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The Defense of the Spanish Empire and the Agency of Nature:
Araucanía, Patagonia and Pampas during the Seventeenth Century

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The Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAII) at the University of New Mexico (UNM) is one of the nation's leading foreign language and area studies centers. More than 100 UNM faculty specializing in Latin American research and teaching are members of the Faculty Concilium on Latin America and are the primary constituency of the LAII.

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Abstract:

The article analyzes the defense of the Spanish Empire in South America and the agency of nature. Spain was the most powerful Atlantic empire of the seventeenth century on the continent, but in South America only Caracas and Buenos Aires were on the Atlantic rim. Portugal controlled the coast of Brazil, Patagonia was neglected, and Peruvian settlements were Pacific-oriented. Both the defense strategy and natural events will provide us with explanations for some major episodes in the evolution of this segment of the empire in the seventeenth century.
Imperial Struggles

Spain was the most powerful Atlantic empire of the Americas throughout the seventeenth century. The following is a brief and sketchy account of what happened in the northern portion of the Spanish Empire when civilians lost interest in the Caribbean islands because of the Indian demographic collapse and the greater promises of enrichment on the mainland after the fall of Tenochtitlan. The Hapsburgs considered that very few areas in this portion of the empire deserved the military protection that would inevitably extract money from the imperial coffers. Havana was one of those places because it was a key Atlantic port from where bullion was transferred to the metropolis. Havana was, therefore, heavily protected, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Spain’s enemies. For example, the Dutch Johannes Vingboons portrayed the treeless and well-garrisoned Havana in a 1630 drawing of a vessel approaching the colony while firing its cannons.

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2. This is a version of a paper delivered at the International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500-1825, at Harvard University in August 2007. I would like to thank Professor Bernard Baylin for the invitation to join the seminar and the participants for their comments.
On the mainland and around the Gulf of Mexico, Spanish claims remained virtually uncontested, Alonso Alvarez de Piñeda having been the first European to sail from Florida to Veracruz and Spaniards also having been the first to reach the Mississippi River. In defending the region, Florida was to help control the ships with silver and goods sailing from Veracruz to Havana. St. Augustine protected the Bahamas Channel, the exit route to go back to Europe thanks to the Gulf Stream that flows “like a river” between the continent and the islands. The defense was a priority that may account for the disregard of other aspects such as the local availability of resources. Andrés González de Barcia Carballido (1673-1743) attested that fortification meant nothing if soldiers were starving, for nobody could protect anything without food in the stomach.³

The founding of Jamestown (1607) added some preoccupation, but Florida remained in a defensive posture. It was a different case in the second half of the seventeenth century when the French wanted to have a stepping stone in the Gulf to take over the silver mines of northern Mexico. They also wanted to use the Mississippi River to reach the French colonies in Canada. News that the French had settled in some place around the Mississippi mouth made the Spanish Crown order the total destruction of any settlement. The Council of the Indies perceived that, if successful, an extended French presence in the Gulf would eventually surround the province of Florida and deprive Spaniards of a surface route from Mexico to Florida – regardless of how difficult such a route could be.⁴ Besides, a French settlement might interfere with the sailings from Veracruz to Havana.

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The map shows the extension of the province of Florida in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which included the peninsula and areas around the Gulf. The map is in Corneille Wytfliet, *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae augmentvm, siue Occidentis notitia breui commentario illustrata* ... Lovanii, Tijpis Gerardi Riuij, 1598; in Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

In South America, Portugal controlled the longest portion of the coast of Brazil, and Patagonia was *terra incognita*, ignored for practical purposes. Only Caracas and Buenos Aires were on the Atlantic. Thus the main Peruvian settlements were Pacific-oriented, starting with Lima and Potosí, the only two colonies deserving royal attention: Potosí, because it had rich silver mines in a mountain in present-day Bolivia, and Lima, because it was the capital of the viceroyalty and its port of El Callao connected the Viceroyalty of Peru with Central America and Mexico via the Pacific Ocean. Both Lima and Potosí were at the very core of the framework for defending the Viceroyalty of Perú, while the rest of the settlements functioned as satellites of either Lima or Potosí.  

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5. One articulation was political since the Spanish administration depended on authorities in Lima. Production and trade were powerful connections, which is very clear in the case of Potosí. Agriculture was impossible at the high altitude of 4,000 m (13,000 ft) with dry, cold weather. Foodstuffs and plenty of goods had to be imported from the nearby regions, including the province of Tucumán in Argentina and areas of Chile. Although goods arrived in Potosí at high prices after a long and difficult trip, Potosí was so rich in silver that it could afford to pay for all necessary imports. For an account on Potosí see Peter
A Framework for Defending South America

At the end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish dominium in the South Atlantic and Pacific was contested by the Dutch who had sailed through the Strait of Magellan many times. In 1599 Simón de Cordes comfortably disembarked on the island of La Mocha in the Araucanía and exchanged goods with the Indians. Only one year passed and, again, the Dutch Oliver Van Noort traded with the same natives of the same island, as did Joris Van Spilbergen in 1614. In the second decade of the seventeenth century, a Dutch expedition from Texel made news across Europe with the discovery of the route of Cape Horn in Tierra del Fuego. These expeditions were bad news for Spain, but worse was still to come. By the end of the 1630s, the Dutch cemented their control over Pernambuco in northeastern Brazil and started planning a southward expansion. Before analyzing the consequences of this expansion, we have to consider the Spanish strategy regarding the defense of the whole Viceroyalty of Peru.


