

GENERAL INFORMATION - OCCUPATION

Occupation Name: Chilean occupation of Antofagasta (Bolivia)

Participants: Bolivia, Peru, Chile

Target: Territorial Expansion

Dates/Duration: Occupation: Feb. 14, 1879 (Stater, 33), Declaration of War April 5th, 1879 (BFSP248, 230) Truce and official sanction for occupation: April 4th, 1884 (Treaty of Valparaiso), War's official end and Annexation: Oct. 20th, 1904 (Dunkelberg et al., 2019)

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The Unit of Analysis: Occupying Powers in Military Occupations

During the War of the Pacific, the Antofagasta province was occupied as outlined by the five criteria that determine a military occupation. Firstly, the Chilean military both threatened to use, and then deployed its military forces to defeat the Bolivian security forces in the Antofagasta province. (Arana, 61) This fulfilled the second category, the capture of the Antofagasta territory from Bolivia, and thirdly, because of this, Chile displaced Bolivia's state sovereignty over the region. As the Chileans were largely in support of the occupation, Chile incorporated the province into the country and administered it effectively (Bulnes, 124). Finally, while the Chilean government did not "impose" anything onto the already largely Chilean Antofagostans, following the truce with Bolivia, Chile was able to fulfil its goals in capturing the province. (Stater, 344)

This capture is where the definition is more complicated. Stated exactly, "Finally, the occupying state must (5) demand, or impose, that the occupied territory fulfil a goal, or set of goals, for the occupation to terminate." (Marcum, 27) It is clear that Chile even before the war had the intention of eventually annexing the province, which in normal circumstances would definitionally disqualify this event as an occupation. Still, Chile only officially annexed the province in 1904 (20 years later) due to long term disagreements with Bolivia over access to ports. While not demanding anything of the "occupied territory", Chile couldn't terminate the occupation until an official peace settlement was reached with Bolivia; the demanded goal to be fulfilled by the occupied territory was that the war be officially ended in exchange for a different port. It was the failure of regional politics that left Bolivia landlocked, not the intentional plan of Chile, and with an official and legitimate peace settlement being reached in 1904, Chile eventually achieved its goal. The peace settlement agreed upon the occupation ending and Antofagasta officially being recognized as part of Chile.

Because Chile didn't officially annex the province in 1884, but rather, waited 20 years until its political goals were achieved, it's reasonable to define Chile's presence in Antofagasta until 1904 as an occupation.

Occupying State(s): Chile

Occupied State/Territory: Bolivia: Antofagasta province

Extent of Occupation:

Extent Country: No

Extent Partial: The Chilean military captured the Antofagasta province after the Bolivian military had seized a Chilean nitrate mining company. (Sater et al., 32-33)

Extent Capital: N/A

Extent Homeland: No

Extent Colonial: No

Occupation Aims:

Disarmament: No

Institutional/ Regime Change: No

Reparations: N/A

Treaty Enforcement: Bolivian violation of the 1874 treaty between Bolivia and Chile over the Antofagasta province. The treaty outlined that in exchange for territorial recognition of Antofagasta, Bolivia had to ensure Chilean enterprises were tax exempt. (O'Brien, 1980) Bolivia's 1879 export tax on Chilean companies caused Chile to invade Antofagasta. (Stater, 19)

Territorial Gain: Yes, the capture of Antofagasta. Materially, Antofagasta increased access to the Pacific trade routes and the lucrative nitrate and mineral deposits of the Atacama desert. (OSU, 2024)

State Creation: No

Policy Change: The Bolivian government implemented "an inflexible system of persecution against the development of Chilean enterprises" (University of Iowa, 84) in the years before the war. Intervention was "urgently required" to protect the interests and "persons threatened" by the Bolivian government (University of Iowa, 85)

Primary Goal: Territorial Gain

Occupation Strategy:

Reimbursement: N/A

Civilian Coercion: N/A

Investment: The Chilean occupation used a loose type 2 investment model of development in the Antofagasta province. Since Chile had already developed the province, it considered Antofagasta part of itself. Chile in its manifesto to foreign powers, states that Chile previously owned the territory before the treaty of 1866, and that it legitimately occupied the territory on the grounds of Bolivia's "non-fulfilment" of the 1883/84 treaties. (BFSP v.70, 350) Additionally, Chile states that Bolivia never invested in the province or had its one enterprises (BFSP v.70, 350), and "To return to Bolivia the territory comprehended between the 23° and the 24° would be considered here as the

delivery of one of our provinces to a foreign power". (Bulnes, 127) Additionally, nearly 93% of the province's population was Chilean (O'Brien, 1980), and its largest business, the Antofagasta company, was Chilean. Bulnes states that the Antofagastan citizens considered themselves Chilean and welcoming of their occupiers, decorating the port with Chilean flags and marching with the soldiers to their barracks. (Bulnes,124) Upon occupation, Antofagasta was incorporated into the nation like any other possession: Espinosa's 1895 descriptive geography book lists Antofagasta as a province administered by Chile; it is a part of the Chilean judicial system. (Espinosa, 24)

Outsourcing: N/A

Extraction: N/A

Leadership Change

No Change: No Change

Endogenous Change: No

Restorative Change: No

Exogenous Change: No

Strategic/Natural Resource Value:

Natural Resource: YES (Nitrate reserves)

Strategic Value: YES (Coastline)

Troops Stationed in Territory:

Troops Stationed:

Troops Stationed High: No

Troops Stationed Low: Compared to the 6,600 men mobilised to guard Peru's Tacna, only 1,500 were sent to guard Tarapaca and Antofagasta. (Stater, 72) 500 men disembarked initially at Antofagasta, but since most of Antofagasta's population was already Chilean, troops faced no resistance, and the towns immediately declared their support and expelled their Bolivian authorities (Arana, 61). These came from the *Blanco*, *Cochrane* and the *O'Higgins* and were welcomed with cheering. (Bulnes,124)

Treaty/Agreements on Occupation: War of the Pacific: none. 1884 Treaty of Valparaiso: Total Chilean control over the province. (Treaty of Valparaiso, 1884)

Insurgency/Resistance: None

Outcome of Occupation: In April of 1884, Bolivia granted Chile the right to occupy its Antofagasta province in a truce. (Stater, 344) The terms were extremely biased towards Chile, in which the country not only gained Antofagasta, but an indemnity for war damages, and a return of sequestered property. (St John, 60) Still the treaty aimed to restore commercial relations between the two nations [although favored to Chile] and the Chileans promised freedom of transit for Bolivian business through Chile. (Treaty of Valparaiso, 1884) This treaty ended the hostilities of the War of the Pacific, and while not an official annexation, it was a placeholder until a definitive peace treaty could be agreed upon between both parties. (Dunkelberg et al., 2019) In 1895 Bolivia and Chile opened negotiations; In exchange for Bolivian recognition of Chilean sovereignty over Antofagasta Chile would assume Bolivian “financial obligations” and aid in giving Bolivia a port. (St John, 68) Indeed, the Bolivians refused to make formal peace until they could receive territorial compensation for the loss of their pacific outlet in Antofagasta, even proposing a succession of Chile’s newly captured Tacna or Arica provinces from Peru. (St. John, 60) The plebiscite in Tacna and Arica that resulted in a Peruvian victory ended Bolivia’s opportunity for ownership of a port, and in the 1904 Peace Treaty, Chile officially acquired sovereignty over Antofagasta “absolutely and in perpetuity” and, in return, built a railroad connecting Bolivia’s La Paz with the Arica port. (Dunkelberg et al., 2019)

Notes:

Latin American countries typically follow an economic model where cash products, such as mining, do not serve as a primary driver of economic development; rather, wealth is often spent on the extravagant lifestyles of the upper class. (O’Brien, 1) As it was not reinjected into the economy, these nations were heavily dependent on external investment and the need for their raw materials (O’Brien, 2). This placed Latin American nations at the mercy of external economic factors, but also more vulnerable internal factors. Bolivia in 1879 was devastated by an earthquake and plague that killed a large portion of the citizenry. (Sater, 29) Furthermore, a drought killed wheat and potato crops, plunging the country into a deadly famine. (Sater, 29) Chile was similarly experiencing hard times. An International recession during the 1870s particularly hit the Chilean economy; bad weather hurt agriculture, the gold standard reduced the need for Chile’s abundant silver, and the recession curtailed European demand for copper. (Sater, 28) Chile was running out of money and couldn’t float its failing banks (Sater, 28). Bolivia ran out of resources to assuage the famine and thus decided to implement a 10-cent tax increase on nitrate exports; this affected Chilean companies in the province. (Sater, 28) Nitrate mining was one of Chile’s most important economic sectors and supplied over fifty per cent of government revenue, employing “tens of thousands of workers”. (O’Brien, 2) Indeed, nitrate mines preferred Chilean workers, who were considered more “robust and intelligent”, and Chileans flocked to work in Bolivia and Peru. (O’Brien, 8) They complained it broke the 1884 treaty that prohibited Bolivia from taxing Chilean companies in the Atacama Desert. (Sater, 28) Indeed, the Chilean Antofagasta Nitrate company refused to pay the increase, and as a result, the Bolivian government appropriated the company’s assets for auction. (OSU, 2024) Chile reacted with invasion, and the Chilean warship *Blanco Encalada*, off the coast of Bolivia, previously monitoring the situation, moved into the attack position when the invasion began. (Sater, 28)

Indeed, the Chilean Navy disembarked enough sailors and troops to capture the province on February 14th, 1879. (Stater, 33)

Demonstrating Latin American dependence on foreign investment, the Chilean government, upon seizing the Antofagasta province, promptly returned private ownership of the nitrate mines and encouraged foreign investment from Britain. (Greenhill, 6) Additionally, The U.S. was neutral, but mentioned it strengthened ties with Chile during the war (BFSP v.71, 202)

Interestingly, following the truce, Chile sought to bring Bolivia into its geopolitical sphere by purchasing Tacna and Arica from Peru. (St John, 66) While originally for the purpose of appeasing Bolivia and the signature of a permanent peace, Chile dropped this logic and instead decided to pursue the territory as a buffer in case Peru later tried to retake its lost territory. (St John, 66) Peru proclaimed it never intended its lost provinces to ever be given to Chile or Bolivia (St. John, 69), and as a result, Tacna held a plebiscite to determine which country to join. (St. John, 70) While both Chile and Bolivia encouraged citizens to vote for Chile, the result from the beginning could not have landed in favour of the Chileans. (St John, 70) With its hopes of a port dashed, Bolivia signed the 1904 treaty with the promise of “other forms of compensation.” (St John, 72) One of these was the La Paz railway built by Chile to facilitate economic transmission of Bolivian goods and permanent peace; it was also a way to make Bolivia economically dependent on Chile and an effective satellite state. (St John, 67)

Bolivia and Peru have been historic allies, with talks in the 1830s over potential unification into a superstate, similar to the original Habsburg Viceroyalty of Peru. (Henderson, 5) Wars between this alliance and Chile in the early 19th century resulted from Chile’s fear of an emerging superpower dominating the region. (Henderson, 5) Following the war, though, Chile seems to have become a superpower. Its newly won coastline made it the premier naval power on South America’s west coast, and an effective global monopoly of nitrate export. (Melillo, 7) Indeed, Chilean nitrate became Western Europe and the U.S.’s primary source of fertilizer and facilitated California’s growth as a fruit producer. (Melillo, 7)

Arana, using a French scholar who traveled to the nitrate mines as a source, claims that the Chilean workers in the mines were heavily exploited by the Bolivian government. (Arana, 48)