of structures and the belief that agents are able to modify existing patterns by their contingent human activity (Bevir et.al. 2013a: 166). The *enabling* side of roles is the agency

side, understood as the capacity to create, modify and violate expectations that emerge from and within relations with Others and from the limitations of structures (McCourt 2012: 378). As Sandstrom, Martin and Fine (2010: 14) remind us:

> Because you have the ability to think and use symbols, you have an important element of freedom as you interact with others and formulate your actions. You can improvise to some degree as you negotiate identities, define situations, and perform roles (such as student, friend, or employee) in your everyday interactions. In turn, you can resist, avoid, or overcome some of the constraints you face in various situations.

The Focus on Unified National Role Conceptions

According to Holsti (1970: 245-246), a NRC "includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems." Although "policymakers" suggests that there may be many views for the NRC, the scholarly works tend to assume a unified voice behind the NRC without paying enough attention to the possible domestic divergences on the process of selecting a role. Cantir and Kaarbo (2012: 6) propose that role theory approaches may benefit from using the strengths of a variety of domestic politics approaches to foreign-policy analysis. They explore possible factors that may affect the role conception, including the influence of public opinion, conflicts between government and opposition, multiparty coalitions, and/or diverging views within small groups of foreign-policy decision makers over which role to enact and play.

Cantir and Kaarbo (2012: 8) acknowledge that the literature has documented the existence of diverse national sources for role conceptions, and that there are other actors beyond elites influencing this process. However, these different sources and actors are not fully

explored since most authors focus on the voices of political elites and leaders as the main authors of roles (Elgström 2000; Harnisch and Maull eds. 2001; Prys 2010). The underlying justification for this choice is that both roles themselves and the elites advancing a specific conception are embedded in the national culture (cf. Breuning 2011: 28-29). In addition, others suggest that leaders simply shape public opinion to advance their preferred role conception (Rosenau 1990), reflecting the power disparity between leaders and followers at the national level.

The importance assigned to international structures is another factor influencing the tendency to rely on a unified NRC. This is not simply a matter of preferred parsimony in theory creation since from an outside-in approach the main voice of foreign-policy making comes from political elites within the executive, at least when it comes to high politics. This perspective involves a hierarchy of importance within the executive that may determine the scope, choice, and nature of the narration of a role conception. Moreover, neorealists argue that the material structure of the international system produces a "sameness effect" of states behaving in similar way due to their lack of functional differentiation (Waltz 1979) that furthers the black-boxing of the state or the elite rather than elites speaking as one (privileged) group among many on behalf of the state.

Therefore, we agree with Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) and Breuning (2011) on the need to explore the contestation and formation of consensus associated with NRCs. It is in this analytical space where the concepts of traditions and dilemmas from the interpretive approach can be used to shed light on aspects of convergence/divergence among elite groups on how national roles are conceived, located, and performed. As a first approximation of the interplay of roles and the interpretive approach, we focus on different traditions within a small group of decision-makers (that is, foreign-policy elites, facing different dilemmas) as the main aspect developed in our empirical section.

Roles and the Interpretive Approach: A Possible Link?

The interpretive approach is primarily humanist and historicist, and stresses the importance of human activity over structure. Patterns obviously exist in human activity, but they do not determine behavior in this approach. Individuals are not passive actors and supporters of institutions, discourses, and a given social order but rather agents that can modify inherited norms and languages following their own reasoning and their inherent creativity. "Agency always occurs against a particular historical background that influences it" (Bevir et.al. 2013a: 167). Thus, actions and practices of individuals are explained in reference to traditions and dilemmas. This tradition encompasses the historical inheritance (or patterns) as the starting point for human activity, in which individuals act and reason. Traditions are sets of understandings an actor receives during socialization. However, traditions do not determine the behavior of the individual *per se*. Traditions should be thought of as only a first set of influences because individuals can exert agency to modify the existing pattern (or tradition). Hence, traditions are themselves products of individual agency (see Bevir 2013b: 10). Role theory, from a symbolic interactionist standpoint, depicts existing patterns or structures as emerging from the mutual interaction between agents. Individuals are the subjects of study and thus are the core of the traditions; they are the actors exerting situated agency and making the national role conceptions in light of both their existing beliefs and traditions.

The concept of situated agency reflects a similar understanding of the *enabling* side of roles stressing the ability of individuals and foreign policymakers to improvise and create new scripts (McCourt 2012) when the traditions can no longer explain a chain of events. Thus, roles do not induce mechanical behavior (Hollis and Smith 1990). It might be the case that enabling or acting creatively in role-making beyond the expectations attached to a previous role is salient to individuals facing dilemmas. "A dilemma captures the way people are capable of modifying

this inheritance to incorporate novel experiences or ideas" (Bevir et.al. 2013a: 167). Whenever a new belief, idea, or practice emerges through the interaction of agents situated within an existing tradition and the new repertoire stands in opposition, then it tends to exert pressure on the agents to either accommodate the new belief into the tradition or to adopt a more radical posture of reforming the tradition. In either case, change takes place as the existing tradition evolves to incorporate a new idea. This is not to say that dilemmas are necessarily exogenous phenomena which agents must confront unexpectedly to make sense of their world, but that dilemmas may also arise from people's own experiences and practices. However, the responses from the agents to dilemmas that have no given solutions may not necessarily lead to the solving of these new dilemmas, as the actor is exerting situated agency in a historically contingent context. As individuals (as agents) respond creatively to dilemmas, then change is a ubiquitous process. Thus, traditions could only be fixed and static if people were not to exert agency and if they never have confronted novel circumstances or dilemmas (cf. Bevir et.al. 2013b: 13-15).

In the language of role theory, from a symbolic interaction perspective, it can be said that a dilemma may provoke dissonance and role inconsistency inducing creativity to face the dilemma. Facing a dilemma with creativity (situated agency) allows actors to change the role being enacted. However, change is not always radical, since it may also involve adaptation to the new dilemma and adjusting the role rather than making a completely new one. The process of changing or modifying roles may be intended or unintended as a tradition may provide a blueprint on how to react and respond to the existing dilemma. Individuals may respond to a dilemma by referring to the practice of the traditions when in reality they are adapting, adjusting, or changing the existing pattern (Bevir et. al. 2013a, 2013b).

When dilemmas are confronted by individuals, we expect roles to change or to be adapted and adjusted depending on the magnitude of the current dilemma vis-à-vis the traditions in

foreign policymaking. In light of this interplay of traditions and dilemmas, beliefs may also experience accommodation and changes by incorporating new sets of ideas. Beliefs change along with the process of changing the role, since roles encompass identity understood not as intrinsic but as evolving through the relation between different agents. "*Meaningful* identity affirmation does not occur outside *social* categories, such as roles…" (McCourt 2011: 1605).