Chile became a vulnerable backyard of Lima and Potosí after the native rebellion of 1598-1599. At that moment, the Council of the Indies suspected that the insurgents would ally with the Dutch and expel the Spaniards from Chile. The following move would be an attack on Lima. Spanish authorities foresaw the peril. The new scenario of a Dutch Brazil was very scary. Chilean Governor Francisco López de Zúñiga, Marquis of Baides (1639-1646), wrote to the Crown that Spain had always managed to somehow neutralize the Dutch actions by sending spies to Flanders who could easily mingle with the locals and report the enemy's plans, but the same would be impossible in Pernambuco.\(^8\)

Unfortunately for Baides, he was correct. While he was still in office, the fears materialized in 1643 when the Dutch sized the port of Valdivia. Far from being a hard military enterprise, it was a very easy task, for Valdivia had been abandoned since the native revolt of 1598-1599.\(^9\) It seemed that, with Valdivia under Dutch control, an attack on the main colonies of Peru was only a question of time. But it never happened. Instead, after some months in the cold, wet weather, the Dutch left Chile never to return. Before further analysis, we need to explain the broader context in which the Dutch failed to consolidate their position in the Araucanía.

We have to look back to the end of the sixteenth century when natives rose in rebellion and killed the governor in the battle of Curalaba, set houses and churches on fire after looting them, and forced the survivors to evacuate the Araucanía in a rush. It was a tragic end to the phase of conquest and colonization.\(^10\) The Crown reacted immediately by

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8. Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, Manuscritos Sala Medina (thereafter BN MM) Volume 138: Marqués de Baides (1645), Document 2525 El Virrey de Perú continúa las noticias que se han tenido de lo que los holandeses hicieron en el tiempo que estuvieron en Valdivia, Lima, 24 de mayo de 1645, p.14.

9. Baides, among other governors, requested from the viceroy the funds to fortify Valdivia. It was fortified in 1645 after the Dutch attack.

10. Classic works on earliest colonization are R.C. Padden, “Cultural Change and Military Resistance in Araucanian Chile, 1550-1730,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13 (Spring 1957), pp.103-121; and Alvaro Jara, *Guerra y Sociedad en Chile. La transformación de la guerra de Arauco y la esclavitud de los indios*. Santiago:
sending a professional army of 2,000 men to the Biobio River. Troops were to be sustained by a *situado*, that is to say, by a military budget and money transfers from the *Cajas Reales* (royal treasury) of Lima. At any rate, it was an extraordinary measure. Spain never reacted to native revolts by sending professional armies. In fact, the only militarized border was with the Chichimecs, and even so, Phillip III had ordered pacification through the implementation of the “peace-by-purchase” policy. It seems a contradiction that, at the same time, the Crown decided to militarize the border with the insurgent Araucanians.

Historians have always insisted that the ferocious resistance of these natives was the reason for sending a professional army to Chile. Without denying the strong native reaction of 1598-1599, I propose, nevertheless, that the royal decision was based on Chile's value for defending the whole Viceroyalty of Peru. Indeed, there were no other places in South America from where it would be easy (even probable) to launch an assault against Lima and Potosí. The coast of Patagonia was a desert and so was the north of

Chile. In these areas none could get food, water and native help for a military expedition. To reach Potosí and Lima from Brazil would demand the painful crossing of the continent with great geographical obstacles. Equally discouraging, tribes in the Brazilian jungle were thought to be cannibals.
The Council of the Indies was fully aware of the danger. In the meeting that followed the native uprising of 1598-1599, it asked for troops to be sent immediately to Chile and ordered the delivery of the 100,000 ducats needed to pay for the expenses.¹¹ That was a huge amount of money for an enterprise about which many were skeptical, but the prospect of leaving Chile without armed protection when the Dutch were sailing around cancelled any further consideration.¹²

The framework for the defense included an Atlantic dimension, the port of Buenos Aires, where soldiers sent from Spain to Chile disembarked to avoid the dangerous sailing of the Strait of Magellan. From Buenos Aires, troops traveled across the Pampas, reaching Cordoba before continuing to Mendoza where they prepared for crossing the Andes. Once in Chile, via the port of Valparaiso, soldiers could reach Lima and Potosí by sea. This route was opened in 1583 by General Alonso de Sotomayor (1545-1610), who was following the European military tradition of establishing corridors (camino real) to ferry troops and resources to war zones.¹³ The importance of this corridor for defending Peru comes to the fore at the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the wars of independence. General José de San Martín – an officer trained in academies on the peninsula – applied this seventeenth-century strategy for defending the empire but with exactly the opposite purpose. San Martín used the strategy to destroy the empire. He disembarked in Buenos Aires, organized the army in Mendoza and crossed the Andes.

