

***Prospects and Opportunities for the Pacific Alliance, Volume V, Isabel Rodríguez Aranda and Edgar Vieira Posada (eds.), Bogotá, College of Higher Education in Business-CESA, Center for the Study of Globalization and Integration-CEGLI, 2015.***

This volume analyzes the Pacific Alliance (PA) with texts about Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile, providing relevant information, theoretical approaches, and some critiques. The PA seeks to create a "zone of profound integration to advance progressively towards the free circulation of goods, services, capital, and people. It also promotes higher growth, development, and the competitiveness of the member economies, aiming to boost welfare, overcome socioeconomic inequality, and achieve social inclusion for its inhabitants" (p. 42).

The initiative was proposed by then head-of-state Alán García, twice President of Peru and accused of corruption, and was supported by Felipe Calderón, the mastermind behind the war on crime that resulted in a bloodbath in Mexico and countless human rights violations. On behalf of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos joined in, who, as Minister of Defense, commanded an army that committed abuse, human rights violations, and assassinations, which have been internationally denounced. The fourth member of the quartet was the Chilean Sebastián Piñera, millionaire and defender of Augusto Pinochet and his cronies.

From the very beginning, the PA was a questionable and contradictory project. Behind the ambiguous concept of "profound integration," which E. Vieira challenges in his chapter, is just another bulky trade agreement, which includes goods, services, capital, and people, assuming that free circulation will drive growth, development, competitiveness, and an inclusive and egalitarian society. But, as G. Marchini asserts, it is not enough for everything to circulate in trade. It is also necessary to successfully insert national economies in the global value chains that move the global economy and would permit a beneficial presence in the Asian-Pacific markets. However, as Marchini clarifies, this cannot be achieved overnight. Moreover, because powerful actors operate in the global value chains and exercise governance, subordinate integration is a very real possibility, which would only exacerbate the current problems, such as extractivism and the reprimarization of exports.

The text also mentions studies that have demonstrated the market liberalization has not produced the supposedly advantageous effects, in particular in underdeveloped economies. Moreover, the adjective "free" is an ideological manipulation of the word, because this free market in fact erodes and can even annihilate the freedom of society, of the non-human beings on this planet, and nature itself. Moreover, it is still said that the problems of today can be resolved with "growth and

development,” which is nothing more than manufacturing goods, now for the Asian Pacific, which will entail higher consumption of primarily non-renewable energy, the depletion of “natural resources,” and more pollution and global warming, not to mention worse living conditions for current and future generations.

Worthy of criticism is the fact that the creators of the PA ignored the history of their own peoples, and the “Good Living” proposal, the brainchild of neighboring countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia, and even Peru, which in reality is a different model, an alternative to a market-subordinated society, which is what the PA desires to reproduce. If the destination is profundity, the path to follow is not to liberalize the markets, nor to commodify the world, but rather a different vision entirely. Although the PA has been maintained by the successors of its founders, it has not stopped being a tyrannical project, buoyed by the whims of the current heads-of-state.

The link between the PA and the theoretical discussion of regional integration is discussed by I. Rodríguez. For readers looking to understand the current global geopolitical map, A. Rocha and D. Morales’ text is especially useful, as they provide an overview of the material and semi-material capacities of the parties to the agreement. A. Roldán and A.S. Castro address trade ties with the Asian-Pacific region, while A. Cobos and J. Recabarren deal with financial integration and the merging of the stock markets, discussing the practically non-existent participation of political parties and Chilean business organizations in the PA. I. Witker and D. Leiva introduced the competition between Brazil and Mexico to be the top leader in the region. Finally, Yun Tso Lee analyzes the geopolitical and economic interests of China and the United States in the PA, and poses two basic questions: 1) Is the PA a Trojan horse at the service of the Americans, or at least, an opportunistic mechanism for Washington to move four pawns to its side on the TPP chessboard? And, 2) Could China exploit the PA to gain ground in world trade?

The text helps readers reflect on the paths that these nations have taken to emerge from “underdevelopment” and also poses a fundamental question: Is a trade partnership the solution to the principal problems we are facing?

According to a study from the Center for the Research and Teaching of Economics (CIDE), presented by Schiavon in numerous forums, Mexicans identify the top three problems as: 1) drug trafficking and by extension that violence and insecurity that go with; 2) global warming; and 3) access to and scarcity of food.

It is not certain if there are similar studies in the other three countries, but surely their citizens suffer from the same ailments. The question is, then: How can the PA contribute to a solution?

The book does not offer a clear answer, perhaps because this is not what the PA set out to do, but if this is the case, then what purpose does a project serve that fails to attack the most severe problems from which we suffer? How can we talk about the rule of law (Rocha and Morales, 2015: 112) when phenomena such as drug trafficking have led to "failed states" (e.g., Mexico and Colombia)? Although the book does provide macroeconomic information, it does not offer data about poverty, health, obesity, malnutrition, prostitution, or suicide, issues that impact the member societies of the PA and should be considered if the true aim is to intensify a project that serves not only business interests, but also the national good.

What our Americas need is not a PA, guided by neoliberal obsessions, but rather, as V. Shiva says, a peaceful partnership of reconciliation with Earth, which will carry us beyond "growth" and leave behind the war against the planet, the war for land and wealth, the war against water and the atmosphere, the forests and jungles, the wars to control seeds and food. On the contrary, the only safe alternative is to live in peace with Earth, knowing that we human beings could not exist were it not for our planetary dwelling and its creatures, because we are one with them. Their life is our life, their agony would be our death.

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