Therefore, traditions and dilemmas can be a way to explore the different voices competing within states to determine the most appropriate role for a state to play internationally. In fact, Bevir et al. (2013a: 167) refer to the existence of a Conservative, Whig, Liberal, and Socialist tradition in British foreign policy, all apparently playing their parts. Moreover, traditions and dilemmas can shed light on how the NRC is cast at the national level and how this process as a politically contingent phenomenon is always contested. However, the NRC is not the only part of a role process to be contested when elites refer to traditions and face dilemmas. The location of a role in a regional or international system, or in an institutional setting, and the subsequent performance of the role are also subject to contestation depending on the expectations of Others in those settings. In the role location and performance stages, the traditions or dilemmas are reinforced or changed, causing new sets of challenges for the occupier of the role.

Finally, the predominance of a specific set of beliefs—framing the type of role a state should enact—brings into focus the internal disputes reflecting diverging traditions in existing foreign policy. The interpretive approach in this sense does not make clear how, and under what conditions, specific groups views predominate within the triad of tradition, beliefs, and dilemmas in foreign-policy analysis. Power is still central to this issue, since this aspect once again brings into focus the existing patterns of authority within a state: leaders (presidents or prime ministers) are the key to resolving internal disputes on the NRC. Leaders are likely to enact either a role of *referee* among groups (as they listen to the different parties and then

decide on the course of action) or a *prime-mover* role, acting from the beginning according to their own beliefs on the existing dilemma to decide which role is most appropriate for the state (to advance a foreign policy), giving priority to the groups that share their views. For example, responses to globalization can diverge among states: some may act to protect themselves from global markets and others to pursue free trade policies, yet even here they may respond differently by prioritizing different regions, pursuing regional integration, adopting a bilateral path or a mix of these options.

Role theory from the symbolic interaction tradition can be located into the constructivist paradigm, as it has been suggested that it shows strong affinities with constructivism (cf. Breuning 2011, McCourt 2012). Yet, role theory differs from constructivism in its understanding of the notion of identity. Whereas roles and identity are related terms, they also have their own conceptual properties.[5] Identity lacks agency since it is not a concept that has an action driven meaning at its heart. Thus, the way to link identity and action through motivational dispositions is through roles. In this sense, roles become a *via media* between identity and actions—correcting the assumption that identity alone determines the interests a state pursues in the international system—without action defined as a conceptual property of identity (cf. McCourt 2011: 7).[6] We briefly contrast two variants of constructivism (structural and relational) with our approach in order to highlight the value-added nature of role theory.

Breuning (2011: 20-21) suggests that some constructivist accounts using role conceptions—those we would label more structural accounts—see identity as largely separate from roles as the former is more of an intrinsic property rather than one created in a constant interaction with the existing social environment in which an actor locates itself (e.g. Hopf 2002,

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[5] For a thorough discussion and analysis of both concepts from a role theory perspective see Breuning (2011) and McCourt (2011; 2012).

[6] See for example Ringmar (1996) on the action of going to war as explained through the variable identity.

2012; Wendt 1999). Agents are the "primitive units of analysis" in this type of constructivism, and preserving that agency results in "showing them making choices from a menu of structurally provided options or by illustrating that their choices produced that menu at some earlier point in time" (Jackson 2006: 141-142). Agents thus "cease to exercise effective identity" in such accounts that often rely on socialization or internalization mechanisms that link agents and structures (e.g., Adler and Barnett 1998; Schimmelfennig 1998). Identities in these accounts thus give predominance to the Self-side of the story without necessarily incorporating the Other in the form of expectations. Hopf (2002: 263), for example, suggests that identities may not necessarily be built in an interactive process with external Others, as identities are a domestically driven process (cf. Breuning 2011: 24). In outlining his main argument in a subsequent work, Hopf (2012: 5) makes even clearer that his approach to identity is domestically driven and may not need the external Other to constitute such identity:

> It is an approach called "societal constructivism." It argues that how the Soviet Union understood itself at home explains how it related to other states abroad. By Soviet Union, I do not mean just Soviet elites, though of course they matter in the last instance. No, it is mass public understandings of what it means to be Soviet, to be socialist, that animates societal constructivism. What accounts for the seemingly strange twists and turns in Soviet foreign policy from 1945 to 1958 can be explained by paying attention to discourses of Soviet identity that are present in novels and films, not just in party circulars and Politburo meeting minutes.

Instead, role theory assumes that roles may be partly built domestically, but that external expectations of Others are key as NRCs should respond to the imperatives of the international system (Breuning 2011: 24). Role theory, at least in its symbolic interaction variant, understands that role conception and play are always a relational process in which the Self (ego) puts herself in the shoes of the Other (alter), be those general or relevant Others (see

Harnisch 2011).[7] Expectations from Others may be in form of cues (mainly from general others) or through direct socialization in terms of the most appropriate role to enact; that is, relevant Others expressing which role the Self should enact (e.g. Thies 2013). Structural forms of constructivism, from our perspective, are thus too static in the way that the Other is always analyzed from the vantage point of the Self as a means of legitimizing and validating the identity of the Self towards the Other. This is so even in constructivist accounts using Otherness, where the Other is to be depicted in certain ways such as rival or friend in order to reaffirm an existing identity of the Self (see Diez 2005: 627-629; Wæver 1996).

Relational constructivisms sidestep the primitive agent found in structural constructivism by focusing on the "practical activities" and "rhetorical commonplaces" that they argue continually produce and reproduce actors in a social environment. Role theory and relational constructivism share a commitment to understanding how both agents and structures emerge from social relations, but in our view, relational constructivism is only slightly less structural than the aforementioned structural constructivists. In his analysis of the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, Jackson (2006: 145) notes that identity was a key feature of the rhetorical commonplaces used in public debates. Democracy and associated values of peace and human rights were deployed against sovereignty—democracy and sovereign statehood both being types of identities, as well as "nested" identities associated with Western civilization and even humanity. These identities are understood to justify and legitimate actions, though we suggest they are missing the central feature of the role to connect identity and action.

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[7] In fact, Hopf (2002: 10) refers to roles to justify his preferred analytical choice for identity. He argues that roles risk reducing identity to a social position. Thus, he claims that roles are only structurally induced and neglects that roles can also be a social category recognized or attributed by others, which is the agential side of the role concept as this part of the role definition involves the interaction between the self and the other in the making of a role conception in our version of role theory.

Roles, as properties of both agents and structures, contain the "rhetorical commonplaces" that relational constructivists seek. Agency is exerted as actors select which of many roles they will attempt to enact in a given situation—the role of a sovereign state vis-à-vis other sovereign states, or the role of democracy vis-à-vis other democracies or autocracies.[8] In our analysis, this selection process plays out domestically as actors contest which role among many will be selected to represent the state—all the while with some sense of how that role will be received by Others. Each role carries with it widely agreed upon behavioral expectations, even as the enactment and reception of that role by relevant Others may alter such expectations over time. Roles also require counter-roles from Others to successfully fulfill a role relationship, but in relational constructivism we once again see the primary focus on the Self, with the Other playing little role beyond serving as a mirror to the rhetorical commonplaces deployed by the Self. Tellingly, Jackson's (2006: 146-147) analysis requires a second layer of legitimation— references to the national interest as a way to provide the connection between identities invoked in rhetoric and action for the Self.[9] As Ringmar (1996: 75) notes, "all attempts to provide the concept of interests with an independent definition will inevitably come to fall back on a

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[8] Relational constructivism, at least in the Kosovo case, required "nesting" one community within another— something easily accomplished through the use of roles. States can hold and invoke multiple roles in a situation, so invoking the role of a democratic state or a member of Western civilization does not require an additional theoretical step as it does in relational constructivism.

[9] Hayes (2012) provides another mechanism for linking identity and action: in-group out-group dynamics developed in Social Identity Theory. Hayes suggests that in order to justify foreign policies like negotiation and reconciliation in a democratic state, the leaders must use rhetoric to emphasize a target state is a member of the democratic community. Conversely, foreign policies that make use of aggression and violence must be justified by rhetoric emphasizing that the target cannot be trusted and may engage in violence against the home state. In his analysis, these group dynamics and associated rhetoric help policymakers securitize certain issues for foreign policy action.

consideration of who that someone is to whom the interests are said to belong"—a position favored by Hopf (2012: 9) as well.[10] Roles already contain expectations of the Self *and* Other that provide an agreed upon set of interests and a normative justification for action.

Ringmar's (1996: 64) insistence that the modern subject (the state in this case) is conceived of as either "an atomistic self whose nature was determined prior to social interaction" or "an empiricist self which could be reduced to a bundle of perceptions and preferences" can be mediated via the use of roles. It represents another option for our analyses of states that shares some affinity with the narrative conception of the Self he advocates. However, rather than focus exclusively on the Self, as we repeatedly stress, it also gives agency to the Other. Narratives associated with roles provide the necessary coherence to give an agent "actorness," but they do not reduce agents to a primitive or atomistic Self, since those narratives are subject to internal and external contestation. Nor is the Self a fleeting empirical snapshot of perceptions and preferences, as roles have a structural element of shared meaning that can be occupied, reinterpreted, and enacted by agents only in the social act of interaction with meaningful Others. While the narrative conception of the Self advocated by Ringmar (1996: 78-83) requires an audience, it is unclear how active, or in what sense, members of the audience (relevant Others) have agency.

Thus, while role theory can be placed in the constructivist tradition within IR theory, we suggest that it has distinct advantages over both structural and relational constructivisms. Roles are properties of agents and structures, thus we do not focus exclusively on the Self as these forms of constructivisms appear to do repeatedly without explicitly considering the agency of

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[10] Bially-Mattern (2005) argues that identity, rather than power politics or common interests are the ultimate source of order in the international system. It is the intersubjective identities adopted by states that give rise to situations where power politics prevails as well as situations where common interests may produce more peaceful environments.

the Other. Roles also connect identity and action through the incorporation of shared behavioral expectations on the part of Self and Other. Roles representing the Self are a matter of internal contestation, despite the heavy weight of tradition, and will often involve external conflict if Others disagree with the choice of role or its enactment.

Narrative as Method

The interpretive approach and symbolic interaction are by nature historicist and interpretative, since they put the focus on the interpretation of events. However, the interpretation of events needs to be recreated by means similar to those of historians, given our frequent focus on the past and the use of primary and secondary source materials (Thies 2002). Narratives in the interpretive approach produce and reproduce traditions and are able to capture changes in traditions in light of new dilemmas. Ruling narratives are the beliefs and stories told by actors to comprehend and frame the world in which they interact. They provide the background for elites to construct worldviews in foreign policy including goals, choices, and interests (Bevir et al. 2013b). Narratives are thus understood as strategies constructed by political agents that speak on behalf of the state, in internal and external relations, to frame and cast roles and achieve specific goals and interests. Importantly, as Ringmar (1996: 74) notes, there are limits on the narrative generation process—there is some "cohesion and connectedness" to the interpretive resources made available to us by society. Political agents cannot create any random narrative they might like, but must draw upon cultural resources that will resonate within their society and across the societies of relevant Others. As we will see, sometimes these narratives are less convincing when political actors "stretch" the limits of credible cultural material. In fact, Bevir and Rhodes (2002: 140) view traditions as sets of narratives that adapt, evolve, and change subject to historically contingent choices, and as such they reflect the historical context in which actors' traditions are confronted by dilemmas. As argued before, individuals may respond to a dilemma by using what

they already know, that is, by referring to their tradition or by believing this is the case, when in reality they are changing and adapting to a new pattern (Bevir et.al. 2013b).

This understanding of narratives can also be recreated as a qualitative study design, that is, "narrative understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska 2004: 17). In fact, Bevir and Rhodes (2012: 205) find Czarniawska's method of narrative analysis consistent with their own approach. Further, narrative as a political act and as a method to study the traditions and dilemmas affecting role conceptions, location, and play often contains turning points (see Denzin 1989) which are indicative of elites reacting to dilemmas and thus inducing role-change. These turning points may imply telling new stories to make sense of the new events. Narrative is also about contextualizing the place or situation: for us the situation in which the narration unfolds is within the context of two Latin American countries redefining or adapting traditions when confronted with new dilemmas; that is, their idea of becoming a member of, and their integration into, the APEC.

Narrative is an appropriate method for the interpretive approach and symbolic interaction to reach *thick interpretations* of the events that constitute the tradition and dilemmas. However, a thick interpretation should be preceded by a solid (historical) description of the phenomena to be recreated and contextualized (see Denzin 1990). However, a rich contextualization and recreation of the narratives within the political elite in charge of the formulation of foreign policy is dependent upon the quality of material to be collected.

Narrative involves analysing different sources viewed from different angles with a goal of bringing them into perspective: first, to identify the roles that are expressed within foreign-policy traditions, and second, to consider the possibilities for change that a dilemma inherently offers to decision makers. Narratives imply using secondary, official documents and spontaneous press declarations to find *yardsticks* for specific narrations containing the roles enacted by states in different settings as well as the divergence/convergence in the making of the role. The validity of

the narrative as a method is given by the use of different sources for the same events and the constant questioning of the source materials against each other as carried out by the researcher. For example, in the role conception process, relying on secondary sources is part of a triangulation technique used for the purpose of contrasting and interpreting episodes related in spontaneous press declarations and in official documents. Moreover, a narrative study using a collection of press declarations in the media from top officials as well as collections of governmental documents and speeches of leaders in different institutional settings should also be contrasted against each other, paying particular attention to whether or not a unified voice pushing for a role exists on a specific matter. This approach to using source material will enhance the validity of our method as well as the interpretation of the data collected.