¹¹ Informe del Consejo de Indias sobre la urgencia de enviar socorros a Chile, 19 de junio de 1600,” in José Toribio Medina, ed., Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Chile. Volume V (1599-1602). Santiago, 1961, p.355; BN MM Volume 103: Francisco de Quiñones (1600-1601), Document 1637 Informe del gobernador Informe del Consejo de Indias sobre las cosas de Chile después que los naturales mataron al gobernador Martín García de Loyola, Madrid, 19 de junio de 1600.
¹² BN MM Volume 112: Alonso de Rivera, Segundo Gobierno (1609-1615), Document 1897 Presupuesto de lo que podría costar llevar de España al Reino de Chile por Tierra Firme mil infantes y utilidades que resultarían, fs. 155 and 156.
¹³ Civilians had traveled portions of the route for trade.
After securing Chile, he sailed from Valparaiso to Peru where he completed the military actions and pronounced independence.

*The Route of Sotomayor:*

According to Sotomayor, the route would allow the imports of horses from Paraguay into Chile.\(^{14}\) Horses were hard to find at reasonable prices in Chile because Chileans preferred to breed mules that were sold at very good prices in the market of Potosí. Moreover, breeders avoided confiscations for the army (*derramas*) and native raids altogether, because mules were useless for warfare and therefore neither the governors nor the Indians wanted them. The Crown hurried in vain to prohibit the use of the Route of Sotomayor for any purpose other than the military one. Soon the route allowed the flow of several other resources inside an extensive network of civilians, priests, officers, merchants and contrabandists who were living on the Rio de la Plata, in Tucumán and in Paraguay. Cattle and horses from Paraguay, Tucumán, and the Pampas arrived in Chile to fill the needs of the army as well as to provide more goods.

\(^{14}\) Goods sailed down the Paraná River from Paraguay to Santa Fe, from where they were sent to Córdoba.
for trade with Lima and Potosí. Other unexpected moves followed. Early in the
seventeenth century, for example, the Jesuits received the royal order to send natives
from their missions in Paraguay to help protect the border with the Araucanians. The
Guaraní were accustomed to consuming yerba mate and tobacco, and so both goods
started to be sent to the Araucanía from the missions in Paraguay along the Route of
Sotomayor. The priests left portions of these goods in their convents in Cordoba,
Mendoza, and Santiago to be sold in the local markets without paying sales taxes. The
competition infuriated merchants who accused the Jesuits of unfair trade and forced
authorities to launch investigations against the Society.  

The defense strategy faced several local obstacles, however, starting with the scarce
white population that could be called to arms in these remote southern areas of Peru. How
many people would be able to resist, for example, a Dutch invasion? (After all, the
Council had reason for concern, because Chileans had been entirely incapable of
dominating a native revolt.) The daunting question had a depressing answer: not much.
There were only around 340 households in Santiago, 40 in Mendoza, and 34 in
Concepción.  

Governors did not exaggerate when they insisted on the poverty of Chile.
“None here can provide with a glass of water,” wrote Alonso de Rivera (1601-1605) soon
after the native revolt. To avoid extracting more resources from civilians, he started his

15. For further information, see Margarita Gascón, Naturaleza e Imperio. Araucanía,
Volume 122: Cartas de varios (1621), Document 2172 Advertencias sobre la guerra de
Chile del licenciado Hernando de Machado, p.140; Concepción was the main colony in
Araucanía, see Fernando Campos Harriet, Historia de Concepción, 1550-1970. Santiago:
Universidad Técnica del Estado, 1979; Leonardo Mazzei de García, Historia de
Concepción. Conquista y colonia. Concepción: Municipalidad, 1995; and Iván Inostrosa,
17. BN MM Tomo 102 Primer Gobierno de Alonso de Rivera (1600-1601) Documento
1620 Copia de una carta de Gregorio Soriano, proveedor general del reino de Chile al
gobernador Alonso de Rivera, Santiago, 15 de octubre de 1600, p.23.
mandate by implementing reforms that took into account the access to natural resources. He ordered the cultivation of crops and organized the imports of horses and cattle from across the Andes to populate the royal farms in Chile.\textsuperscript{18} A \textit{situado} of 212,000 ducats annually was available to pay for both salaries and needed resources.\textsuperscript{19} Rivera's plan for the self-sufficiency of the army was condemned to failure, because imports from across the Andes benefited civilians and officers who did very little to prolong Rivera's plan after he left Chile.\textsuperscript{20} In the following years, crop planting was dramatically reduced on the royal farms, which were also mismanaged and their balance sheets altered to show losses. Although the \textit{Audiencia} in Santiago was ordered to supervise the army, most of the oidores preferred to stay out of frontier affairs.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{A Volcano, a Plague, and a Truce}

For the Council, the Dutch menace was at the top of the agenda when it decided that southern Chile needed more protection after the native revolt. Although the Dutch finally took Valdivia, they could not settle in Chile. According to the diary of the Dutch expedition to Araucanía, the main difficulties started from the scarcity of foodstuffs and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} For his life, military reforms, and his two periods of government, see Fernando Campos Harriet, \textit{Alonso de Rivera. Gobernador de Chile}. Santiago: Universitaria, 1987; (1\textsuperscript{a} edición 1966).
  \item \textsuperscript{19} The \textit{situado} for Florida was 50,000 ducats annually; see Amy Turner Bushnell, \textit{Situado y Sabana. Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida}. Athens, Ga.: Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History, 1994, pp.44 and 47.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} A description of these networks in Margarita Gascón, “Comerciantes y redes mercantiles del siglo XVII en la frontera sur del virreinato del Perú,” \textit{Anuario de Estudios Americanos} LVII: 2 (Sevilla 2000), pp.413-448.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} For documents and episodes of corruption in the army, see Gascón, \textit{Naturaleza... Op. Cit.}, chapter “Ejército situado: negocios y corrupción,” pp. 55-69.
\end{itemize}
firewood for heating and cooking. Shortfall fuelled desertions. The men fished and hunted, but natives were the main providers. Unfortunately for the Dutch, Indians exchanged food for arms, and four or five head of cattle equaled five guns and ammunition. The fact that arms were changing hands at a high speed created a dangerous state of affairs that could not last forever. Natives blamed nature for the lack of food, since agriculture had been impossible for the last eight years because of storms that lasted 40 days each and earthquakes that ruined everything else. Quakes were so powerful that they had “pulled out trees from roots.” Later on, however, natives promised to bring more foodstuffs if payment was made upon delivery. The deal reveals who was in control and through what device. The Dutch eventually left Chile, promising to come back better equipped and with black slaves to ensure Indians that they would not be enslaved. Natives then promised to help but refused to sign any written commitment.

The failure of the Dutch to stay in Chile and the Indian behavior toward them deserve a closer look. Again, we have to understand the episode within a broader context. In 1641, Governor Baides and several toques (Araucanian chiefs) had agreed on a truce at Quillín. The so-called Parliament of Quillín has been celebrated by historians as the first one in a series of agreements that pacified the frontier, but the historiography misses the crucial reasons for such a momentum. On the Spanish side, the empire needed a truce. The Crown had more than enough difficulties in Europe. The seventeenth century was one of endless warfare, with only seven years without a war: 1610, 1666-1667, and 1680-1682. Spain went from one humiliation to the next, starting with the War of Mantua (1620-1631); then Maastricht (1632), followed by the naval defeat of Downs (1639). In 1640 the


uprisings of the Catalans and the Portuguese defied the unity of the Iberian Peninsula.\(^{26}\) Under pressure to send more resources to pay for the wars in Europe, Peruvian authorities refused to increase expenses in Chile.\(^{27}\)

Viceroy Marquis of Mancera (1639-1648) considered that Buenos Aires was in even greater danger, because the enemy could invade the Atlantic gate of the Route of Sotomayor to cut off the Atlantic connection.\(^{28}\) He therefore dismissed Baides´ request and increased Baides´ frustration by ordering him to send 200 of his soldiers to protect Buenos Aires.\(^{29}\) When the governor complained to the Crown, the viceroy replied that Baides was acting against his promises because he had agreed on a truce with the Indians, but then he started asking for more soldiers and arms to combat them. Baides downplayed the contradiction and replied that Mascara's words were the product of his genuine ignorance. Baides stressed that all the information that the viceroy had taken into consideration was provided by an Araucanian female who was living in Lima as a slave of a friend of the viceroy.\(^{30}\)


\(^{29}\) BN MM Volume 136: Marqués de Baides (1639), Document 2466 Carta del Marqués de Baides a SMR, Lima, 13 de marzo de 1639; BN MM Volume 137: Marqués de Baides (1640-1644), Document 2489 Carta del virrey Marqués de Mancera, virrey del Perú, a SMR, Callao, 8 de junio de 1641.

\(^{30}\) BN MM Volume 137: Marqués de Baides (1640-1644), Document 2489 Carta del virrey Marqués de Mancera, virrey del Perú, a SMR, Callao, 8 de junio de 1641. BN MM
Without any help from Lima, Baides turned to Santiago, but the capital had always been reluctant to sacrifice itself by sending more resources to the frontier. The decree by Philip III that had waived the colony’s burden of the frontier, except for helping with provisions, shielded Santiago from the lack of commitment.\footnote{For his policy, see Paul Allen, \textit{Philip III and the Pax Hispanica. The Failure of Grand Strategy}. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.} Every time a governor asked for help, Santiago had the waiver at hand, exposed the poverty of the capital, and assured the governor that it had already contributed to its limits for the defense of the empire. It could not be different in 1640 when Baides pleaded for assistance, stressing that four Dutch vessels were around. The answer of the members of the town council was just short of insulting when they let Baides know that they would all immediately start praying for a happy ending.\footnote{BN MM Volume 152: Francisco de Meneses (1666), Document 3034 Baides y los navíos holandeses (1646), pp.76-77.} Ironical as it might sound, Divine Providence did help the governor, because a volcanic eruption and a plague among the natives created conditions for a truce.

