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**The Ten Cents War:  
an expansionary or a post-colonial conflict?**

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## **Introduction**

A hundred years after the revolution of Tupac Amaru, the south of modern Bolivia and Peru became the theatre of a new conflict over the control of two strategic commodities: guano and saltpetre. This is known as the Ten Cents War, a conflict that outbroke on the Pacific coast of Latin America which, due to its peculiarities, can viewed on one hand, as many scholars still do, as a major clash between three nation-states and, on the other, a truly modern post-colonial conflict. Both points of view suggest interesting considerations about the nature of modern and post-modern state. Such conflict involved the states of Bolivia, Peru and Chile.

The analysis will be limited to two different but related periods of time. In fact, we will initially and briefly deal with the years following the wars of independence until well into the economic and social crises preceding the war, from 1879 to 1884. This first step is necessary to understand the premises of the conflict since the analysis of those years hides the answer to some of the questions we would like to answer, while the second is the chronological period during which this tragedy unfolded. In fact, the narration of the events will move from the end of the independence wars (1820s) well into the age of guano and saltpeter which economically and consequently socially constitutes a major turning point in the history of South America by the second half of the century. These unexpected sources of wealth were discovered in the harsh and difficult-to-live-in border region of the Atacama Desert. Although their importance has been nowadays outweighed due to remarkable advancements in the field of chemistry, at that time, controlling the exploitation of saltpetre and guano meant not only the possibility to increase the overall agricultural production and of the explosives, but it also offered the profitable opportunity to gain access to the world trade, which the so-called Second Industrial Revolution had been shaping up.

Even though in the past specialized literature already dealt plentifully with such a bloody-tainted page of the Latin-American history, the purpose of this study is to realize a more comprehensive and up-to-date account of the facts, examining in detail causes and consequences from a geopolitical, military and economical point of view. Did Chile deliberately provoke the war? To answer to this question, the views of two mayor scholars will be compared; the Chilean Francisco A. Encina

and the Peruvian Jorge Basadre. Hence we will discuss whether it is possible to consider this withering armed struggle a fight for the defence of the “vested” colonial powers’ interests in this part of the world or simply an expansionary conflict. The importance of studying this topic is twofold; on one side, we are dealing with a classic conflict among fully sovereign nation-state while on the other, however far from the European continent, the Pacific War can be viewed as the first of a series of conflicts where the national state gives way to the forces of an already well-established capitalist economy in search for cheap commodities, anticipating some of the most recurring patterns of modern post-colonialism.

The debate in this case should not be made of ifs or aimed at discovering who was wrong but it should reflect on the importance of supranational institutions in avoiding the extremes of single countries ambitions. The lack of coordination between the three countries may be considered the real cause for the war, but unfortunately this negative experience was not understood by the ruling elites of those European states that on 1914 were the protagonists of an even more tragic episode. In fact, if only they had payed attention to how dangerous the idea of considering war a viable way to solve internal problems or the most complicated diplomatic knots would prove in the end, perhaps the ultimate advancements in the field of science would not be subjected to the means of almost perfect war machines. Though the everlasting seek of cheap primary goods is also a good topic for further reflections; even today there are conflicts for the control of strategic facilities and the analysis of the economic causes is a useful exercise for those interested in understanding the origin of modern post-colonial conflicts.

Literature is abundant and mainly in Spanish; the large majority of it goes back to the 1970s since was written on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary celebrations. However, this article tried also to include more modern approaches, this is for instance the case of Tulio Halperin Donghi, who in his excellent masterpiece *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* gives an update record of the events transcending any nationalistic involvement. Other important sources of information were the monumental work *Historia de América Latina* written by Bethell Leslie and Klein, Herbert S’s *A concise history of BOLIVIA*. However, a Chilean reader may criticize the decision not to include any Augusto Pinochet Ugarte’s books, but given the high politicization of this author we feared a

nationalistic contamination of the information. In fact, although the enormous bulk of data available, many sources lack of the required scientific detachment and some others do not take into consideration the role of the foreign enterprises in shaping diplomatic relations. This problem was highlighted thanks to the seminal work of Edgar Oblitas Fernández *Historia Secreta de la Guerra del Pacífico*; this book is very helpful in understanding that almost any attempt to make a comprehensive account is biased insofar the investigation is limited to the military and diplomatic aspects.

