

# Cambio de política exterior por inercia: la política exterior colombiana hacia Asia-Pacífico en el periodo 2010-2021

## *Foreign Policy Change by Inertia: Colombian Foreign Policy Toward the Asia-Pacific Region in the Period 2010-2021*

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### Resumen

Este artículo explora si la política exterior colombiana hacia Asia-Pacífico cambió en 2010-2021 y, si lo hizo, en qué medida, desentrañando así una contradicción en la literatura académica. Metodología: Basado en la literatura de Cambio de Política Exterior, el artículo compara la política exterior colombiana hacia Asia-Pacífico en 2010, 2018 y 2021 a través de dos conjuntos de datos. Se explora un análisis del cambio normativo a través de una revisión de documentos gubernamentales. Posteriormente, las relaciones de Colombia con la región se miden cuantitativamente, a través de tres dimensiones de diversificación. Según los datos, el alcance del cambio se determina utilizando una tipología de cambio por niveles. Conclusiones: El análisis del cambio normativo apunta inicialmente a un cambio de ajuste en la relación de Colombia con Asia-Pacífico durante el primer mandato de Juan Manuel Santos, el cual se ralentizó en su segundo mandato y sufrió reveses con el presidente Iván Duque. Los da-

tos cuantitativos, sin embargo, sugieren que el cambio iniciado por Santos continuó bajo Duque, independientemente de posibles alineaciones normativas con EE.UU. Sugerimos que la inercia causada por las decisiones iniciales de la administración Santos, así como el peso del ascenso de China, crearon el impulso suficiente para evitar que el cambio experimentara retrocesos. Originalidad: Este artículo representa una incursión inicial en el estudio de la política exterior colombiana a través del lente de Cambio de Política Exterior. Desarrolla una caracterización rigurosa de la relación de Colombia con una región poco estudiada. También aporta la inercia como elemento innovador, el cual podría ser incorporado a los modelos teóricos de análisis de cambio.

**Palabras clave:** *Cambio de política exterior, política exterior colombiana, Asia-Pacífico, inercia, relaciones Sur-Sur*

### Abstract

This article explores whether Colombian foreign policy to the Asia-Pacific changed in 2010-2021 and to what extent, thus unraveling a contradiction in the academic literature. Methodology: Grounded on the literature on Foreign Policy Change, the article compares Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in 2010, 2018, and 2021 through two sets of data. An analysis of normative change is explored through a review of government

documents. Colombian relations to the region are then measured quantitatively through three dimensions of diversification. Based on the data, the extent of change is determined using a graduated typology of change. Conclusions: The normative change analysis initially points to an adjustment change in Colombia's relation with the Asia-Pacific during Juan Manuel Santos' first presidential term that slowed down by his second term and suffered setbacks under President Ivan Duque. The quantitative data, however, suggests that the change initiated by Santos continued apace under Duque, regardless of possible normative alignments with the US. We suggest that the inertia caused by the initial Santos administration decisions, as well as the weight of China's rise, created sufficient momentum to keep change from experiencing setbacks. Originality: This article represents an initial foray into studying Colombian foreign policy through the lens of Foreign Policy Change. It develops a rigorous characterization of Colombia's relation with an understudied region. It also contributes inertia as an innovative element for the analysis of change to be incorporated into theoretical models.

**Key words:** *Foreign policy change, Colombian foreign policy, Asia-Pacific, inertia, South-South relations*

A curious contradiction has emerged in the academic discussions on Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific region starting in 2010. On the one hand, it has become commonplace to argue that, with the arrival of Juan Manuel Santos to the presidency (2010-2018), what had once been a foreign policy almost exclusively aligned with the United States under former president Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), experienced a notable "change" (Ardila and Clemente Batalla, 2019; Borda, 2017; Gonzalez Parias, Mesa Bedoya and Londoño Ossa, 2016; Ramirez, 2011; Sanchez and Campos, 2019) in the way that the country sought to find its place in a

dynamic global context of rising multipolarity through a diversification of its relations, especially with the Asia-Pacific, which it now conceived as the "world's geopolitical and economic epicenter" (Cancillería de Colombia 2013: 12).

Examples abound in the literature of this alleged change during the Santos years. Pastrana, Betancourt, and Castro (2014: 182), for example, speak of a "redefinition of foreign policy objectives" as the Colombian government centered its attention away from a declining Atlantic and toward a rising Pacific. This redefinition materialized in the Colombian government's active support for the establishment of the Pacific Alliance, with aims to serve as a platform for the projection of its members towards the Asia-Pacific (Ministerio de Comercio, 2012). Gomez Diaz (2021), meanwhile, points to changes as reflected in the strengthening of the country's diplomatic presence in the region, increases in trade and investment, the coming into force of new agreements, and the widening of relations towards new partners and new areas of cooperation.

On the part of the Duque administration (2018-2022), even as some have criticized the "ideologization" of the country's foreign policy under his leadership (Pastrana, Villota, and Burgos, 2021), the turn to diversification has remained a consistent foreign policy objective (Cancillería de Colombia 2018). Colombia's relations with China, in particular, have been said to have strengthened in the trade field (Aguirre, Fernandez Panero, and Marabio, 2021) and to now cover new areas, like investment, financing, and the construction of massive infrastructure projects (Castrillon, 2021), with no slowdown in the country's relations with other Asia-Pacific states.

But even as the literature speaks of change, the very same literature notes that the turn in the country's foreign policy didn't happen fully, or at least not to the extent expected (Velosa, 2020). Relative to other countries in Latin America, Colombia's insertion to the region has been found to be incipient and

weak (Castro Bernal, Acosta Strobel, and Praj, 2017), even precarious (Torres, 2021). There are also claims that it lacks a clear strategy, consisting instead of loose actions (Pastrana, Betancourt, and Castro, 2014). Most notably, none of the authors find that Colombia has abandoned its close alignment with the US. Instead, the US remains at the center of Colombian foreign policy (Ardila and Clemente Batalla, 2019), and pro-American attitudes continue to be a part of the “common sense” of Colombian foreign policy-making elites, and even as an element of Colombian identity (Bernal and Tickner, 2017).

Did Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific change starting in 2010? And if it did, to what extent did it change? This article seeks to answer these questions by using tools drawn from the field of Foreign Policy Change (FPC), principally Hermann’s four graduated levels of foreign policy change.

As will be explained in the coming section, foreign policy change is a relatively rare phenomenon with specific characteristics, that is the result of a process with factors that enable or hinder it, and that occurs at various degrees of depth. Using the lens of FPC to study the case of Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in the period 2010-2021, we find that, although President Santos might have initially intended for a more profound change to take place, during the entire period of study, Colombian foreign policy ultimately only experienced adjustment changes—the most superficial form of foreign policy change under Hermann’s (1990) typology. Nonetheless, the initial actions taken by the national government under Santos and the weight of China’s rise on international structural conditions created sufficient inertia to keep change from slowing down, even under the more US-aligned Duque administration.

Studying this topic through the lens of foreign policy change is expected to contribute in both disciplinary and practical terms. In disciplinary terms, being grounded in the studies on FPC, a tradition of foreign

policy analysis that is methodologically and theoretically rigorous, this article addresses the critiques that the study of Colombian foreign policy has been mostly atheoretical, that it recurs to common tropes (Amaya, 2017), and that it has insufficiently used specific frameworks of analysis (Bitar and Tickner, 2017). The focus on Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific also contributes to the discipline because it addresses the absence of studies on the relation between Latin American countries and the region that go beyond trade, a gap in the literature observed by Rojas and Teran (2017: 249).

In practical terms, this work will allow for a more precise characterization of Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific, a region that has been rhetorically prioritized by past administrations, but with whom Colombia maintains only relatively superficial relations (Castro Bernal, Acosta Strobel and Praj, 2017; Gomez Diaz, 2021; Torres, 2021). This characterization should permit decision-makers to identify weaknesses and obstacles in the process of foreign policy formulation and implementation.

The article is structured in five sections, in addition to this introduction. First, a presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework to be used, drawing from the literature on FPC, along with a justification of the regional scope and period of study and a presentation of the methodology used. Second, a description of the normative shifts experienced by Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific region for the period 2010-2021. Third, a presentation of quantitative data that speaks to the degree of change in the period of study. Fourth, a discussion of the findings of the normative and quantitative data. Fifth, a presentation of conclusions and avenues for further research.

1. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks, justification of regional scope and period of study, and methodology

a. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks  
Nearly 30 years ago, as the Cold War

unraveled, states both great and small undertook profound changes to their foreign policy, waking the field of foreign policy analysis to the realization that it had for long focused principally “on stability and inertia rather than on the transition from one state of affairs to another” (Gustavsson, 1999), that is, that it had dismissed foreign policy change.

In the years since, the study of FPC has gained ground, developing a wide array of tools and models to assess whether change has taken place (Jerdén, 2014; Johnston, 2013), to measure the degree of change (Hagström and Williamsson, 2009), and to explain the causes and processes of foreign policy change (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; Busby, 2007; Carlsnaes, 1992; Goldmann, 1988; Gustavsson, 1999; Hagan and Rosati, 1994; Hermann, 1990; Kaarbo, 2017; Lee, 2012; Mearsheimer, 2001; Merke, Reynoso and Schenoni, 2020; Peltner, 2017; Risse and Sikkink, 1999; Rosati, 1994; Skidmore, 1995; Subotic, 2015; van Noort & Colley, 2020; Volgy and Schwarz, 1994; Walsh, 2006; Welch, 2005; Yang, 2010). This work analyzes possible changes to Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific through this lens.

A useful initial definition of foreign policy is offered by Hermann, who describes it as “a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program created by authoritative policymakers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymaker’s political jurisdiction” (Hermann, 1990: 5). We complement this with Anderson’s annotation that it is expected that policies should be “relatively stable” (Anderson, 2000: 4). From these definitions, we draw five central elements: that (1) more than a result, foreign policy is a process (2) that is led by the state, (3) that is distinct from domestic policy in that it is explicitly directed toward foreign entities, and (4) which is carried out with an explicit intention in mind (5) over a relatively prolonged period of time. The last two elements are particularly important to this study in that they remind that “a heap of isolated actions does not equal

a foreign strategy” (Amaya, 2017: 55). The review of Colombia’s relation with the Asia-Pacific will require careful analysis of whether the actions taken amount to a foreign policy or not.

States generally maintain consistent foreign policies (Rosati, 1994; Walsh, 2006). These, while subject to ordinary policy fluctuations, rarely truly change. Change is only said to occur when “a state’s foreign policy apparatus routinely starts to handle similar situations differently” (Jerdén, 2014: 50). This description is supplemented by three insights from Haesebrouck and Joly (2021: 484): that the changes to the foreign policy of states can vary in terms both of their goals and the means to achieve them; that change occurs in gradations; and that change can occur through dramatic breaks or in a cumulative manner, through incremental changes.

In line with the second insight above, we take foreign policy change not to function like an on/off switch; rather, it occurs at various degrees of depth. We follow Hermann’s (1990) typology of four graduated levels of change to characterize the possible change in Colombia’s foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific. Table 1 below describes each of them, from the most superficial to the most profound levels of change.

**Table 1. Four Graduated Levels of Foreign Policy Change**

Level of foreign policy change	Description
Adjustment change	Change “in the level of effort and/or in the scope of recipients” (Hermann 1990, 5). Tends to be a quantitative change.
Program change	Change in the methods or means of foreign policy. It can involve new instruments of statecraft. Tends to be qualitative.
Problem/goal change	Change in the problem or goal of foreign policy, that is, a change in its purpose.
International orientation change	Change in the state’s entire orientation toward world affairs, including role and activities. “Not one policy but many are more or less simultaneously changed” (Hermann 1990, 6).

**Source: Adapted from Hermann (1990)**

In the presentation of the methodology below, we will detail an initial operationalization of each of the levels of foreign policy change, which will then be used to ascertain whether Colombian foreign policy changed or not in the period of study.

In the study of foreign policy change, great attention has been placed on understanding the mechanisms of change, and the factors that facilitate or hinder it. For this, various models have been created. Of the existing models, the one developed by Gustavsson (1999) stands out because of its consideration of factors at every level of analysis (Singer, 1961). This is relevant to this study given the exhortation by Amaya to analyze Colombian foreign policy considering “the degree of priority of the matter under study” by the decision-maker, as well as “domestic conditions and the external context” (Amaya, 2017: 58).

Under Gustavsson’s model, change occurs through a three-step process. The first step is that of the sources of change, which are identified as the fundamental structural conditions at the international and domestic level. These conditions can be both political and economic, for example, changes to the international distribution of power as rising states shift the system toward multipolarity (Mearsheimer, 2001; Volgy and Schwarz, 1994), or shifts in voter preferences that shape the policies of political players inside

a state (Hagan and Rosati, 1994). They can hinder change from happening, or they can facilitate it taking place.

The second step in the model is a cognitive one, that involves how individual decision-makers perceive and react to structural conditions. The framework of beliefs of leaders becomes an important intervening factor, shaping their willingness to change the state’s foreign policy from the status quo and influencing the direction of change (Yang, 2010). This consideration is in line with arguments that leadership matters, with changes in government occasionally leading to changes in policy (Peltner, 2017; Rynhold, 2007; Volgy and Schwarz, 1994; Walsh, 2006). In Latin America, works like that by Merke, Reynoso, and Scheroni (2020) confirm the importance of presidential ideology as the most powerful predictor of foreign policy change.

Finally, the third step is that of the decision-making process. Even in a national decision-making context in which presidents enjoy great discretion in the formulation of foreign policy (Ardila, Cardona, and Tickner, 2002; Gonzalez Arana, Galeano David, and Trejos Rosero, 2015; Tickner, 2007), they are ultimately immersed in institutional structures in which outcomes aren’t given. Even when all other conditions align, powerful gatekeepers in the decision-making process



can impose obstacles to change (Breuning, 2013). From an advocacy coalition framework perspective (Haar and Pierce, 2013), among the groups that can influence whether foreign policy change takes place, one finds business associations, in line with findings about the role of these groups in Colombia's policy in the negotiations over the free trade agreement with the US (Garay, 2008) and in the economic policies of the Santos administration (Vargas-Alzate, Sosa, and Rodríguez-Ríos, 2012).

As a final note on Gustavsson's model, the author notes that foreign policy change is likely to occur during certain policy windows, "a moment of opportunity that can be used for introducing reforms" (Gustavsson, 1999: 85). Policy windows may be the result of external shocks (Hermann, 1990: 12); they can also emerge because of uncertainty following a crisis or policy failure (Lee, 2012: 739; Walsh, 2006: 492-493).

#### b. Justification of regional scope and period of study

Having presented the theoretical and conceptual framework of this article, we will now justify its regional scope and period of study. We study Colombia's foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific and not toward individual states in the region because, starting under the Uribe administration, and continuing with Santos and Duque, the country has taken the entire region as the target of its foreign policy. This is well-exemplified in the national strategy of insertion to the Asia-Pacific (Cancillería de Colombia, 2013) and the establishment of the Pacific Alliance, with aims to project itself toward the region (Ministerio de Comercio 2012).

In line with publications made by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cancillería de Colombia, n.d.; 2019), we take the Asia-Pacific to encompass the following 24 countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (hereafter, China), India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (hereafter, Korea), Laos, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New

Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. This choice of conception of the breadth of the region is not unproblematic, for example, in the way that it locates vastly disparate countries under a same umbrella term, or in the way that it intentionally leaves out certain important economies. The implications of this will be examined in greater detail in the final section. Nonetheless, given that the change of foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific has been carried out by the Colombian government precisely using that regional scope, even if the choice of countries by the government appears imperfect, the study of all of them is most appropriate.

The period of study of this article goes from 2010 to 2021, covering the two Santos presidential terms and a little over three years of the Duque term. This periodization is appropriate for three reasons. First, because it allows us to address the research problem presented in the introduction, that of a contradiction on whether foreign policy change took place and the extent of it over the two presidencies. Second, because, given the definition of foreign policy presented earlier, in particular the expectation that it should be carried out with particular intentions in mind over a relatively prolonged period of time, if Colombian foreign policy truly changed starting in the Santos administration, we would expect that change to carry over under the Duque presidency. Third, ending the period of study in 2021 allows us to include certain statistical data for that year in the analysis, data that is not yet available for all of 2022.

#### c. Methodology

This work seeks to ascertain whether Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific changed in the period 2010-2021. If a change in foreign policy took place, we use Hermann's four graduated levels of change to identify it accurately. To determine whether change took place, we compare the state of Colombian foreign policy toward the region at the start of the Santos administration, in

2010, with its state in 2018 and in 2021. We are interested in adding that observation in 2018 to check arguments made by Gomez Diaz (2021) and Pastrana Buelvas, Villota Hernandez, and Burgos Giraldo (2021) that, starting with Duque, the change toward diversification initiated by Santos was reversed.

While the period of study is 2010-2021, to carry out a more complete analysis of possible changes, in the analysis of the data, we include information from the Uribe years. This inclusion allows for a better sense of what came before and what, if anything, changed afterwards.

In making the comparisons, we review two sets of data. On the one hand, following Hagström and Williamsson's (2009) study of change in Japanese foreign policy, we review official government policy and strategic documents for possible normative shifts in how the Colombian government views the international order, its own role in that order, and the relations that it believes it ought to have with the Asia-Pacific. We are interested in tracking normative shifts because we expect a change in foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific to come about in tandem with a shift in the collective beliefs of Colombian decision-makers about proper Colombian behavior. This choice also allows us to identify the mechanisms of change in Gustavsson's (1999) model.

The documents reviewed are the four National Plans for Development (PND, by their Spanish-language acronyms) approved during the period 2006-2022; the strategic institutional plans, as well as the principles and guidelines of Colombian foreign policy, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the period of study; and the four policies on defense and security published by the Ministry of Defense during the period 2007-2022. Use of these documents to evaluate Colombian foreign policy has been validated by numerous authors (Forero, 2015; Valdivieso Collazos, Camelo Zamudio and García Briceño, 2021; Vera Piñeros, Prieto

Ararat and Garzon Amortegui, 2021).

On the other hand, we review quantitative data that can speak to the degree of change. Table 2 below lists the variables analyzed by dimension, a description of them, the years for which data was collected, and the sources from which they were drawn.

Table 2. Quantitative Measures of Foreign Policy Change

Dimension	Variable	Description	Years	Source
Official relations	Embassies and consulates	Number of Colombian embassies, consular offices, and consulates	2010-2021	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021)
	ProColombia offices	Number of Pro-Colombia offices	2010-2021	ProColombia (2022); news
	High-level visits	Number of official visits and meetings by President, Vice-President, and Minister of Foreign Affairs (and equivalents)	2002-2021	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.); news
Trade	Imports	Value of imports from the region as a percentage of total imports; comparison with US and EU	2002-2020	OECD (2022)
	Exports	Value of exports from the region as a percentage of total exports; comparison with US and EU	2002-2020	OECD (2022)
Investment	Stock of FDI	Stock of FDI inflows from Asia-Pacific as a percentage of total FDI stock; comparison with US and EU	2007-2021	Banco de la República (2022)

Source: created by the authors.



Forero (2015: 296-297) identifies two dimensions with which to measure diversification, each with their own set of variables. These appear relevant to this exploration of change. The first dimension is the increase in official relations, to be measured here by the number of embassies and consulates, the number of ProColombia offices, and the number and geographic breadth of high-level visits. For the most part, this data was found in the virtual archives of the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ProColombia. We validated the completeness of this data through an online search of news stories. The second dimension is the increase in bilateral trade. In measuring this, we are especially interested in identifying how exports to and imports from the Asia-Pacific region, as a percentage of all exports and imports, changed relative to exports and imports with more traditional partners like the United States and the European Union. Given incomplete data, and to avoid comparing data across databases, the commercial data was drawn only for 2002-2020, from the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC 2022).

We add a third dimension that measures the increase in the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI). Drawing from the Colombian central bank (Banco de la República, 2022), we measure the change over time in the stock of FDI to Colombia held by Asia-Pacific countries relative to that held by more traditional partners like the United States and the European Union.

If change took place, we would expect it to occur along the lines drawn by Hermann. An adjustment change would manifest in shifts in the quantitative data that reflects a deeper and broader relation with the Asia-Pacific, that is, higher numbers with a greater number of countries. Qualitatively, we expect only a declaration of greater interest in the Asia-Pacific. A program change would include the previous quantitative changes, but would be accompanied by novelty in how the presidential administrations choose to relate to the region, both tangibly and discursively.

This might include new mechanisms for interaction. A problem/goal change includes the above, as well as a vision of the country's new foreign policy goals and of the place of the Asia-Pacific in them. This will require an identification of the initial stated goals, to be done below. Finally, a change in international orientation would be reflected in a profound shift in how Colombia views its place in the world and its relation to others in it, specifically, in a complete abandonment of its alignment with the US and a turn away from the Atlantic and towards the Asia-Pacific. Both the normative and quantitative analysis should reflect these changes.

## 2. Normative shifts in Colombian foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific

This section and the following one will compare Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in 2010, 2018, and 2021, to determine whether a change of foreign policy took place and to what extent. To do so, in keeping with the stated methodology above, we begin with a review of normative shifts in official government policy and strategic documents, tracking possible changes in how the government viewed the international order, Colombia's role in it, and the kind of relations the country ought to have with others.

In terms of the view of the international order, the 2008-2009 financial crisis stands out as an event that marked at least a temporary breaking point in Colombian foreign policy, shaking Colombian decision-makers into considering the vulnerabilities of dependence on established partners in the West and making note of the opportunities that could stem from a change in foreign policy. This break is notable in the comparison of the PND's for the second Uribe administration and the first Santos administrations. In the former (DNP, 2007), very little is said about conditions at the international level. The Asia-Pacific is not posed as a rising region, nor is the United States or Europe portrayed as in decline. The silence evident on this regard may be reflective of a view of an assumed static world.

The latter plans, on the other hand, do speak of a world in motion. The crisis is said to have revealed the fragility of developed economies like the United States and the European Union (DNP, 2015: 950), which continue to experience slow recoveries. In the way that Colombia continues to “excessively concentrate risk” (DNP, 2011: 672) in them, it faces a worryingly “high degree of vulnerability” (DNP, 2011: 674). While the crisis negatively affected developed markets, it also created “new global spaces” (DNP, 2011: 671) for Colombia and for emerging economies. The Asia-Pacific region is one of them, being presented as a “global strategic actor” (DNP, 2011: 684), or even more so, as the “world’s geopolitical and economic epicenter” (Cancillería de Colombia, 2013: 12).

This particular reading of changes to the international order, however, is only temporary. Already by the time of the second Santos administration, the government notes a slowdown in economic growth of major Asia-Pacific economies like China and India. There’s a perception of the international order as changing, but no clarity on who those changes favor. This is why, starting in 2015, the international context is described as “uncertain” (DNP, 2015: 940), “unstable” (Ministerio de Defensa, 2015: 5), and “challenging” (DNP, 2019: 133). We believe this later normative shift to have influenced foreign policy change towards the Asia-Pacific.

Now, when it comes to the view of Colombia’s role in the international order, two main themes stand out from the documents. First, regardless of views on a changing or static international order, every presidential administration, starting with Uribe, expresses an idea of a new Colombia that is called on to participate more actively in the global stage and to be recognized in the way that it has changed. Uribe begins this practice, pointing that a Colombia that has achieved security gains “must now focus on the development of new identity paradigms that permit and reproduce the political and economic differentiation of the country from what had come before” (DNP, 2005: 546).

Santos and Duque build on this idea of a new Colombia, growing in ambition. In the documents of the Santos administration, we see an intention to make of Colombia a role model in peace resolution and a well-positioned offeror of South-South cooperation. The documents of the Duque presidency go a step further, suggesting that Colombia has a leadership role to play in regional and global governance of strategic issues, like the fight against climate change, the defense of democracy and human rights, and new threats to security (DNP, 2019: 147). We consider this consistent and growing conception of an active Colombia to be relevant because it motivates the country to work more closely with new actors.

A second main theme is that of the varying readings given to the objectives of foreign policy. In this regard, we perceive a break between the Uribe and Duque administrations, on the one hand, and the two Santos administrations, on the other. The first set of presidents appear to principally perceive foreign policy as a means to address security issues in the country and the Western Hemisphere. Accordingly, the Uribe administration declares that Colombian foreign policy in his presidency “centralized its efforts on promoting the Policy on Defense and Democratic Security” (DNP, 2007: 543). In the way that the country relates to others, it should do so with a view toward gaining support for Colombia’s security policies against guerrilla groups and other threats (Ministerio de Defensa, 2007: 47-48). This emphasis on security is echoed by Duque, whose PND posits that border and migration matters are of “special relevance” (DNP, 2019: 133) to foreign policy under his tenure.

President Santos, meanwhile, appears to have taken a more ample, “pragmatic” (Ardila and Clemente Batalla, 2018) view of the objectives of foreign policy, seeing it as a means not only to address threats but also to take advantage of opportunities. Economic matters are centerpiece in this view, with discussions on Colombia’s insertion to foreign

markets, investment attraction, adherence to and creation of new regional mechanisms of integration, and the development that results from these actions. This is in line with previous findings (Vargas-Alzate, Sosa, and Rodríguez-Ríos: 2012) on the important place of trade to Colombian foreign policy during this period. Other areas, like a more active public diplomacy and the aforementioned offering of South-South cooperation, are also encompassed by the positive Santos view on Colombia's role.

Finally, in terms of the view on the relations that Colombia ought to have with the Asia-Pacific, it is noteworthy that the decision to diversify relations and the elevation of the Asia-Pacific as a prioritized region both begin under Uribe. In his PND, backed by the argument that a new Colombia is called on to play a more active role in the world, he proposes formulating a targeted policy for the Asia-Pacific, with aims to promote trade, investment, and cooperation (DNP, 2007: 548). It's also notable that Uribe proposes "bringing together a bloc of Latin American countries with presence in the Pacific Basin" (DNP, 2007: 547), gesturing towards the later founding of the Pacific Alliance under Santos.

This interest in the Asia-Pacific will be elevated under the first Santos administration, with the decision to develop a strategy of insertion in the Asia-Pacific. What will distinguish this new stage is the heightened urgency of the Colombian government in diversifying relations to lessen the perceived risks from excessive dependence on established Western markets. While Uribe saw a deepening of relations with the Asia-Pacific occurring in parallel with continued alignment with the US, the first Santos administration aimed to bring about a relative reduction in Colombia's dependence to the West as a measure to better distribute risk.

The documents reveal that the strategy of Colombian insertion to the region is principally economic, through the negotiation of new trade agreements, bilateral investment treaties, and double taxation agreements;

activities that attract investment, including an active public diplomacy agenda; more active participation in existing regional arrangements, like the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC); efforts to have Colombia be admitted into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); and the creation of new platforms for projection to the region like the Pacific Alliance. At the diplomatic and political levels, the strategy calls for a strengthened official presence in the region, and more frequent instances of dialogue and mutual exchange, for example, through high-level visits (Cancillería de Colombia, 2013; PND, 2011).

Nonetheless, the momentum of the first Santos administration slows down by the second term. By then, while still speaking of diversification as an important means to advance national interests, the policy and strategic documents begin to consistently mention relations with both traditional and non-traditional partners as important (DNP, 2015: 585). Increasingly, the Asia-Pacific region is lumped with other regions and continents of the world for which strategies must be developed, like Africa and Central Asia. The Asia-Pacific, then, doesn't disappear, but its priority status fades away.