In 1640 the Villarica volcano erupted as part of a longer period of seismic activity in the Andes. The same series of geological events included the massive earthquake that destroyed Cuzco in 1650. A tapestry in the Cathedral donated by one of the survivors portrays the degree of destruction and the social unrest in the aftermath, and the veneration of the Cristo de los Temblores is still a popular ceremony that began soon after the quake of 1650. Lima also reported seismic activity in 1630, 1655, 1678, 1687, and 1690. In 1645 an earthquake affected Quito; and the Pichincha volcano erupted in 1660. A major earthquake, called the Magnus, in Santiago in 1647, transformed the capital into a
place of ruins. It also modified the course of the Mapocho River that flows across town, making floods a frequent catastrophe in subsequent years.33

After the earthquake in Santiago, the elite asked for a tax break and the king granted the benefit. Santiago stressed the lack of economic activity during the emergency and assured the king that the colony needed all the available money to rebuild the capital. Reconstruction, however, was extremely slow. Ten years later, another earthquake gave the elite another tragedy to use to apply for a renewal of the tax break. Also, natural disasters in the capital forced the governors to divert attention and resources from the frontier to Santiago.34 In many ways, natural catastrophes reduced warfare. Natives had to deal with some disasters, too. The eruption of the Villarica volcano polluted both the river and the Villarica Lake, making fishing impossible and forcing natives to look for clean water in faraway areas. The ice caps of the volcano melted and crop fields were suddenly flooded. For the Jesuit Alonso de Ovalle (1603-1651), the natural event was a message from heaven. God had spoken through nature and Divine Word turned itself into a brush that painted the triumph of the empire in the sky with the smoke and the ashes of the volcano. The Apostle Santiago led the Spanish army while terrified Indians were surrounded in the middle of an environment of destruction that included the very presence of a monster from hell.35


34 Margarita Gascón and Esteban Fernández, “Terremotos y sismos en la evolución urbana en Hispanoamérica. Ejemplos coloniales y estudio de caso,” Boletín CF+S 16 (Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Madrid 2001), ISSN 1578-097 X.

35. John Carter Brown Library: “Relación Verdadera de las Pazes que Capituló con el arauacano rebelado, el marqués de Baides, conde de Pedrosa, governador y capitán general del reyno de Chile, y presidente de la Real Audiencia Sacada de sus informes y cartas y de los padres de la Compañía de Jesús, que acompañaron al real ejército en la jornada que hizo para este efecto el año pasado de 1641,” Madrid, 1642 (?); and Alonso de Ovalle, Histórica Relación de Reyno de Chile. Roma, 1646.
Alonso de Ovalle, *Historia relacion del Reyno de Chile y de las missiones y ministerios que exercita en el la Compañía de Jesús*. Copies of the first editions in The John Carter Brown Library; also copies in Biblioteca Nacional de Chile and Biblioteca Cervantes de Paris; for later editions, see the one in 1991 by Editorial Universitaria de Santiago de Chile.

Without any metaphor, natives faced the inevitable consequence of soil and water pollution. At the survival level, material difficulties were so obvious to them that they rushed to avoid warfare. They were also aware that peace agreements with the Spaniards brought gifts such as cattle and food supplies. Some *toques* sent messengers to test the willingness of Baides for peace talks, and the governor happily agreed on a meeting at Quillín to reach the truce that he badly needed. Baides not only did not have any extra help from Lima and Santiago, he did not even have enough soldiers for the summer campaign of January 1641.
When Baides arrived in Chile in 1639, he ordered a census of human resources when he knew that most units lacked Indian allies or amigos. The gravity of the situation was summarized in his words: “Amigos were the nerve of warfare.” During the campaigns, Baides explained to the Crown, the amigos collected firewood and cooked, shepherded horses and cattle, preceded the army in searching for the right path and the appropriate place to cross a river. Up to this point in the text, allies were portrayed as just servants of the Spaniards, but things became more confusing when Baides testified that amigos were the ones who decided which native villages to attack. Some years earlier, Governor Alonso de Rivera had perceived the same distortion in roles. With astonishment he reported that his army was caught inside ancestral tribal conflicts in which Spaniards were helping the amigos, and not the other way around. Baides’ account exposed the same paradox.

By the time of Quillín, the Spanish army had already been defeated by the 1639 plague. The plague (probably smallpox) had decimated Indians without making distinctions between amigos and insurgents. Captains let the governor know that the amigos in their units had been lost to the plague. Baides knew that natives were having problems, but so was he. It was, therefore, a good moment for peace talks. Similarly, at the beginning of the century, Rivera reported that it was “a miracle” that insurgents in 1598-1599 had not killed all the Spaniards on the spot. The “miracle” was a plague.

36. BN MM Volume 137: Marqués de Baides (1640-1644), Document 2485 Carta del Marqués de Baides a don Juan Solórzano: Tratos de paz que hice en la entrada a tierras del enemigo el año 40, Concepción, 18 de marzo de 1641. According to the catalog, this document is a “Copia en el Museo Británico, Papeles de Indias (13977).”
38. Sources do not identify the plague.
39. Jerónimo de Quiroga, Memoria de los sucesos de la guerra de Chile. Santiago: Andrés Bello, 1979, p.368; BN Sala Medina Volume 136: Marqués de Baides (1639), Document 2469 Carta de la Real Audiencia de Chile a SMR, Santiago, 11 de noviembre de 1639, p.44.
Indians entered the Spanish settlements to steal, kill and enslave, they brought back to their villages unwanted guests – germs for which most Indians still lacked immunity. As the plague ravaged, further actions against the Spaniards had to be put on hold.\textsuperscript{40} In these two crucial moments of the frontier, nature was involved in unexpected ways to seal the fate of the empire.

**Ambivalence and Contradictions**

The framework for defending Peru was robust and fragile at the same time as a result of ambivalence and contradictions. It was true, for example, that the presence of the professional army in Chile made Spain robust to defend the South Pacific. Expensive as it was, men and guns in Chile protected the backyard of Lima and Potosí. When the Dutch sized Valdivia, the strategy of keeping a professional army in the Araucanía proved to have been the right decision. While appropriate for defense, it was, nevertheless, a contradiction for pacification. The Crown had hoped that the insurgents would come to accept Spanish rule after a few years of military presence. Then natives would willingly defend the empire against intruders. The wishful thinking backfired, because the army galvanized previous tribal conflicts when some Indians took advantage of the opportunity to join the troops and attack their ancestral enemies using Spanish military resources. Since amigos were entitled to Spanish protection against the attacks of other natives, roles were turned upside down when amigos decided which routes were to be traveled, which native villages were to be set on fire, and which tribes were to be the victims of pillage and enslavement. When Baides concluded that the amigos were “the nerve of warfare,” he was basically conceding that they were the chief commanders. At some point Rivera had been reluctant to use his troops – most of them allied Indians – to protect some Indian villages against the attacks of some other Indians. To perform such a task went in opposition to the imperial goal of pacification, he concluded.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{41} For cases, see Andrea Ruiz Esquide, *Los indios amigos en la frontera araucana*. Santiago: Universitaria, 1993. pp.17 and 55.
Major contradictions arose from the *situado*. According to Father Diego de Rosales (1601-1677), it was authorized for three years, but it lasted 69 and consumed 30 million pesos. Conceived as a remedy, it turned out to be a poison. Trapped in the Carbides and Scylla dilemma, the Crown needed the army and was willing to pay for it, but the flow of resources from the center to the periphery created benefits for many who would do anything to prolong the favorable status quo of a militarized border in southern Chile. In the second half of the century, peace agreements with several *toques* became a common practice, but the decrease in military action did not translate into a decrease in the military budget.

Meanwhile, the situation of the troops was deteriorating by the day. The arrival in Concepción of goods from Lima increased by 25 percent in 1607, but by 40 percent in 1655. Governors did not get enough cash to pay the salaries; and without cash, soldiers sold their arms and clothes and enslaved natives. It was not supposed to work that way.

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44. BN MM Volume 112: Alonso de Ribera, Segundo Gobierno (1607-1614), Document 1919 Sueldos y gastos de 1614, p.299. Prices in 1690 in BN MM Volume 168: José de Garro (1690-1693), Document 3479 Carta de don José de Garro a SMR, Santiago, 12 de junio de 1690, p.8; BN Sala Medina Volume 169: Tomás Marín de Poveda (1694-1696), Document 3522 Carta del oidor decano y fiscal de la Real Audiencia de Santiago de Chile a SMR, 30 de abril de 1696, p.204; BN MM Volume 169: Tomás Marín de Poveda (1694-1696), Document 3522 Carta del oidor decano y fiscal de la Real Audiencia de Santiago
They all blamed the merchants of Lima for the problems in Chile. In 1697 authorities ordered the situado to be sent directly from Potosí to Concepción, and in cash. The rationale was that merchants in Lima would be deprived of the benefits of sending goods to the army at high prices while keeping the silver for themselves. Governors would then have enough cash to pay the salaries, and soldiers, in turn, would be happy and behave properly. But nothing changed for better. Well-organized bad practices moved to the new location. By 1690, Concepción was reported to be full of merchants and contrabandists from all over Peru.

Another weakness of the framework was the situation in Buenos Aires, an outpost always eager to take advantage of the opportunity for contraband. Since it was the entry to the Route of Sotomayor, the Crown turned a blind eye to the corruption that made

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45. Enslavement was initially accepted as a punishment for those Indians caught during the military actions. It was nonetheless criticized on several bases – moral, legal, tactical; see in particular Jorge Randolph, Las guerras de Arauco y la esclavitud. Santiago: Horizonte, 1966, and Eugene Korth, Spanish Policy in Colonial Chile. The Struggle for Social Justice, 1535-1700. Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1968. Authors in the previous notes also include information about enslavement.