This article is based primarily on second hand sources, in the sense that it is an elaboration of specialized literature. We also had the opportunity to visualize several official documents and the Embassy of Chile in Rome kindly allowed us the access to its library many first hand sources were available. As we said, the literary works we analyzed is written in Spanish, but thanks to the personal acquaintance with this language we managed to overcome this problem. Unfortunately, this article will not go beyond the argumentation of our thesis and a brief introduction to the main topics. Consequently, the reader should not consider it as an exhaustive account of the Ten Cents War, instead a contribute to an ongoing debate almost unknown in Europe. Perhaps the bibliography at the end could be of some help to those who are interested in getting a more inclusive insight.

The final dissertation will be divided in three chapters. The first chapter will introduce the reader to the main issues and sharp contrasts concerning Bolivia, Peru and Chile later involved in the War of the Pacific, leading from the years following the end of the colonial yoke. In addition, this chapter will compare the surprising Chilean political stability against the troublesome situation in Bolivia and Peru where the rural and indigenous social claims periodically put the national order at stake. Hence, the second chapter will attempt to formulate a useful hindsight into the already-mentioned conflict moving from the very first, though doomed to failure, diplomatic relations. Thus, it will be interesting to assess the military strength of the partaking countries, having in mind our most relevant research question, why Chile, comparing the views of two mayor scholars; Jorge Basadre and Francisco A. Encina. The third and final chapter will analyse the consequences of the conflict, giving relevance to what Leslie Bethell defines as “one of the mayor

rural uprising since Tupac Amaru II<sup>1</sup>". This rebellion is the most representative one among those that sprang up in the north of Peru in a situation of violence and uncertainty following the military defeat.



Map of Peru and Bolivia (1867), from *Atlas de la Géographie Universelle (description de tous les parties du monde)*, nouvelle édition. By M.J.J.N. Huot, in association with Malte-Brun. Publisher Garnier Freres, Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p. 239.

## Chapter I

### *The political and economic situation of Bolivia, Peru and Chile since the end of the colonial rule (1820s-1870s)*

#### 1.1 Bolivia

Despite the romantic and Wilsonian view of the principle of self-determination of peoples, which had been incredibly influencing contemporary North American and European history, Upper Peru<sup>2</sup>'s declaration of independence proclaimed on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1825 did not mean the sprouting of a new and enlightened civil service, nor the creation of a brisk economic system able to project its development outside the constraints of the disintegrated imperial order. In other words, to the proclaimed national independence corresponded *de facto* to a discordant, not to say tragic, socio-economic colonial reality. Herbert S. Klein claims that the very declaration of independence had negative impacts on economy, making things even worse in an already distressing situation, which was yet to be solved during the final years of the Spanish rule<sup>3</sup>.

The war of independence had some major consequences for the Upper Peru. It brought about an impressive loss of machinery, but also the destruction of a relevant number of mines and of other strategic facilities which, in the end, triggered a dramatic reduction of specialized and technical personnel, all elements that would play a key role in raising the levels of production. Moreover, the breaking apart of the Spanish Empire put to an end the possibility to take advantage of the imperial subsidies which were granted for the purchase of mercury. Other consequences were the monopolization of silver exportations and the imposition of custom tariffs between the newly-formed national entities. As one may expect, these negative events proved fatal in determining the subsequent crisis of the mining sector which was bound to last for many years, though at a very high social cost.

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<sup>2</sup> Upper Peru is a denomination for the land that was governed by the Real Audiencia of Charcas. It comprised the governorships of Potosí, La Paz, Cochabamba, Chiquitos, Moxos and Charcas (since renamed Sucre). After the war of independence, the region changed its name in Bolivia after Simón Bolívar.

<sup>3</sup> Klein, Herbert S., *A concise history of BOLIVIA*, p 102.

Eventually, when in May 1829 the Congress appointed President of Bolivia, almost any governmental effort in this field fell short of producing the desired effects and, despite the surprising and unexpected flourishing of the indigenous communities' commercial activities, development was anything but far from being a sound hauling progressive force. Therefore, to say it in Bethell's words, "since 1825 until well after 1850s Bolivia would have to deal with the unusual circumstance of running a constant deficit in its trade balance, which could only be offset with illegal silver exportations and a bustling smuggling trade. Government's deficits were a recurring pattern (...). Henceforth, by the middle of the century, Bolivia was in some even worse conditions than those of its first years of republican life and everything seemed to deteriorate even more"<sup>4</sup>.

The newly elected government of de Santa Cruz matched with the ambitious project of realizing a Peru–Bolivian Confederation, such a remarkable design which at the same time reveals how the main geopolitical forces were at work in this part of the American continent. Moreover, Simón Bolívar had already conceived the idea of carrying out the formation of this national entity who, before leaving to Bolivia, instructed the already-mentioned general de Santa Cruz to oversee the organization of the Peruvian government, having in mind the hatching of the Great Bolivian Confederation (1836-1839)<sup>5</sup>. However, once the dream of reuniting Peru and Bolivia through diplomatic negotiations had vanished, confident of the stability of the republican regime in his country, de Santa Cruz decided to invade Peru to achieve his goal<sup>6</sup>, and by 1836 he could finally achieve his purpose. In this sense, the president's plan partially succeeded in gaining the support of the Peruvian population, especially of those who were more likely to be engaged in economic activities with Bolivia. In fact, these people saw the Peru-Bolivian Confederation as a new political entity beneficial to their commercial interests<sup>7</sup>.

However, not everyone was happy with the president decisions, as sectors of the Bolivian high-society criticised the president for choosing Lima as the capital of the recently-brought-into-being state and the southern provinces of Peru soon experienced the emergence of an autonomous state, independent from the

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<sup>4</sup>Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c. 1870-1930, p.207.

<sup>5</sup> Camacho, J.M. *Historia de Bolivia*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c. 1870-1930, p.211.



Confederation<sup>8</sup>. Although troublesome, internal contradictions did not stand for the main concern; “careful about what would have happened next in the neighbouring Peru, the Chilean government tried to strike an alliance with Argentina<sup>9</sup>, having in mind the ultimate end of thwarting the Confederation<sup>10</sup>”. It’s not a case that such an accomplishment represented a threat to the Chilean military and commercial supremacy in the Pacific Ocean and that even Rosas did not like it. In fact, the Confederation had lowered customary tariffs and other protectionist measures on the goods entering the harbour Callao which turned in a major Valparaíso’s commercial competitor. In addition, given its geographical extension, Chile considered the Confederation as a power that might eventually pose a serious threat its national security and for these reasons the “omnipotent”<sup>11</sup> Diego Portales, the father of Chilean expansionism, in December 1836, decided to declare war on the Confederation and so did Argentina in May 1837.

Although 1837 invasion was unsuccessful, the Chilean army was still determined to thwart the Confederation and in July 1838 endeavoured in a new expedition, but this time Chile could count on the active support and participation of a large contingent of Peruvian exiles, among which were two generals: Agustín Gamarra and Ramón Castilla<sup>12</sup>. Also within Peru a large part of the so-called “élite limeña”, which had never tolerated the loss of the national independence, actively contributed to the success of the invading forces. Not only the liberals, which had always opposed de Santa Cruz’s political plan and his authoritarian rule, but also Salaverri’s supporters, rejoiced to hear that Castilla and Gamarra intended to re-affirm the autonomy of Peru<sup>13</sup>. During January 1839, de Santa Cruz’s army was decisively defeated in the battle of Yungay and the Confederation crumbled; consequently, Andrés de Santa Cruz was forced to exile<sup>14</sup>. When in October 1839 the Chilean forces left Peru, Gamarra was once again elected president and became the promoter of a new constitution. Surprisingly he soon started a military campaign aimed at conquering Bolivia, but he was defeated and killed in November 1841. To

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> Not only with Argentina, but also with Ecuador. Though the latter preferred to remain neutral.

<sup>10</sup> Camacho, J.M. *Historia de Bolivia*, p. 219.

<sup>11</sup> Pease G.Y., *PERU HOMBRE E HISTORIA*, La República, III, p. 8

<sup>12</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 6, c. 1820-1870, p. 211

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Camacho, J.M. *Historia de Bolivia*, p. 224.

some extent, these tragic but pivotal events of the Andean history can be geopolitically considered, although with very different premises, as the archetype of the future Ten Cents War.

Anyway, “twenty years after the foundation of the Bolivian Republic, 1846 statistics records show that for what regards the trade balance there is an impressive disproportion”<sup>15</sup> and it also surprising to note that by mid-1850s, despite a situation where instability and frequent insurrections were of a recurring pattern throughout the country, mining exportations started to grow constantly. Notably, this sector’s take-off had initially begun only in the highlands region and subsequently spread also in the coastal territories thanks to the important scientific advancements, a direct consequence of the capitalist progressive forces in the rest of the world<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, in the years between 1875 and 1880 Bolivia returned to be one of the most important producers of refined silver, which sparked the recovery of the whole national economy as an effect<sup>17</sup>.

From a social point of view, in accordance with Guzman’s claims<sup>18</sup>, we dare define Bolivia as an “agrarian” regime, since, although this country had managed to emancipate itself from the Spanish rule, the distribution of land among population still used to follow the criteria common to many colonial economies. Moreover, it is possible to make a clear distinction between collective property and “personal” property of those who were estate owners even during the colonial period. Adopting the excuse of considering the communal property of land as something out of date and as an obstruction to the emerging of a well-integrated society, governments like that of Melgarejo Pero and especially those in office during the 1870s, assumed an aggressive attitude against the indigenous communitarian social fabric. These attacks were mainly in the shape of legislative acts which imposed that privately-owned properties had to be officially registered as belonging to just one physical person. Not surprisingly, this private-law decision was aimed at favouring the interests of the white population and of the “cholos” against the already disadvantaged indigenous peasantry<sup>19</sup>. In other words, to the relatively stationarity

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<sup>15</sup> Guzman, Augusto, *Historia de Bolivia*, segunda edición, p. 176.

<sup>16</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c. 1870-1930, p.207.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 209.

<sup>18</sup> Guzman, Augusto, *Historia de Bolivia*, segunda edición, p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c. 1870-1930, p.209.

of the main economic activities corresponded an old-fashioned social system and an unstable political situation which differed from other south American countries, due to the “caciquista” character of the military elite.

## 1.2 Peru

After three hundred years of Spanish rule, the heavy colonial legacy still represented, socially and economically speaking, one of the mayor issues hindering the consolidation of governmental institutions and the emerging of a national consciousness in recently independent Peru. From a political point of view, the Peruvian situation was characterized, as in other South American countries, by a high-degree of instability along which different groups of the creole elite aimed at seizing the political power, having in mind the protection of their idiosyncratic and local interests<sup>20</sup>. Given these circumstances, it was *de facto* almost impossible for the government to carry out any policy designed to foster cohesion at a national level. Therefore, political institutions were like stranded boats, struggling to supersede the administrative structure of what once was a particle of the disappeared Spanish Empire<sup>21</sup>.

In that period, free trade, one of the most persuading arguments legitimizing the War of Independence, resulted in a disrupting factor which threatened to break apart the Peruvian state. Although it produced an increase in exports which consequently favoured the land-owners’ interests, free trade proved determinant in putting off the development of the manufacturing sector due to the unsustainable price competition with the goods coming from abroad. However, from the 1840s Peru experimented an incredible economic development thanks to the exportations of guano, which, consequently, provided the country with an enormous bulk of economic resources.

Though the history of the exploitation of guano’s facilities is quite complex, it deserves a special attention. As Franklin Pease G.Y. argues, guano began to play an important economic role only when European, Asian and North American

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup> Bonilla, Heraclio, *The Indian Peasantry and “Perú” during the War with Chile*, extracted from *Stern Steve, Resistance, rebellion, and consciousness in the Andean peasant world, 18th to 20th centuries*, cap. 8, p. 220.

farmers realized its incredible fertilizing properties, few years after the already-mentioned Peru–Bolivian Confederation’s flop (1839). Until then, its use in agriculture was limited to indigenous communities, although its properties as fertilizer were known much before the Spanish conquest<sup>22</sup>. The emergence of such an unexpected source of wealth came up in a country where, since the proclamation of independence, there had not been the formation of a whatsoever capital accumulation, nor there was a convertible economic surplus. Moreover, bank savings were almost inexistent and consequently banks did not perform any borrowing-lending activities.

Commerce represented also one of the scarce sources of capital and this may explain, for example, why many of those investing in mining were mostly merchants, a pattern which went back to the colonial era when any large injection of economic resources needed to foster output were externally provided by the metropolitan government<sup>23</sup>. This possibility was no longer available in modernizing Peru, a country which met several difficulties in facing its external duties and the saturation of the domestic market severely curtailed any chance of receiving financial help from abroad.

Luckily, thanks to guano, things were about to change as it not only helped fulfilling the government’s ambitions to create a unified nation but also represented such a conspicuous source of revenues that from 1847 Lima managed to stabilize internal budget and, by 1848, to pay off its external debt<sup>24</sup>. The exploitation of guano facilities was in the hands of private companies in the sense that the contractors paid the state to extract, transport and sell it on a cost-plus basis. The president of Peru Nicolás de Piérola replaced this system and soon stroke a new agreement between the government and the French Dreyfus house<sup>25</sup>. From 1869 the latter was granted the exclusive right of extracting and selling guano in exchange of making a quick loan to the government to face immediate payments on due date. Nonetheless this precious fertilizer represented an attraction for many European firms and therefore this led to an increase in the levels of corruption. This prompted, several political figures standing up for the old “club” of contractors to sternly

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<sup>22</sup> Pease G.Y., *PERU HOMBRE E HISTORIA*, La República, III, p. 184.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 237.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 238

criticise this attitude<sup>26</sup>. Among them stood out Manuel Pardo, the founder of the “partido civilista”; he promoted the reinvestment of the revenues<sup>27</sup> were entering the country in the construction of railways and other facilities of national interest. Hopefully, Peru was finally able to enhance its transportation system by building in 1850 the first railway and to introduce gas lighting<sup>28</sup>.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of the war of the Pacific abruptly interrupted this process in 1879, thwarting the dream of forming a modern capitalist society in the old Peru. However, war outbreak in an already difficult economic situation, since by the mid of 1870s Peru went through a mayor economic crisis that even the recently increased guano exportations could not help to solve. In such a complicate situation Manuel Pardo took advantage of the popular malcontent and managed to mobilize not only his aristocratic supporters but also most those living in the capital, reorganizing his party and winning 1872 elections, a year before 1873 crisis’ onslaught<sup>29</sup>.

Though, once again government was not able to rely on an efficient fiscal policy, therefore for whatever policy implementation it had to beg the International Bank and other private enterprises for credit<sup>30</sup>. