

FOREIGN POLICY OF CHILE DURING THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF MICHELLE BACHELET IN 2006–2010

© Sivkov I.A.

Samara National Research University, Samara, Russian Federation

Academic advisor: Guralnik T.A., Candidate of Philological Sciences, associate professor
Samara National Research University, Samara, Russian Federation

Key words: foreign policy, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Michelle Bachelet, diplomatic relations.

The purpose of this paper is to survey the main achievements of Chilean President Bachelet during her first presidential term (why have you chosen the first term of office? What was the reason of choosing the 1st term rather than the 2nd (3rd etc) In order to achieve this purpose the following objectives were set:

- to outline the traditional foreign policy of Chile;
- to survey M.B goals of foreign policy;
- to evaluate Chile's bilateral relations with Argentina, Peru and Columbia

Chile is a country of Latin America with unusual past, strange present and unpredictable future. The phenomenon of this country in the XXIth century is an integrity of its foreign policy goals no matter which party is in power. However, political parties still play their role in forming governmental agenda, finding an interesting balance between the needs of the state and political ideas, which explains the rationale behind the choice of the Michel Bachelet's 2006-2010 term of office as the object of study [1–3].

To analyze the political course of Michele Bachelet in 2006–2010, it is noteworthy to explore the bilateral relations of Chile and several countries of the region, including Peru and Bolivia, to find out Chile's main achievements in diplomacy during the chosen period of time.

The official position of Chile on foreign policy was traditionally peaceful cooperation with world community, protection of democratic institutions and civil rights, involvement in international organizations.

In 2006–2010 Michelle Bachelet was elected a President of the Republic of Chile on the wave of leftist parties popularity in Chile. The Republican foreign policy once again aimed to improve regional cooperation. It synergized with the so-called “left turn” in Latin America in general, when left-wing parties gained power and popularity in the whole region. Therefore, Chile needed to compromise with other Latin American states in economy and territorial disputes, on the one hand, and to maintain sustainability and integrity of political course of Chile, on the other.

The best relations for Chile during the first term of Bachelet were those with Argentina. The countries had few political reasons whatsoever to conflict, as established trade cooperation in Mercosur and peaceful stance of both countries prevented any turmoil. For example, in 2009, Chile and Argentina signed an agreement on integration and cooperation, replacing a previous 20-year-old document, which enabled both countries to maintain their trade relations during the World Economic Crisis.

Another neighbor of Chile, Bolivia, was a completely different story. This country is of vital importance for Chilean economy, as it has large gas deposits. However, diplomatic relations between these countries have been tense for more than a century. The reason was a dispute over Atacama region, which was captured by Chile in 1884. For Bolivia, this event became a national trauma, as the republic lost their access to the Pacific Ocean. As a result, up to Bachelet's Presidency, the countries had broken their diplomatic relations for 40 years. New President tried to resume relations with Bolivia by publishing Memoranda in 2006, claiming the situation to be unfair. Soon after, her cabinet offered a new project of free corridor in Antagofasta province, allowing Bolivian citizens to move freely and exploit a part of Chilean coastal line for profit.

Bolivian side welcomed such a move, and both sides established communication on the topic. This attempt, however, did not bring the desired result, both due to the president's lack of time and understanding.

The third neighbor of Chile, the Republic of Peru, also stayed cold with Chile due to uncertain sea borders. For example, in 2006 Government of Peru claimed to change sea borders during delimitation. The Chilean parliament denied, and, in 2008, Peru officially addressed the International Court of Justice to resolve the dispute. However, the active position of the President of Chile and performed peaceful actions did not allow this case to thwart bilateral relations. As a result, in 2009 both sides signed a free trade agreement.

One of the most controversial decisions of President Bachelet was to strengthen diplomatic relations with Cuba- For example, Chile and Cuba signed a free trade agreement in 2008. A year later, Michelle Bachelet decided to visit Cuba and meet with its leader Fidel Castro. Furthermore, she refused to meet with opposition political organizations of Cuba, despite their invitations. This event was met in Chile with embarrassment, as the opposition accused the President of 'playing into the dictator's hands'.

In general, Michelle Bachelet's actions were quite peaceful and popular among Latin American region. Even historical rivals of Chile, such as Bolivia and Peru, admitted her peaceful intentions, which allowed Chile to drastically increase its trade balance. However, M.B. Presidency in 2006-2010 offers valuable insights into her building successful diplomatic relations with both "friendly" and "unfriendly" neighboring countries of the Latin American Region.

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