Although our empirical analysis below primarily uses secondary sources and press declarations, narratives are also encompassed in oral tradition. The use of interviews is a component of the chosen qualitative methodological approach even though it has rarely been a source of evidence in the work of role theorists. This is somewhat understandable given that many of the cases analysed have occurred in the distant past, such that officials are no longer living, as well as current cases where officials are unwilling or otherwise not available for interview. Yet, if contestation over the national role enacted, located, and played is the subject of study, then interviews with top officials should be a key step to gather evidence of the different voices making the foreign policy of a state. Foreign policymaking is based on decisions and sometimes such decision processes are not always written and may be issue-specific. Interviews can provide a better grasp on how certain actions and thus roles were decided, enacted, and performed respectively. Interviews are important to recreating those narrations reflecting the internal frictions over the national role within an elite group. Likewise, interviews with top officials can also be used to corroborate and contrast information obtained in governmental documents, press declarations, and from public speeches and reports. By using interviews vis-à-vis written sources, we can have a better grasp on how

policymakers adapted or changed the type of narrations when a perceived dilemma challenging foreign-policy traditions enabled or constrained the national role conceptions, location, and play.

The Asia-Pacific: Roles and Narratives of Latin American Countries

Chile

Making a National Role

After re-democratization (1990) the economic model of export-promotion inherited from Pinochet's regime (1973-1990) became the main pillar in terms of Chilean beliefs about goals and interests for a new foreign policy. The economic beliefs became central since other issues such as human rights or political alignments with countries could generate internal divisions that could jeopardize the democratic stability of Chile (Mullins 2006). Nevertheless, opting for a commercially driven foreign policy also produced internal divisions within the center-left governmental coalition (1990-2010). In fact, the foreign-policy elite perceived economic globalization as a new structural phenomenon, despite disagreement about how to react to it among powerful governmental and societal interests. Thus, economic globalization produced a dilemma for foreign policymakers.

The commercial-global group from the foreign-policy elite preferred that Chile advance its own independent way of approaching the global economy beyond Latin America—a kind of *global free-trader* role. A second group of regionalists (or traditionalists) preferred that Chile become an active member of regional integration groups in South America as way to follow the previous Latin Americanist tradition of Chile (before 1973)—a *regional integrator* role. The latter group believed that Chile should integrate into the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and from there be part of the global economy.[11] In fact, these were the

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[11] MERCOSUR was created in 1991 by Argentina and Brazil as the main leaders of the bloc along with Uruguay and Paraguay as small powers.

expectations communicated by Argentina and Brazil as the main leaders of MERCOSUR. Yet, the Unit of Trade (DIRECON) at the Foreign Affairs Office and the Ministry of Finances argued against a possible full MERCOSUR membership since this group had higher tariff barriers than those of Chile.

The commercial-global group saw the dilemma of globalization as an opportunity to deepen and consolidate the internal pattern of export-promotion and free trade by seeking to establish Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the US and the EU as main priorities (Wehner 2011). In fact, Chile enacted a role of global free-trader under the influence of the set of beliefs of the DIRECON and Ministry of Finances group. What made possible the predominance of this commercial group over the traditionalist was the leadership role of the President of Chile. Then President Patricio Aylwin played the domestic role of a *referee* to advance the global free trader role over the other possibility of enacting a regional integrator role. The subsequent President Eduardo Frei (1994-2000) acted as the *prime-mover* of the commercial agenda (Porras 2003: 17), which favored the DIRECON's group beliefs and role conception over that of the traditionalist group from the foreign affairs office.

The then foreign affairs and finances authorities also generated a narrative of compatibility between the Latin American integration option and the bilateral trade agenda as an intermediate solution: first, by including the negotiation of low-scope trade agreements with South American countries; second, by conducting bilateral FTAs with Central America; and third, by achieving deep FTAs with Peru and Colombia in the 2000s (Wehner 2011). Thus, Chile's foreign-policy elite made the concept of "open regionalism" its *leitmotiv* to achieve such compatibility (Van Klaveren 1998: 122-126; Wilhelmy and Durán 2003: 281), as well as to emphasize Chile's autonomy and economic exceptionalism vis-à-vis the rest of the countries of South America.

This first episode of Chilean post-Pinochet history demonstrates a number of important points about our attempt to marry interpretivism and role theory. First, the central role of beliefs—in this case economic beliefs—is shown to affect the relationship between agents and structures. Second, these beliefs were used to frame potential foreign-policy roles for Chile. In this case, those who believed strongly for a global free-trader role or those who advocated for a regional integrator role. Interestingly, the base economic belief in favor of freer trade dominated as part of a historical tradition from the Pinochet era—what changed was the dramatic impact of the economic structure of globalization, which provided a dilemma for foreign policymakers. Third, the structure of globalization was not determinative of the process of contestation and deliberation on the national role. While global free-traders had the upper hand due to the influence of Presidents Aylwin and Frei, other governmental elites generated a counter-narrative to promote a middle road between global free trade and regional integration—the open regionalism narrative. The *open regionalist* role was therefore a product of tradition, and prevalent beliefs in favor of freer trade married to a new narrative that attempted to resolve contention between the global free traders and the regional integrators as a result of the dilemma posed by globalization.

An Asia-Pacific Country as National Role Conception

One might argue that economic globalization as a structural force could have induced Chile's choice of establishing free-trade relations with most countries (ignoring the aforementioned discussion), but the decision of going to Asia and becoming an APEC member was also contested among Chile's decision-makers. During the first post-Pinochet democratic government (1990-1994), the focus was on reestablishing relationships and presenting Chile as a reliable and trustworthy partner to Europe, the US, and the other Latin American countries. It was not a top priority to enact the role of a trading state with Asia. However, the economic

boom of East Asian economies provided groups of exporters, along with the DIRECON and Ministry of Finances and Economy, the opportunity to advance an Asian agenda. As part of these elites' strategy, Chile's role repertoire would be expanded to invoke a natural sense of "belonging" first to the Pacific Basin and then to the Asia-Pacific (despite its geographical limitations) to promote a possible entrance to APEC.[12] Chile would therefore adopt an Asia-Pacific NRC.

This NRC is an interesting case of a top-down, strategic NRC. Some national actors at both the National Assembly and within the Executive preferred to solidify links to the rest of Latin America as previously mentioned. These groups contested the narrative of an Asian-Pacific national role conception by emphasizing the traditional Latin American regional identity and arguing that: "Chile's individual projection to the Pacific sea did not carry much weight and it was rather slow to show concrete results (…)" (Salazar Sparks 1999: 227).[13] The "East Asian Miracle" and most of the APEC members thus represented another dilemma for the elite of the Chilean state (Salazar Sparks 1999: 227; Wilhelmy 2010). However, the contestation over the role of Chile becoming an Asia-Pacific country was eased by the leadership of then President Eduardo Frei acting as a domestic *prime-mover* to adopt APEC as the new foreign-policy priority for Chile.

The narrative of the commercial elite to justify such a new venture, and subsume it into the existing national tradition of economic openness and free-trade orientation, was not only commercial in the sense of depicting Asian countries as being the new hub of the global economy, but also traditional by appealing in a forceful way to the common historical past of relationships between Chile and the Asian countries (see van Klaveren 1998; Salazar Sparks 1999; Rodríguez Guarachy 2006; Wilhelmy 2010; DIRECON 2010: 163). It is clear that the

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[12] Chile became an APEC member in 1994.

[13] All quotes from Spanish texts are the authors' translations.

former probably carried more weight in the selling of the narrative of the Asia-Pacific NRC, since one could nest the APEC dilemma within the larger economic globalization dilemma. Some type of free-trading role was therefore likely to be seen as a solution. Both the global free-trader and open-regionalist roles were compatible with the narrative being produced to justify the Asia-Pacific NRC.

Role Location in APEC

Chile had a process of failed role location into APEC as it first sent a request to be incorporated with the status of observant in 1991, which was not accepted.[14] In fact, the location of a global free-trader role (as well as an Asia-Pacific country) was contested during the negotiation of Chile's incorporation into APEC. During this process of locating itself as an Asia-Pacific country, the internal divergences within the foreign-policy elite flared up between the group of traditionalists that preferred to enhance relations with traditional partners and the commercial group that wanted to enhance relations with the main trading partners (US and Europe) who invoked the role of Chile as part of the Asia-Pacific.

ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia, were the main supporters to Chile's accession, as they constituted six of the 15 original members of APEC. Malaysia's support was decisive and did not represent a particular trade-driven interest in Chile, since trade between the two countries was marginal. Rather, it was the personal relationship between President Aylwin and Prime Minister Mahathir that allowed Chile to secure Malaysian support to become an APEC member. Chile was not supported by Australia, Japan, and the US. The US wanted Chile to perform the role of a non-strategic partner to contain regional integration schemes in Asia excluding the US, such as ASEAN or the East Asian Regional Caucus. The strong resistance

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[14] Personal communication with former Ambassador and Executive Director of APEC, Mario Artaza, 20 April 2011.

of Australia to Chile was based on the view that the broadening of a still young organization could risk its future consolidation especially as it moved into an unknown region (Wilhelmy and Lazo 1997: 28; van Klaveren 1998: 143).

The role location process was pursued by developing a new narrative supporting a new role for Chile that was complementary to both the trading and Asia-Pacific roles. In fact, Chile presented itself as occupying the role of *bridge-builder* between South American economies and Asian ones. Chile pursued a lobbying strategy with APEC members to show the benefits of having an entrance point into large South American markets such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile through the Pacific coast. However, Chile was also planning to use APEC as an arena of socialization to get new FTA negotiation partners as APEC is a social, and not binding, economic forum (DIRECON 2010: 164).

The complementary role of bridge-builder also had a domestic political dimension within Chile, which was to contain possible internal critics from the group of traditionalists at the foreign affairs office. The bridge-builder role and supporting narrative also served to manage criticism coming from other countries in the region. Chile was perceived by Argentina and Brazil as going global by abandoning its traditional South American orientation. Adopting the bridge-builder role within APEC was a way to ameliorate supporters of the Latin American approach (see Fermandois 2011: 39).

Although the new bridge-builder role helped facilitate the advancement of Chile's entrance into APEC, Chile had to join forces with Mexico to finally get incorporated into APEC. At the APEC meeting in Seattle in 1993, the solution for accepting Chile and breaking through the resistance of Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, the US, and Canada was to accept a package deal of a tripartite acceptance to the group of the aforementioned countries plus Papua New Guinea; the latter supported by Australia. Yet Papua New Guinea and Mexico got

automatic acceptance, while Chile had to wait a year before full incorporation at the general

APEC meeting in Indonesia (Wilhelmy and Lazo 1997: 30-31; van Klaveren 1998 143).

This aspect of Chile's role location process demonstrates the importance of structure and

agency in the negotiation of NRCs. While Chilean elites had selected and attempted to justify

domestically the Asia-Pacific NRC, Chile initially failed to convince the audience of APEC

states that it was indeed the correct role. While agents can attempt to adopt any role they

choose, without confirmation and acceptance by the audience of interested states, such a role

is meaningless (Thies 2012). In this case, Chile had some initial support and recognition of its

Asia-Pacific NRC from Malaysia, but strong resistance from Australia, the US, and other

powerful member-states in the institutional forum of APEC. Once again, Chile faced a

dilemma and foreign-policy elites innovated to generate a new narrative to support the bridge-

builder role. This role could be used to appease both domestic and Latin American opponents

of the Asia-Pacific NRC at the same time as it could be used to argue for APEC acceptance.

Ultimately, a bargain within APEC on several new members led to Chilean accession, but even

so, it was treated differently than its peers during the process. New roles, like the Asia-Pacific

NRC and the bridge-builder NRC can be very difficult for minor members of the international

system to adopt without the support of major members (Thies 2013). In this sense, role theory

can inform an interpretive account on the ways in which agents navigate, reinforce, and

sometimes enact changes to structure.

Role Play in APEC

Chile's role play in APEC was not contested at all at the domestic level once it secured its

membership and once it started to sign an increasing number of bilateral FTAs with other

APEC states. The traditionalist group was displaced and their critics lost influence as Chile

also pursued an FTA strategy with countries from Central America after securing an associate

status in MERCOSUR. Moreover, Chile also became the only South American country in APEC—a fact that was used to develop a narrative invoking positive reputational effects for Chile in the international community.[15] Yet, Chile was seen as a small economy within APEC, and it needed others support to advance its goals and interests. Chile opted to pursue bilateral economic relations and also be a leading state in the making of the Transpacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (or P4 agreement) with New Zealand, Singapore, and Brunei.[16] Thus, once Chile was incorporated into APEC, the role it played was that of global free-trader and the narrative to justify such actions was based on the auxiliary role of being a bridge-builder between South American and Asian economies since it enjoyed a privileged geographical location and status as an Asia-Pacific economy. In fact, Chile has FTAs with most of the APEC countries, except the Philippines, Russia, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia (see Wehner 2011, DIRECON 2013).[17]

Although Chile is a small actor in APEC, the institutional setting allowed Chile to hold APEC's pro-tempore presidency in 2004. While holding APEC's presidency, Chile advanced its own trade interests. Chile posed the topic of freer trade by presenting APEC as a trade community and referring to the importance of FTAs in the realization of APEC's goals, that is, Bogor's goals (Artaza 2004: 86-86). Chile opted for pushing for its own agenda assuming that

[15] Peru became an APEC member four years after Chile in November of 1998.