Finally, with Duque, the diversification of relations is once again flagged as an objective, but the Asia-Pacific is not considered a priority. Instead, greater importance is given to what are considered traditional partners and allies in the hemisphere that explicitly share a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and a free market economy (Cancillería de Colombia, 2018: 13). By that time, mechanisms like the Pacific Alliance will be interpreted less as platforms for the country's projection toward the Asia-Pacific and more as mere regional integration efforts (Cancillería de Colombia, 2018: 29).

Having reviewed the documents, could we say that a normative change took place which would signal a change in foreign policy? Based on the data, one could argue that Colombia's

relation with the Asia-Pacific did change beginning with the first Santos administration in 2010. The region became the cornerstone of a reinvigorated objective of diversification of relations. The pursuit of diversification was motivated by both positive economic opportunities and negative fears of the risks of excessive dependence in a few established markets. To achieve Colombia's insertion to the region, a strategy was formulated, with economic, diplomatic, and political courses of action. Following the earlier definition of foreign policy change, one could say that the country did begin to "handle similar situations differently" (Jerdén, 2014: 50).

While change may have taken place, the changes appear to be adjustments of effort in Colombia's relation to the Asia-Pacific, the most superficial level of change under Hermann's (1990) typology. Even during the first Santos administration when the strategy toward the Asia-Pacific was being implemented most vigorously, the country never attempted to abandon its alignment with the US. More than a comprehensive diversification of relations, what the government sought was a diversification of economic relations, a narrow change at most. We could not observe that new instruments of statecraft were developed. Even the establishment of the Pacific Alliance was not conceived by the Santos administration as particularly novel. The PND for his second administration discusses it as just another regional mechanism, similar to existing ones, and at the same level as other then-recent mechanisms like the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, by its Spanish-language acronym) (PND, 2015: 586). What the documents point to, then, is an intent by President Santos to increase means of contact which would in turn increase the weight of the region for Colombia relative to others, especially in the economic field.

These modest intentions of change experience setbacks during the second Santos administration, up to 2018, and deepening with the Duque administration until 2021. As shown above, by then, even as diversification

continued to be nominally pursued, the region was no longer seen as a priority. Given the conceptual expectation that policies should be relatively stable, this brings up the question whether a change in foreign policy occurred at all. When seen through the documents, it would ultimately seem that there was no change. This will be reviewed against the quantitative data presented below.

### 3. Quantitative changes to Colombian foreign policy to the Asia-Pacific

Having presented an analysis of possible normative shifts in Colombian foreign policy for the period of study, we now present a second set of data that might add nuance to the previous findings. We are interested here in determining whether the initial declarations of foreign policy change toward the Asia-Pacific proclaimed by Santos in his first term were enacted, and if the Duque administration did represent a setback in that initial intention of change.

As discussed in the methodology, following the work of Forero (2015: 296-297), three dimensions are analyzed. The first dimension is that of official relations, with three variables. Table 3 shows the number of Colombian embassies and consulates in 12 countries of the Asia-Pacific. For embassies, an X denotes the presence of a Colombian embassy in the country while a dash denotes that Colombia had no diplomatic presence in the country. For consulates, we provide the total number of them in the country, including the consular offices attached to the embassy in the capital.

Table 3

Colombian embassies and consulates in the Asia-Pacific, 2010-2021

Country	2010		2018		2021	
	Embassy	Consulate(s)	Embassy	Consulate(s)	Embassy	Consulate(s)
Australia	X	2	X	2	X	2
China	X	2	X	4	X	4
India	X	1	X	1	X	1
Indonesia	-	-	X	1	X	1
Japan	X	1	X	1	X	1
RoK	X	1	X	1	X	1
Malaysia	X	1	X	1	X	1
New Zealand	-	-	-	1	-	1
Philippines	-	-	X	1	X	1
Singapore	-	-	X	1	X	1
Thailand	-	-	X	1	X	1
Vietnam	-	-	X	1	X	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>

Source: Drawn from Cancilleria de Colombia (2021)

The data points to a notable change in the country's diplomatic presence in the Asia-Pacific from 2010 to 2018, reflecting the Santos administration's strategy for insertion in the region. Of interest is that, under the Duque presidency, there was no reduction of that presence, regardless of the normative setbacks already discussed above. A reduction in numbers could have been possible, like the one seen in 2002, early in the first Uribe administration, when the embassies in Australia and Indonesia, along with the consulate in Singapore, were closed

(EFE, 2002).

Continuing with official relations, table 4 shows the number of ProColombia commercial offices in the region, known as Proexport commercial offices prior to 2014. These offices are responsible for supporting the objectives of ProColombia abroad, mainly, promoting non-traditional exports, investment attraction, and international tourism. An increase in their number would signal a strong economic commitment on the part of the Colombian government with the region.

Table 4

ProColombia commercial offices in the Asia-Pacific, 2010-2021

Country	2010	2018	2021
China	1	2	2
India	1	1	1
Indonesia	-	1	1
Japan	-	1	1
RoK	-	1	1
Singapore	-	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

Source: Drawn from ProColombia (2022).



The numbers show, again, a marked increase from 2010 to 2018. Like the increase in the number of embassies and consulates, this is in line with the Santos administration's strategy of insertion to the region. Revealingly, the number of countries in which there are commercial offices hasn't only increased, but also the number of countries that those offices cover as part of their work. That is the case for the Indonesia office, which is also responsible for Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam; the Singapore office, which is also responsible for Australia and New Zealand; and the India office, which is also responsible for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, among other countries outside of the region.

Once again, there was no drop in numbers from 2018 to 2021, regardless of the rhetorical downgrading of the Asia-Pacific seen in the documents.

Next, figure 1 shows the number of visits and high-level meetings with countries of the Asia-Pacific by Colombian presidents, vice-presidents, and ministers of foreign affairs. We separate the data into four categories:

state visits by the Colombian president; other official visits and meetings with heads of state, heads of government, their deputies, and foreign ministers, both in the Asia-Pacific country itself or in third countries; and visits to Colombia by counterparts from the region. Calls and letter exchanges were not included. We also calculate the number of countries of the region with which these official visits and meetings were held. The data is presented for each four-year presidential term since 2002.

The figure shows three findings of interest. One, that outreach to the Asia-Pacific began to grow during the second Uribe administration, with a notable uptick in official visits and meetings from 2010 to 2018. This increase in interest in the Asia-Pacific is expressed not only in the number of visits and meetings, but also in the wide scope of countries covered. When in the first Uribe administration these were held with officials from only seven countries, by the second Santos administration, the Colombian government is handling relations at the highest level with 16 of the 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific.

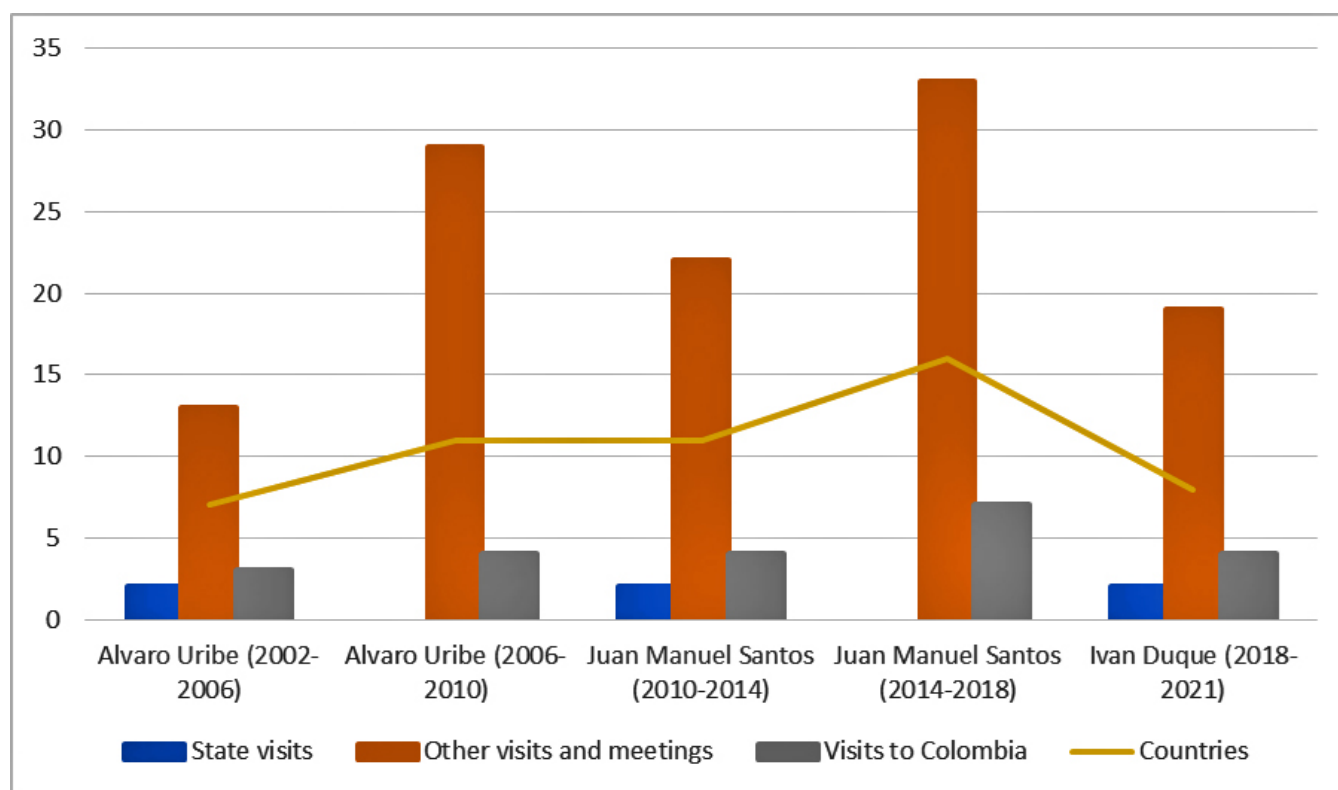


Figure 1. Official visits and meetings with counterparts from the Asia-Pacific, 2002-2021. Data drawn from Cancillería de Colombia (n.d.).



A second finding is that, with the Duque presidency, the number of visits and meetings and the number of countries experienced a relative drop to levels reminiscent of those of the early 2000s. This, however, may respond to two situations. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited travel and made governments focus on relations with regional actors. The Asia-Pacific region has kept particularly tight control over travel throughout the pandemic (Power, 2021), with over 25% of all of the world's countries who still restrict entry being located in the region. 2021 is thus the year with the lowest number of visits and meetings for Colombia since 2003. The only two meetings of that year were held virtually, with China and Indonesia. On the other hand, in this article, the Duque presidential term is only reviewed until December 2021, leaving out other visits and meetings held since. The apparent drop may then respond more to these situations than to an actual downgrading of the relation with the countries of the region.

The final finding of interest here is that every president since Uribe has made two state visits to the Asia-Pacific. Of the six state visits to countries of the region, half of them have been to China, and one each to Japan, Korea, and Singapore. These countries are, incidentally, the ones with which Colombia has had the greatest total number of official visits and meetings: China with 19, Japan with 17, Korea with 15, and Singapore with nine.

The second dimension is that of trade relations, with two variables. Figure 2 presents Colombian exports to the Asia-Pacific, the European Union, and the United States as a percentage of all of the country's exports, for the period 2002-2020.

The figure shows a steady rise in the share of the Asia-Pacific as a percentage of total exports since 2002, with an increase of 6.87 and 6.23 percentage points during the Uribe and Santos administrations, respectively. That rise continued from 2018 to 2020, under Duque, with the share of the Asia-Pacific reaching a record 17.17% in that final year.

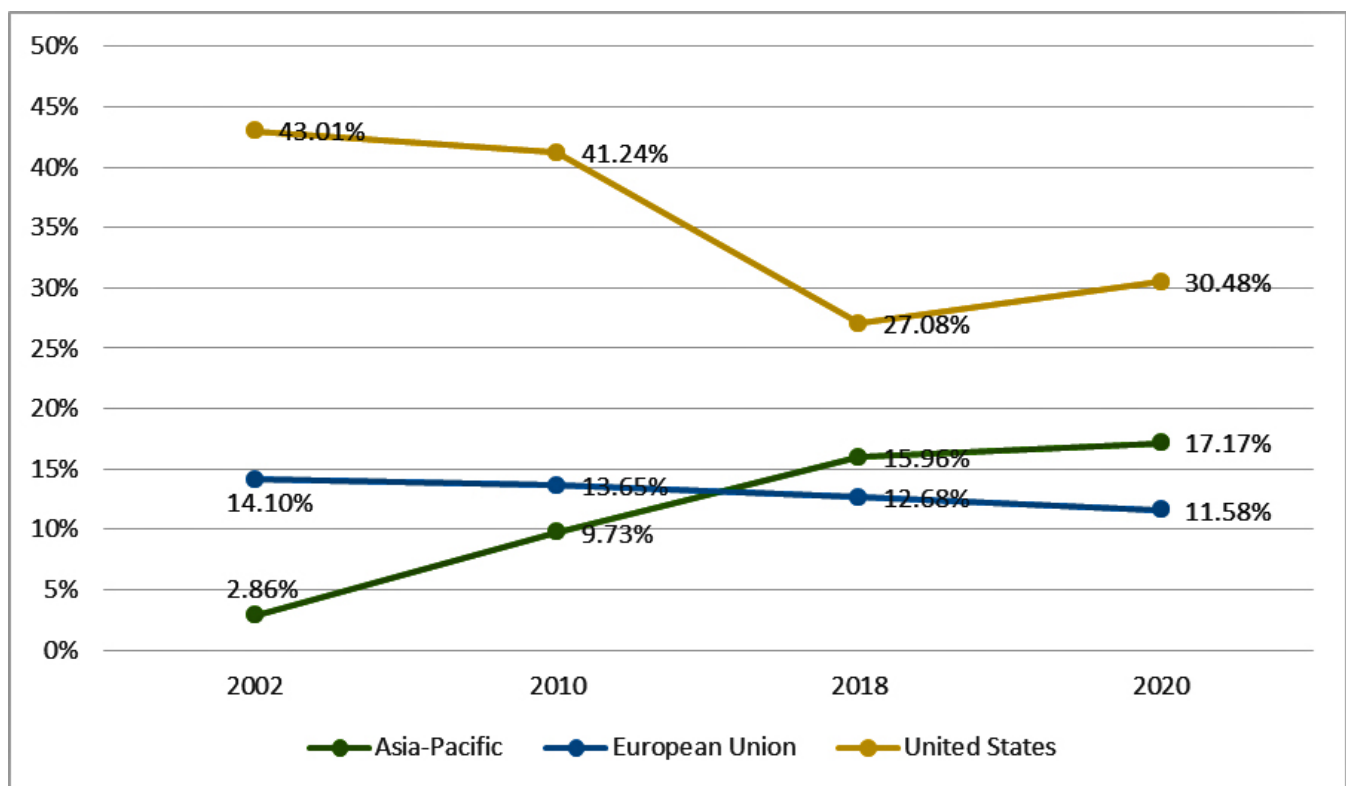


Figure 2. Colombian exports to selected regions and countries as a percentage of total exports, 2002-2020. Data drawn from OEC (2022).

As the Asia-Pacific has increased, the United States and the European Union have seen relative decreases in their shares. The most significant drop is that of the United States from 2010 to 2018, with a decrease of 14.16 percentage points. The European Union also experienced a decrease, from 14.1% in 2002 to 12.68% in 2018 and 11.58% in 2020. This resonates with the calls made in the Santos policy documents to decrease the concentration of risk in a few countries. While the share of the United States increased mildly from 2018 to 2020, this result may have been a result of the particular disruptions of the pandemic in that final year, when the US market remained relatively open. In 2021, the share of the United States dropped once again, this time to a historic low of 26.6% (Portafolio, 2022).

The next variable in the dimension of trade relations is imports from the Asia-Pacific as a share of all imports to the country. Figure 3 presents these numbers for the period 2002-2020, comparing them to those for the European Union and the United States.

The figure presents trends similar to those for exports. Starting with the Uribe administration, the share of the Asia-Pacific has grown, while the shares of the United States and the European Union have dropped. It is significant that, from 2010 to 2018, the Asia-Pacific became Colombia's number one source of imports. During those years, the share of the Asia-Pacific jumped 7.59 percentage points, reaching 31.12%; the share of the US, meanwhile, decreased 0.37 percentage, occupying 27.32%. These trends continued from 2018 to 2020.

The trade numbers given so far speak of the Asia-Pacific as a whole. The numbers by country, however, are of interest in that they reveal which countries are propelling the trade relation forward. Figures 4 and 5 present the value of Colombian exports and imports to the top five destinations and sources in the Asia-Pacific and to the rest of the region for the period 2002-2020.

The figures show that the growing share of

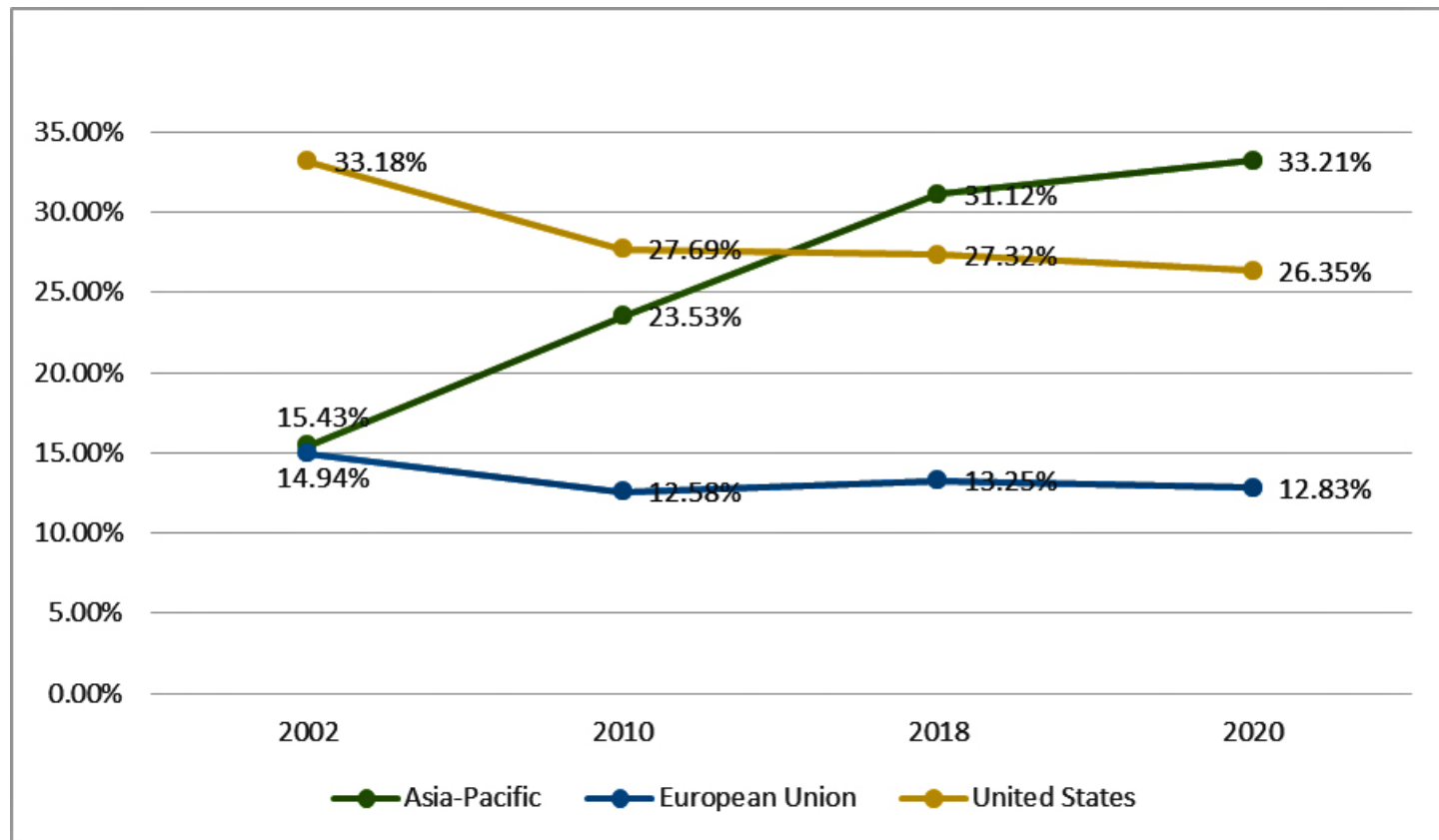


Figure 3. Colombian imports from selected regions and countries as a percentage of total imports, 2002-2020. Data drawn from OEC (2022).

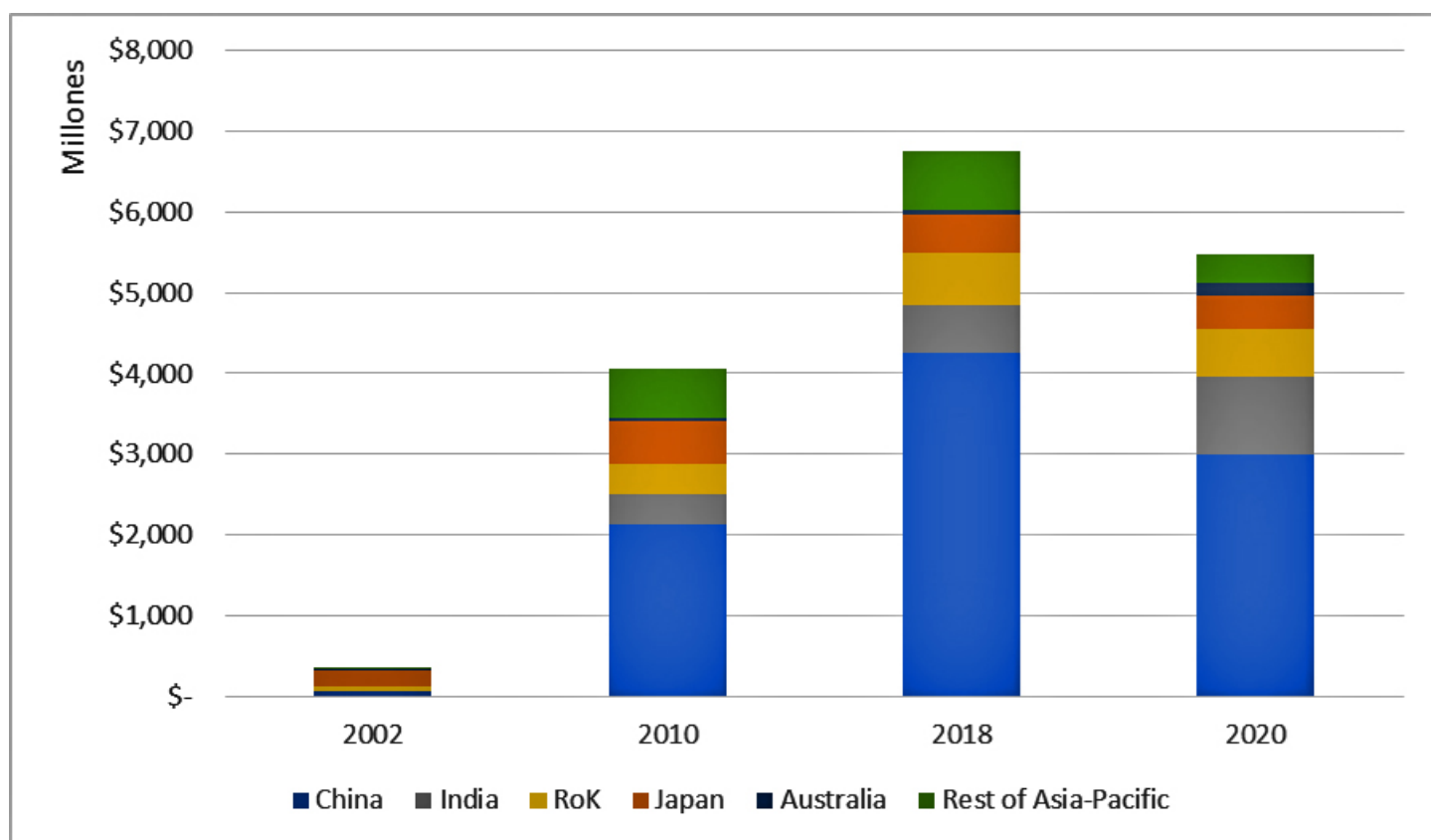


Figure 4. Value of Colombian exports to five top destinations and other countries in the Asia-Pacific, 2002-2020. Data drawn from OEC (2022).

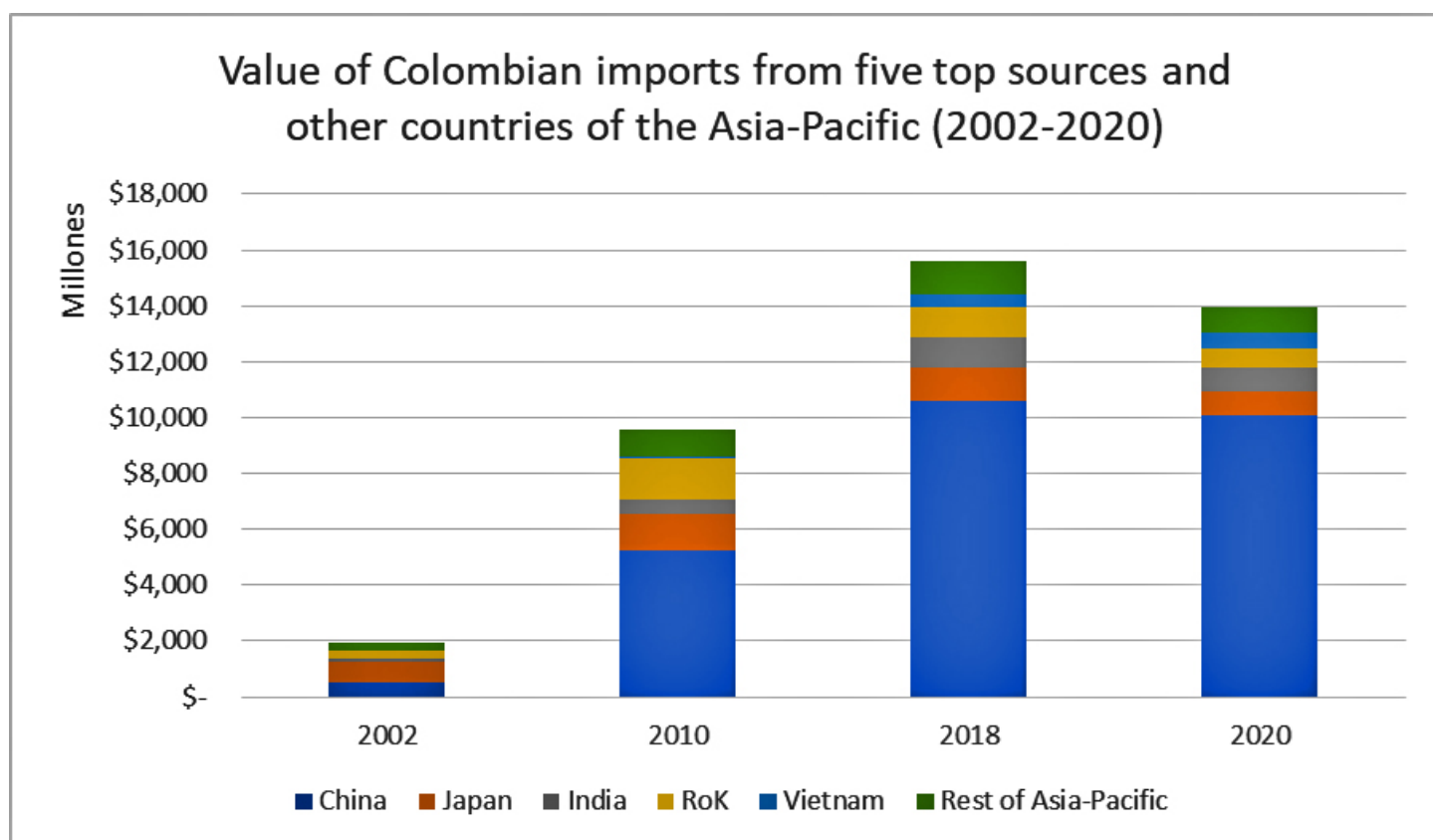


Figure 5. Value of Colombian imports from five top sources and other countries in the Asia-Pacific, 2002-2020. Data drawn from OEC (2022).

the Asia-Pacific in Colombian trade has been principally driven by the Chinese market. China's importance to Colombia has grown since 2002. From 2002 to 2010, Colombian exports to the country grew from a mere US\$56.9 million to US\$2.1 billion. Imports also grew significantly, from US\$528.3 million in 2002 to US\$5.2 billion in 2010. That trend continued from 2010 to 2018, when exports and imports reached US\$4.3 billion and US\$10.6 billion, respectively. Due to the pandemic, the value of exports and imports with China dropped by 2020; however, China maintains its position as Colombia's second source and destination of goods.

The final dimension is that of investment relations, with one variable. Figures 6 and 7 show the stock of FDI to Colombia held by Asia-Pacific countries, the United States, the European Union, and the rest of the world for two periods, 2007-2010 and 2007-2021. These years were selected due to limited data availability. In comparing FDI stock in these two periods, we are interested

in determining if the share of the Asia-Pacific experienced any changes.

The figures show that the share of FDI stock held by Asia-Pacific countries has increased, but only slightly and from an already low base, from 0.63% in 2007-2010 to 1.06% in 2007-2021. This shows that, over time, Asia-Pacific countries have expanded their investments to the country, but they continue to remain behind other more traditional sources of investment.

These results are not surprising given two situations. On the one hand, that, except for Japan and Korea, most Asia-Pacific countries have just recently begun to foray into outward foreign direct investment (Rasiah, Gammeltoft, and Jiang, 2010), especially that directed to Latin American countries (Chen and Perez Ludeña, 2014), meaning that their stock of FDI will lag behind that of countries with longer histories of investment in Colombia. On the other hand, the data may not fully reveal the source of FDI because of the way that companies direct their investments through

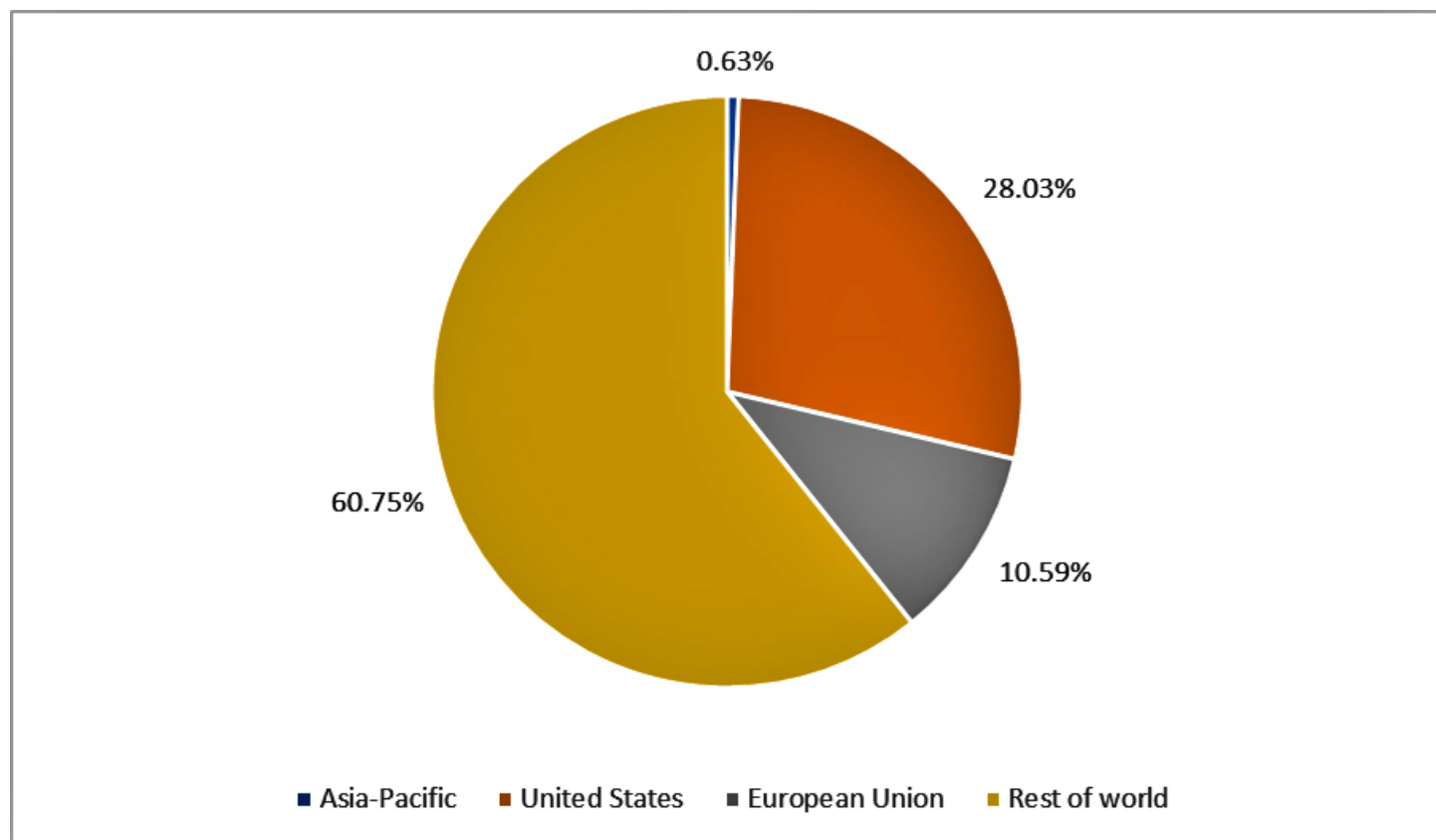


Figure 6. FDI flows to Colombia by country/region as a percentage of FDI stock, 2007-2010. Data drawn from Banco de la Republica (2022).

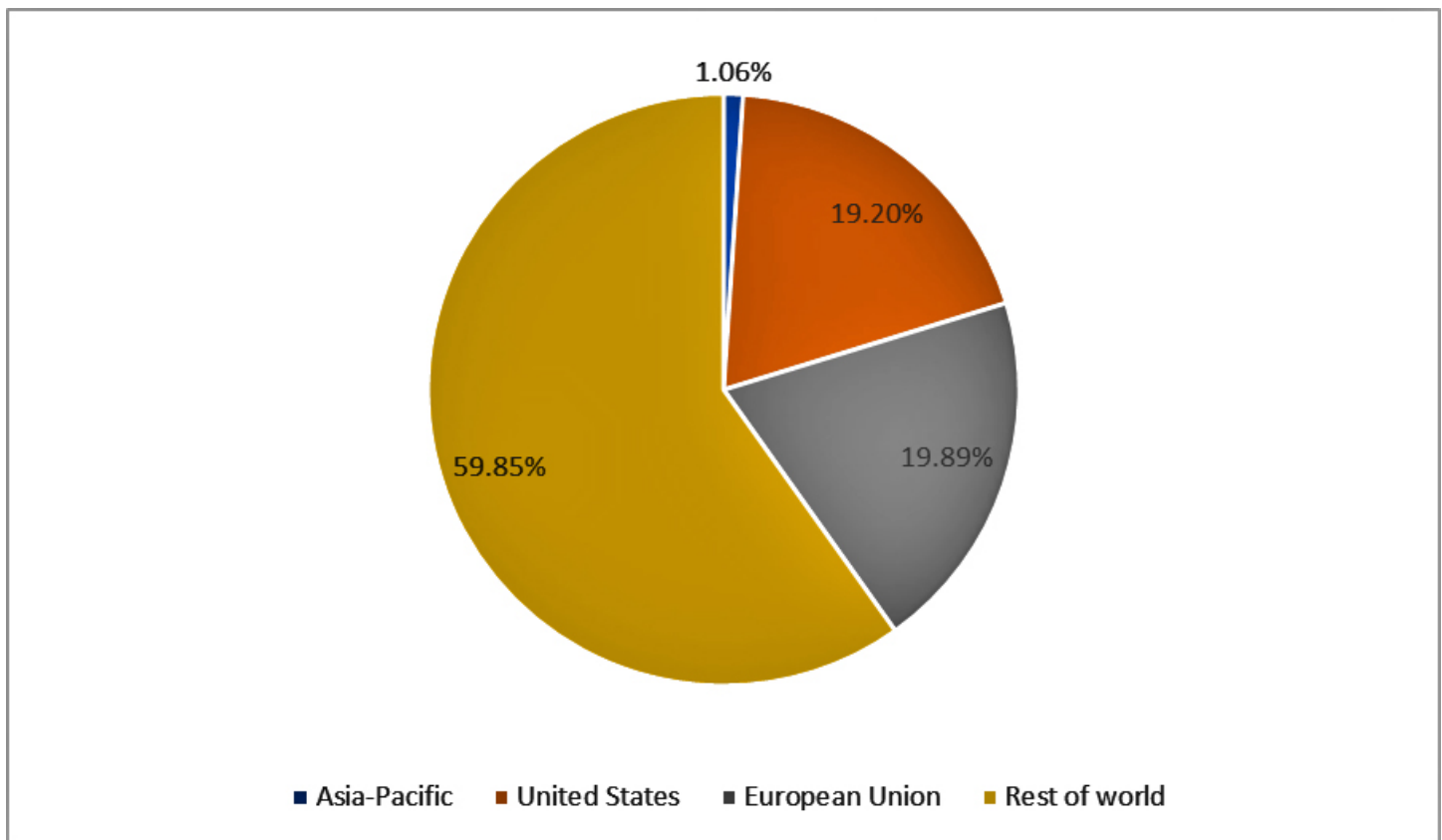


Figure 7. FDI flows to Colombia by country/region as a percentage of FDI stock, 2007-2021. Data drawn from Banco de la República (2022).

third countries. For example, just for 2021, 4.96% of all FDI flows into the country came from the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands (Banco de la República, 2022).

#### 4. Discussion of results

In the analysis of possible normative shifts, we found that, following a strict definition of foreign policy, the change in foreign policy that was at least rhetorically announced during the first Santos administration lost steam by his second term and faced setbacks with the arrival of Duque to the presidency. The lack of follow-through would bring into question if Colombia's actions toward the Asia-Pacific truly ever amounted to a foreign policy change. If any change did take place, if only for a short period of time, it was believed to be an adjustment change, one of effort, with an intent to diversify Colombia's relations by developing deeper ties to the region and working with more countries in it.

The quantitative data presented above now helps us to better understand the previous

findings, adding nuance. All of the data presented shows that Colombia's relation to the Asia-Pacific did experience changes from 2010 to 2018. Whether seen through the dimensions of official relations, trade, or investment, the Santos years saw connections grow both in intensity and breadth, signaling the diversification of relations. This change toward the Asia-Pacific came hand in hand with a relative reduction in Colombia's dependence on more established partners like the United States and the European Union, as shown by the data on trade.

The data also shows that the trend of changes that took place through 2018 continued or at least didn't experience intentional setbacks in the period until 2021. The number of diplomatic missions and ProColombia commercial offices remained stable, the number of official visits and meetings didn't see notable drops, even during the pandemic, and the numbers on trade and investment saw continued expansions. This echoes the findings of others (Pastrana Buelvas, Villota

Hernandez, and Burgos Giraldo, 2021: 118) who have seen continuities between Santos and Duque, with consistency in objectives and only occasional departures in the means to achieve them.

That the changes initiated under Santos continued under Duque is remarkable given the earlier findings of the normative analysis. What explains this seeming contradiction? We offer here two parallel early hypotheses, that point to the importance of inertia in foreign policy change, echoing work by Lechini (2006; 2018) on the subject. First, that once foreign policy change has been put in motion in a certain direction, it is difficult for decision-makers to change it again, even if it is to return to the previous status quo. This would especially apply in scenarios for which the change in foreign policy was directed at partners and issues that are not seen as particularly threatening to the state, regardless of who is in power.

For the case of Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific, given that the change that took place during the Santos presidency was directed principally at the economic and diplomatic fields, and that it did not directly threaten key national interests, for example, Colombia's relation with the United States, then, with Duque as president, even if there was a normative shift away from the Asia-Pacific, the government would not go through the trouble of rolling back previous decisions.

A second hypothesis concerns the inertial force toward change generated by China's rise and its consequent effect on the international distribution of power. Gustavsson's (1999) model, discussed earlier, posits fundamental structural conditions at the international level as one of two key sources of change. Following that model, Colombian foreign policy would be influenced by the noticeable shift from US dominance, especially in the American continent, to today's conditions in which China plays a parallel important role in the region. This importance is most evident in the economic field, but it has grown to other areas like public health during the pandemic.

The data presented above reflects that perception of China's importance to Colombia, and its influence on the country's foreign policy. The positioning of the Asia-Pacific as the first source of imports and second destination of exports has been driven principally by the Chinese market. Colombia's largest diplomatic presence is in China, it established a ProColombia commercial office exclusively dedicated to the Chinese market, and most official visits and meetings have been with Chinese counterparts.

We suggest that China's inertial force operates at two levels of change. One, in effectively shaping Colombia's foreign policy toward the country and the region, influencing the government's intent to diversify relations so as to better reflect the international distribution of power. We saw this happening most evidently in the official government policy and strategic documents of the Santos years, as well as the actions taken by that government, as reflected in the quantitative data. Two, in deepening relations between the two countries —and, hence, between Colombia and the Asia-Pacific— regardless of intent by the Colombian government. This may be what we are seeing in the Duque years. It also brings up Haesebrouck and Joly's (2021) proposition that foreign policy change can also occur incrementally, through small steps in the long-term.

## **5. Conclusion and avenues for further research**

This work set out to unravel a contradiction in the literature on Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in the period 2010-2021, in which authors spoke both of a profound change in Colombian foreign policy toward the region starting in 2010, while at the same time suggesting that the change was not so profound after all or didn't even took place. To determine whether a change in Colombian foreign policy toward the region took place, and to what extent, we adopted a FPC approach, using Hermann's typology of four graduated levels of foreign policy change to ascertain the degree of change that might have taken place.



The analysis consisted of a comparison of Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in 2010, 2018, and 2021. This comparison considered two sets of data. Through an analysis of official government policy and strategic documents, we set out to determine possible normative shifts in the Colombian government's view of the international order, of Colombia's role in it, and in the appropriate relations that it ought to have with the Asia-Pacific. This analysis uncovered a relevant normative change in the first Santos administration, that found in the diversification of the country's relations with the Asia-Pacific as both an avenue to take advantage of opportunities as well as a means through which to reduce the concentration of risk. This changed approach toward the region, while indeed different from that of the past, could only be understood as an adjustment change under Hermann's typology, the most superficial form of change. The analysis, however, brought up questions on the extent to which a changed foreign policy did ultimately take place, considering the reduced priority given to the region during the second Santos administration, and a certain return to US alignment under Duque.

The findings from the analysis of this first set of data were complemented by a second set of quantitative data for the period of study, centered on three dimensions of possible change: official relations, trade, and investment. The data showed, once again, a change in Colombian foreign policy with Santos, but it also indicated continuity, and, for some variables, even an increase in effort in the country's relation with the Asia-Pacific under Duque. Here, once again, we would be speaking of an adjustment change.

We concluded with a discussion on the findings. To explain the unexpected continuities in Colombian foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific under Duque, we brought forward two early parallel hypotheses, both centered on the importance of inertia to change. The momentum of past decisions on change, as well as the pull created by a

rising state like China, may go some way toward explaining why, even under a more US-aligned administration like Duque's, the decisions on diversification toward the Asia-Pacific continue up to this day.

This article is only an initial foray into a topic that is complex and that requires more investigation. The analysis of possible change in the period of study could be furthered by including new sets of data, like the number of agreements entered into with Asia-Pacific countries, the amount of development aid received, the number of instances of political dialogue at other levels below that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the budget allocated to efforts in the region, and the country's participation in multilateral organisms tied to the region. The work could also be refined by carrying out interviews with relevant officials who served in the various administrations.

More work could also be done to explain the mechanisms of change of Colombian foreign policy at this time. This article looked at whether change took place and to what extent, but didn't delve into why change took a certain route and not another. Why did change slow down under the second Santos administration? Use of an adapted version of the Gustavsson (1999) model could bring insight into these questions. This would be especially relevant in studying the country's foreign policy not toward the region, but toward particular subregions or countries.

Finally, the hypotheses on the importance of inertia to foreign policy change should be put to the test. For the Colombian case, we suggested that governments are unlikely to make an effort to change back to a previous status quo if a previously made decision is not seen as threatening or problematic. The Colombian government, like other governments in Latin America and the Caribbean, are increasingly seeing pressure from the US on their relationship with China. This situation creates the conditions for an interesting study on whether the momentum from the past breaks in the face

of US opposition, or if the change toward diversification has already set in.

## Notes

1. ProColombia is a Colombian government agency, under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Technology, responsible for promoting non-traditional exports, tourism, and investment attraction.
2. The 2008-2009 financial crisis began in the US in the form of a real estate bubble that burst, which uncovered a vast web of unregulated subprime mortgage-backed financial instruments held by powerful financial institutions. The crisis then spread from the real estate sector to the financial sector, and from the US to the rest of the world, including Colombia. For more on the Colombian government's economic response to the crisis, see Chacon, Varon Guzman, and Bastos Osorio (2016).
3. Borda (2017) also analyzes this conception of a new Colombia, but she centers her study on the Santos years.
4. Perhaps indicative of the progress by then in the deepening of Colombia's relations with China, Japan, and South Korea, the PND of the second Santos administrations labels these as "traditional partners", among other states like the United States, Canada, those in Latin America and the Caribbean, Israel, and the members of the European Union (DNP 2015, 585). Of 16 listed "non-traditional partners", 10 of them are from the Asia-Pacific region.

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