46. BN MM Volume 166: Juan Henríquez (1680-1683), Document 3476 Situado desde Potosí: Real Cédula del 16 de enero de 1687, pp.315 and 317; Volume 168: José de Garro (1690-1693), Document 3479: Carta de José de Garro a SMR, Santiago, 12 de junio de 1690, p.1. For contraband in the late colonial period, see Villalobos, Comercio y contrabando en el Río de la Plata y Chile, 1700-1811. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1986.

regulations useless. Early in the seventeenth century, locals profited from Buenos Aires' role in defending Peru, and when, in 1606, Spain tried to implement hard measures to combat contraband, Buenos Aires cried out that it would depopulate, and once depopulated, the whole empire would be under threat, because Spain would be without an Atlantic port to disembark the troops needed to protect Peru. Even the bishop felt obliged to preach that refusing to comply with the royal orders would be loyal disobedience. Spain retreated. From then on, authorities would need to balance the commitment to enforce regulations and the need to keep Buenos Aires with enough population to defend the empire. 48

Things were no better off in Mendoza where the incentives to sustain a population were very scarce. With an arid climate, local agriculture was only possible with irrigation, a labor-intensive activity. Huarpes, however, had been sent to Santiago to work from the earliest days, and, of the 45 vecinos (inhabitants with political rights) who participated in the foundation of Mendoza (1561), 30 were permanent residents in Santiago. Spaniards refused to live in a place without natives who worked for them. The result was that Mendoza remained so small that it did not qualify to be included on a map published in Amsterdam in 1596, where Buenos Aires, Cordoba, and Santiago were all located with accuracy. 49 The demographic insignificance of Mendoza affected the imperial strategy as the Crown realized in 1605 with the expedition of Alonso de Mosquera. Pompously called “The One Thousand Men,” Mosquera's expedition left Lisbon with 800 soldiers and arrived in Mendoza with 500. But this number was still enormous for Mendoza, because only ten vecinos were able to participate in the derrama with some wine and cereals. When Mosquera learned what he would encounter in Mendoza, he bought 900 head of cattle in Cordoba and sent a letter to Santiago calling for urgent help. Mosquera arrived when winter had already closed the Andes for travel. How locals and the army managed to survive that winter is impossible to know, because the acts of the town council for those


49. Newberry Library, Map by Arnold Florentin van Lasgeren, Amsterdam, 1596.
days have disappeared. The obvious fragility of a colony that was important to sustain the continental strategy alarmed the Council. With the lack of encomenderos being the main cause, Spain insisted that Indians had to stay in their original places and therefore encomenderos had to reside where they were allotted their encomiendas. Governor Francisco de Meneses (1664-1668) still found a ruinous Mendoza as a result of nature – diseases and floods – but mainly because of the empire's inefficiency in enforcing legislation. Although disappointed, Meneses collected bribes from the encomenderos of Mendoza who were permanent residents in Santiago and who wanted to bypass the legislation.

Farther south, Patagonia illustrates how nature limited and helped the imperial strategy at the same time. In 1584, Sarmiento de Gamboa founded Nombre de Jesús and Don Felipe in the Strait of Magellan with the aim at sustaining “people and resources en route to Chile.” Harsh climate and the lack of food destroyed the two settlements in months. Spain learned the lesson to never attempt colonization again, but also to never pay attention to news that the Dutch or the English were around. In 1635 a report assured them that the English had settled in the Strait and were searching for the riches of the City of the Caesars. Spain ignored the report. In 1680 a similar report was dismissed with only


51. BN MM Carta del gobernador de Chile a SMR, Santiago, 26 de marzo de 1664, Volume 147: Francisco de Meneses (1664), Document 2829, p.59.

52. The legend portrayed a magnificent place with docile Indians and enormous amounts of gold and silver; for documents, see La ciudad encantada de la Patagonia. La leyenda de los Césares. Buenos Aires: Contiente, 2005; for analyses, see Fernando Ainsa, Historia, utopía y ficción en la Ciudad de los Césares. Madrid: Alianza, 1992; and Ernesto Morales, La ciudad encantada de la Patagonia. Buenos Aires: Teoría, 1994. For letters to the Crown; see BN MM Volume 133: Document 2416 Informe de don Juan de Henríquez al virrey del Perú sobre el reconocimiento de una población hecha por los ingleses en el Estrecho de Magallanes, Concepción, 12 de marzo de 1635, folios 103 and
one sharp sentence: “The area is totally inhospitable.”\textsuperscript{53} For the Council, nature would do the job of expelling the enemy.

From another angle, access to natural resources made either robust or fragile the military strategy; for example, natives used to deprive soldiers of food and means of transportation as an efficient tactic to paralyze them. Each soldier needed between six and eight horses during a campaign, because everything had to be transported on horseback. Ox-driven carts were useless in the dense bush of Araucanía, with narrow paths and plenty of rivers. Natives knew these limitations and burnt the grass along the paths that the army had to travel. When troops could not adequately feed their horses and cattle, they had to return to the forts. Hernando de Machado reported in 1621 that burning grassland and stealing horses and cattle were efficient military tactics implemented by the rebels. Natives stopped the army without any battle, they did not risk any men in any confrontation, and they still defeated the Spanish army when it was forced to retreat to its forts because soldiers could not feed the cattle. Moreover, Machado denounced that governors sent misleading reports to the Council when they informed them that campaigns had been a success. Obviously, they portrayed themselves as winners to protect their careers, but claims that they had destroyed the native crops were entirely untrue. Indians farmed small plots close to the paths that the army traveled to allow soldiers to destroy

\textsuperscript{53} BN MM Volume 166: Juan Henríquez (1680-1683), Document 3429 Dictamen del Consejo de Indias sobre un decreto de SM en que solicita opinión sobre la mejor manera de reducir a la fe católica a los habitantes de Tierra del Fuego, Madrid, 9 de agosto de 1683, and Memorial de los jesuitas de 1681 afirmando que había población inglesa en Tierra del Fuego, Document 3430; Parecer del Consejo de Indias sobre una proposición de SMR para reducir a la fe católica a los habitantes de Tierra del Fuego, Madrid, 9 de agosto de 1683; and Volume 133: Marqués de Baides (1635), Document 2418 Certificación de don Gaspar de Suazo y Villarroel, sargento mayor de la gobernación y guerra de Chile, sobre lo acordado en una Junta de Guerra para tratar la mejor manera de desalojar a los ingleses que han poblado el Estrecho de Magallanes.
them with the mistaken belief that they were destroying the next harvest. Indians would need to ask for peace to avoid dying of starvation, governors concluded. Dying of starvation? Machado asked rhetorically. Impossible. “Indians in Chile were only dying of laughter,” Machado replied, because Indian cornfields were located in high-altitude valleys, all of them unreachable for the Spaniards. Spain, however, was willing to compromise with these paradoxes and contradictions at the local level. In a way, they were just a small price to pay to sustain a continental framework for defending the empire.

Conclusion

After the Araucanian revolt of 1598-99, the Crown reacted in the unusual way of sending a professional army of 2,000 men to the south of Chile. Historical explanations have insisted that the main reason for militarizing the border was the Araucanian resistance to Spanish rule. From the point of view of this article, the decision was based on the fact that Chile was an important piece in the framework for defending the Viceroyalty of Peru. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the main threat was the presence of the Dutch in the South Atlantic and Pacific. Recurrent news of vessels trading with natives on the islands of the Araucanía alarmed the Crown. In the 1630s, when the Dutch consolidated their presence in Pernambuco, Brazil, royal authorities believed that the Dutch would sooner or later attack the main Peruvian colonies. In 1643, the Dutch sized Valdivia, but they only stayed for a few months. This episode has given us the opportunity for a closer look at the imperial and natural conditions that explain the failure of the intruders to consolidate their presence in Chile.

The article has explained how the framework for defending Peru was continental, including an Atlantic dimension, which was the military corridor that connected Spain with Chile via Buenos Aires. Soon after it was opened by General Sotomayor, the route began to serve both military and civilian purposes. It channeled resources from the

54. BN MM Volume 122: Cartas Varios (1621) Document 2172 Advertencias sobre la guerra de Chile del Licenciado Hernando de Machado, oidor de la Real Audiencia de Chile, a SMR, 14 de marzo de 1621.
Pampas, Río de la Plata, Tucumán and Paraguay into Chile. In the end, the Route of Sotomayor helped to keep together a handful of isolated colonies that were scattered in the vast southern end of the Spanish empire.

Nature was involved in different ways in the outcome. The plague of 1639 and the volcano eruption of 1640 were examples of how nature created the local conditions that explained the truce agreed to in Quillín in 1641. It was just in time, because two years later the Dutch would seize the port of Valdivia. When the Dutch did not receive enough help from the natives to stay in Chile, Indians blamed natural disasters for the lack of enough foodstuffs. Controlling access to natural resources as a means to control warfare was a powerful Araucanian strategy that Machado confirmed in his report. Spain also profited from the natural conditions in Patagonia that helped it expel intruders in a more efficient way than any army.

Overall, the strategy for defending the Viceroyalty of Peru was correct. Unfortunately, it nevertheless created ambivalences and contradictions. For example, authorities in Buenos Aires had to tolerate illegal trade, while in Chile the army with the situado generated opportunities for legal and illegal activities. Major contradictions arose from the very presence of the royal army on the frontier, since it created a wide range of problems; and it even galvanized previous struggles among natives. Nonetheless, the Crown was willing to tolerate the contradictions for the sake of the empire. In sum, the goal has been to describe how the agency of nature and the defense strategy explain the main episodes of this southern extreme of the Spanish empire during the seventeenth century.
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