[16] In fact, this agreement serves as the basis for the Trans-pacific Partnership (TPP) under the led of the US, which is being negotiated since March 2010. The TPP includes the original P4 countries, as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, Peru, Malaysia, Mexico, Vietnam, and the US. The TPP is seen by Chile and the US as a way to achieve a far-reaching FTA in the Asia-Pacific as complementary to, or perhaps to be subsumed by APEC as the goals of Bogor have not yet been met.

[17] Chile is currently negotiating an FTA with Thailand.

this would be welcomed by the US as the main structural leader within APEC, which received confirmation from President George W. Bush:

> President Bush joined other APEC leaders in welcoming the APEC Best Practices for Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). These best practices will help ensure that the growing number of FTAs in the Asia Pacific region meet a high standard and contribute to liberalizing trade in the region (The White House 2004).

Therefore, once Chile was accepted by APEC members as an Asia-Pacific country and as a bridge-builder, it pursued its global free-trader role with zeal. The open integrator role, while supporting an earlier compromise domestic narrative, was now fully subsumed within the global free-trader role. The narratives that had been constructed to support it initially, as well as those that were developed to support the Asia-Pacific NRC and the bridge-builder NRC, allowed the faction of Chilean elites that supported global free trade to eliminate most of the domestic opposition. Chile assumed a leadership role within APEC and within the global network of bilateral FTAs. Thus, Chile took the basic economic beliefs that it inherited from the Pinochet regime and molded them via narratives to contend with a series of foreign-policy dilemmas emanating from economic globalization, the East Asian Miracle, and the failed attempt at APEC membership to transform itself into the global free-trader that it is today.

Mexico

Role Conceptions between Tradition and Technocrat

Mexico's foreign-affairs elite depicted the state as being nationalist, independent, idealist, and protectionist in both the political and economic realms until 1988. These beliefs were manifested in Mexico's role set as a *revolutionary state, third-world state, Latin American state* and thus an *anti-American state* (Garza Elizondo 1994: 537; Mabire 1994). These role

conceptions continued even under the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), who implemented domestic liberal-economic reforms while continuing with these NRCs and supporting beliefs in foreign policymaking more generally (Martínez Aguilar 2006: 148; Dominguez 2008: 49). The continuity of foreign-policy beliefs and NRCs under a market-driven approach at the national level resulted from structural factors like the economic crisis of 1982 and the recovery package implemented after, but also the weight of the traditionalist foreign-policy elite resisting changes in their national role conceptions. Nevertheless, the traditional group experienced a gradual loss of influence in the making of the foreign policy, despite its resistance to change its beliefs and role conceptions (see Gámez Vázquez 2001: 476, ff7).

When President Carlos Salinas de Gortari took power (1988-1994), foreign policy experienced a radical change in its underlying beliefs and thus in its national role conceptions. Salinas initiated changes in the Mexican role set that eliminated all traces of the third-world state role, at least in part due to structural changes in the international system such as economic globalization and the end of the Cold War (Solana 1995: 66). New beliefs such as internationalism, interdependence, pragmatism, and liberal ideas more generally were included as new drivers of the foreign policy to make sense of the dilemma posed by globalization. Salinas sought to develop new NRCs, such as *globalizer*, *bridge-builder* between Latin America, the Pacific Basin, and the US (Garza Elizondo 1994: 541; Mabire 1994) and as a *trading-state*, which is reflected in the increasing number of FTAs negotiated.[18]

This dramatic change in Mexico's role set was contested within the Foreign Affairs Office (Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores-SRE) because its members were identified with the previous set of beliefs (traditionalist group). The SRE quickly began to lose influence in the

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[18] Out of a total of 12 accords, four were negotiated under the administrations of Salinas de Gortari, and six under the Presidency of Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) (Haro, León and Ramírez 2011: 340-342).

conduct of foreign policy at the expense of a group of economic modernizers (technocratic group) from the secretariats of economic affairs, and trade and industrial affairs. In fact, the leadership role of President Salinas was decisive for granting power to the latter group to conduct the FTA negotiations with the US (NAFTA) and the EU.[19] President Salinas sought to impose his worldview and beliefs about the benefits of a market-driven foreign policy and the roles that Mexico would play on the world stage. Moreover, the SRE did not have the instruments to resist the imposition of the presidential mandate and thus it sought to accommodate itself to the new agenda by complementing and balancing the pro-American foreign policy by keeping links with Latin America through FTAs and political contacts (Ruiz Pérez 2011: 318). In this internal contestation over the appropriate role conception between a *Latin Americanist* (traditionalist group at SRE) and *pro-Americanist* and *globalizer* (technocrat group at the secretaries of economic affairs, trade and industrial affairs), any consideration of the Asia-Pacific, and especially to join APEC, was absent.

Once again, we see a Latin American country responding to dilemmas posed by changes in the international economic structure. Globalization forced both Chile and Mexico to reconsider their basic beliefs about the economy and trade. Both contained groups of traditionalists who wanted to maintain Latin Americanist roles, while facing strong challenges from Presidents and their supporters pushing more global trading roles. In some ways, we should not be surprised that the Executive in presidential systems is able to shift the debate toward his preferred set of beliefs to privilege or create NRCs for the state. In neither case was Asia part of the original discussion, contestation, or narrative of any of the groups within Chile or Mexico.

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[19] The negotiations with the US and Canada were formally announced in 1991 and the NAFTA agreement was implemented in 1994. The trade negotiations between Mexico and the EU were concluded in 1997.

Accession to APEC without a Role Conception?

Mexico's role conception and its entrance to the APEC went hand in hand with the accession to NAFTA. It seems to be the case that the dilemma of becoming an APEC member took Mexico by surprise, inasmuch as no salient narrative on an Asia-Pacific role is evident during this process (Anguiano Roch 2001). If we rely on purely structurally based explanations of foreign policy, then the growing dynamism of the Asia-Pacific (a structural shift) may have induced Mexico to have a stronger focus on this region.[20] However, President Salinas' response to globalization led the economic foreign-policy elite to pursue FTA negotiations first with the US and Canada and the EU, as well as with some Latin American countries; the latter as compensation mechanism for the SRE (Gámez Vázquez 2001; González González 2001; Covarrubias 2003).[21]

The attempt to forge economic ties with the Latin American countries was mainly with small countries without having a clear trade impact on Mexico (Covarrubias 2003: 22). However, this compensation strategy implemented by the traditionalist group at the SRE did not seduce countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba, creating gaps and distance in their traditional good relations (González Uresti 2008). Thus, economic globalization as a pattern did not mean an automatic shift to the Asia-Pacific and to APEC, despite the growing dynamism of Asian economies vis-à-vis Latin American economies. Likewise, the invitation to join the APEC forum was unexpected and become a dilemma for Mexico (Anguino Roch 2001).

Most Asian countries were against the formation of NAFTA, which drove their interest in creating a Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) within ASEAN, signed in 1992. Moreover, the

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[20] There are references in the speeches of President Salinas to the Pacific-basin including the Asian side, but not a narrative of a natural belonging to it.

[21] The first FTA with an Asian country was with Japan that was signed in 2004.

rationale to invite Mexico to join APEC was to prevent its fragmentation into two opposing FTA groups that were formed within this overarching institution (Anguiano Roch 2001: 845). Ultimately, the main proponent of Mexican accession to APEC was the US once Asian countries demonstrated the intention to incorporate this country (Haro et.al. 2011: 363).

Mexico did not conceive of a specific role for APEC accession. It kept the role of globalizer, bridge-builder, and pro-American state to face this new dilemma. These roles did not experience an adjustment to incorporate an explicit sense of belonging to the Asia-Pacific as a natural place to justify the eventual accession. This also meant that Mexico's foreign-policy focus was kept on NAFTA. The foreign economic elite actually downplayed the importance of APEC entrance since the NAFTA accord was thought to be in jeopardy due to the election of Bill Clinton and the new political reconfiguration of the US Congress. Yet, not only did President Clinton assure his approval of NAFTA but he also sought to develop a political orientation for APEC. This political impetus for APEC was also meant to support Mexico's accession to APEC. The US saw Mexico as strategic partner to advance both trade and political goals in the Asia-Pacific, a benefit of the alliance created by NAFTA (Anguiano Roch 2001: 844-846).

Overall, Mexico's experience was very different from Chile's. Unlike Chile, Mexico did not have to create a new narrative of an Asia-Pacific role. Mexico served the strategic interests of both APEC members and the US, so its membership proceeded much more smoothly than Chile's. Mexico could use the new NRCs developed in response to the dilemma posed by globalization (globalizer, bridge-builder and pro-American state) to join APEC, almost as an afterthought to acceding to NAFTA. The change in roles and identities required in Canada, Mexico, and the US to make NAFTA possible was enormous and has been described elsewhere (Goff 2000). Once those changes had been made to the role set, and those roles were appropriate for NAFTA and APEC, no need for additional innovation was necessary.

Role Location into APEC

The invitation to APEC did not imply divergences at the domestic level of the foreign and economic policy apparatus. The SRE was already experiencing role adaptation to the new global dilemma after president Salinas imposed its tenets supporting a market-driven economy. The strategy to protect domestic economic reforms was to secure their irreversibility by joining NAFTA, negotiating other FTAs, and by joining economic driven forums like APEC at the international level.

The view of APEC as an opportunity as well as a way to enhance the strategic partnership between the US and Mexico shaped the role-location of Mexico within this forum. In fact, the interests of other states and regions in Mexico should be viewed through the privileged relationship created with the US (Garza Elizondo 1994: 540). Mexico adopted a position of follower to US leadership in APEC. Mexico secured a common posture with Chile and Papua Guinea to ease their entrance into APEC, but it gave all the negotiation weight of the process to the US as its main ally. In principle, Mexico's accession was not resisted by APEC's skeptical actors such as Australia and Japan, as these two actors were also US allies.

Mexico pursued the NRCs of American ally, globalizer, and bridge-builder into APEC as part of its role repertoire. The most salient role was the American ally, which allowed Mexico to be accepted into the forum. The globalizer role was used as complementary to the American ally role as it was used as a benchmark to show peers in APEC that Mexico was following the rules of the game of economic globalization. In other words, Mexico showed in its role location and enactment that the dilemma posed by joining APEC was already incorporated into its new foreign-policy tradition. Further, Mexico used the role of bridge-builder and developed a similar narrative to that of Chile in order to justify being an APEC member to its internal audience as well as to be accepted by most APEC members. Some APEC

members saw NAFTA as a trade deviation group, which gave a negative connotation to Mexico as direct competitor vis-à-vis the Asian economies in their trade relations with the US. The narrative developed to locate and play the role of bridge-builder was designed to demonstrate that investing in Mexico provided an opportunity to enter the American market, countervailing the view of Mexico as a competitor to other Asia-Pacific states (Garza Elizondo: 1994: 541; Anguiano Roch 2001: 845).

Thus, Mexico's role location process into APEC helped produce an even stronger version of the pro-American state role into something akin to an American ally role, at least in economic terms. The bridge-builder role was strengthened to convince both skeptics within Mexico and within APEC that Mexico would fit into this new club of Asia-Pacific states. Mexico thus developed roles that did not require the development of an Asia-Pacific identity, but rather as a key partner to the US that facilitated global trade.

Role Play in APEC

The incorporation of Mexico (at the APEC leaders meeting in Seattle in 1993) was followed by the first official conference in Bogor, where the key economic goals of APEC were signed. President Salinas did not participate in the Seattle meeting, which was interpreted as a sign of the lack of priority of APEC for his presidency (Anguiano Roch 2001). However, he attended the second leaders meeting in Bogor, when his domestic mandate was expiring. The role of Mexico as bridge-builder was recognized but not substantially enacted in APEC because of the Tequila Crisis (1995) that changed the focus from the external to internal national problems. The US financial rescue increased the dependence of Mexico on the US and it meant strengthening the alliance between the two, further bolstered in trade matters and thus within APEC as well.

Moreover, the role of globalizer, bridge-builder, and American ally in APEC was neither contested by peers nor by the internal voices in the economic and foreign secretaries. APEC was seen as of secondary priority by policy-makers, despite then President Ernesto Zedillo's incorporation of APEC and the Asia-Pacific region into Mexico's foreign-policy narrative—of high relevance because of Mexico's dynamic economic growth. President Zedillo referred to the conduct of bilateral relations within APEC as a commercial diversification strategy and as a new venture, since some Asian countries did not have strong existing relationships with Mexico. Zedillo argued that Mexico should "(…) consolidate the existing accords and increase the links with Japan and structure bilateral relations with each APEC member, with a special interest on the group of ASEAN countries in order to use the opportunities of development these economies offer, as well as to give full meaning to our participation in this important international forum" (Zedillo 1995: 20).

The roles of follower, passively-enacted globalizer, and bridge-builder only changed when Mexico had to lead APEC as pro-tempore president in 2002. Mexico prioritized its own agenda during its presidency of APEC, much like Chile. In fact, one of the key topics of the APEC leaders meeting in Los Cabos (2002) was small and medium sized companies. This topic was taken from the presidential plan and campaign of Vicente Fox (2000-2006). In subsequent meetings of APEC, Mexico has played the role of globalizer and ally with the US by committing itself to continue promoting commercial and financial liberation under the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Moreover, it followed and supported the US in including the issue of terrorism within APEC's agenda through the Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR) program.

An issue of interest to Mexico that has been excluded from APEC is the migration issue, which shows both the asymmetry of the ally role with the US and the weight of the US in APEC. In 2005, the Declaration of Busan (Korea) dealt with the issue of human security to

moderate the purely anti-terrorist agenda of APEC. The issues of pandemics, food security, poverty, and corruption were incorporated, yet migration was not even presented by Mexico into this forum (Ramírez Bonilla 2008: 392-397).

Finally, a new impetus to enact the role of globalizer, trading-state, and American ally has been pursued by Mexico, under the leadership of the US in the negotiation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), seen as a response from the US to the APEC economies delay in achieving the goals of Bagor (Uscanga 2011).[22] Thus, Mexico's role-play of globalizer, trading-state, and American ally in APEC has been rather passive (the exception being its 2002 presidency of this institution), despite the fact that Mexico has unfolded a narrative of acting as bridge-builder between Asia and the Americas within APEC. Mexico clearly has agency despite its structural ties to the US through NAFTA and the subsequent economic, social, and political changes in the relationship. However, this agency is largely reflected in how actively or passively it enacts its US-sanctioned roles within APEC.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored on a theoretical level the possibilities and limitations of combining an interpretivist approach to foreign-policy analysis with a role-theoretic approach. Our motivation for doing so is rooted in existing criticisms of role theory; namely, the prevalence of considering NRCs as somehow reflecting national consensus without examining domestic processes of contestation, and the predominance of structure and material power in most accounts of NRC formation and enactment. We have demonstrated that it is possible to

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[22] Mexico only joined the negotiation of the TPP in October 2012. The negotiations are to be conducted by the Secretary of Economy (*El Universal* 2012), and not the SRE confirming its displacement from the global economic process and its political role and mission of enhancing relations in Latin America.

incorporate concepts from the interpretive approach such as beliefs, traditions, and dilemmas into role theory in order to address these two criticisms. In our cases of Chile and Mexico, we have explored the existing beliefs and traditions associated with economic foreign policy prior to, during, and after joining APEC. In both cases, dilemmas associated with globalization led to domestic actors reconsidering basic beliefs and narratives associated with traditional NRCs. Further, both cases demonstrated that presidents were able to repackage basic beliefs and reorient NRCs toward global free-trading, despite heavy resistance from groups adhering to tradition. Interestingly, the dilemmas faced by Chile and Mexico were structurally imposed—even as their responses were not overly determined by structural changes like globalization. Without viewing domestic processes of contestation, one might mistakenly assume that increased globalization would lead directly to free-trading roles, but this ignores all of the agency inherent in domestic political processes and even in interstate relations. Role theory, in particular its symbolic interactionist version, is already attuned to the mutual constitution of agents and structure. Our cases indicate that the selection of NRCs was shaped rather than determined by structure, and that subsequently those NRCs went on to shape the institutional forum of APEC as well as larger structures of globalization.

We have also sought to incorporate the primary methodological tool of the interpretive approach, narrative, in our case studies of Chile and Mexico. The narratives associated with these two countries demonstrate how key foreign-policy actors interact as foreign-policy traditions related to NRCs are constantly challenged, and experience adaptations and changes when dilemmas and historical contingencies become salient. The narrative also shows the importance of agents in this process, even as structures condition their behavior.

The two cases highlight some interesting similarities and differences faced by these two states in a similar time period. Both faced the dilemma posed by globalization, both drew on existing cultural material in the form of beliefs within their societies to develop responses to this shared dilemma. In both cases, groups representing foreign-policy tradition and groups representing change

engaged in a battle of narrative construction to reinforce or transform NRCs. In both cases, those representing change came out the victors—in part because of the importance of the Executive in presidential systems. Both Mexico and Chile had presidents that pursued changes in NRCs toward more global free trading roles and away from Latin American regionalism. Both pursued similar roles of global free-trader and bridge-builder internationally to assist with APEC membership.

The differences between the two are also striking. Chile created an Asia-Pacific role for itself as a way to convince domestic and international audiences that it should be a member of APEC. Such enactment was at least partially convincing, although Chilean membership in APEC was delayed even as Mexico and Papua New Guinea were granted membership. Mexico did not see the need to create such an NRC or shift its identity toward the Asia-Pacific to join APEC, nor did the audience of APEC states. In fact, Mexico's primary reorientation in terms of basic beliefs and NRCs was toward the United States. The pro-American or even American ally roles, which marked a fundamental shift in Mexican foreign-policy tradition that had to be accomplished for NAFTA served equally well for APEC. Ultimately, given APEC's rather loose institutionalization compared to other international institutions, fundamental changes in identity represented by NRCs for non-Asian states to join is probably unnecessary. It may have been a necessary precondition for Chile to join, but Mexico had only to show its functional use for the organization.

Future work on the marriage of the interpretive approach to foreign policy and role theory should definitely continue to explore the domestic contestation of NRCs. We would like to see more interviews of foreign-policy officials representing the variety of bureaucratic and executive interests, as well as interviews of commercial leaders and opposition figures. In our analysis of Chile and Mexico, agency remains at the highest levels of the state, in part because that is what we have observed, and in part because these are presidential systems in which the executive has much more latitude in foreign policy than in parliamentary systems. We have documented group contestation

over foreign-policy tradition and change, but more micro-level information would add to the texture of our description.

We also believe that the interpretive approach should more carefully interrogate the concept of structure. While role theory can be overly structural, it need not be when using the symbolic interactionist version that recognizes the constant interplay between agency and structure. Our sense is that the interpretive approach to foreign policy may be adopting an analytical stance that prioritizes agency, but we caution against the removal of structural considerations. In our cases, it is clear that structural changes in the global economy began the process of reconsideration of Chilean and Mexican beliefs, traditions, and associated NRCs. The response to the globalization dilemma was not automatic or direct, but this structural change did precipitate agent action. Agents then in some measure reinforced aspects of the global economic structure, even as they debated NRCs that challenged other aspects of structure. Neither interpretivist nor role theory will ever resolve the agent-structure debate, but both should be sensitive to their standpoints (agents or structure) and how this influences their narrative construction.

Finally, the use of narrative itself will require more careful elaboration within both interpretivist and role theory work. At one level, the agents we are examining are constructing narratives using the cultural material of beliefs that are available to them. Those narratives are used to support or challenge traditions in response to dilemmas in the environment. Role theorists are then particularly interested in the kinds of NRCs developed out of those narratives that then represent the state in the international and domestic systems, lending a kind of social coherence to state behavior and identity. At a second level, the researcher is in the position of reconstructing narratives that the agents themselves may not be entirely aware of as holistic, social enterprises. Ensuring that our analytical reconstructions of agents narratives reflecting NRCs is consistent with history is critical to our scholarly accounts of foreign-policy processes like Chile and Mexico joining APEC.

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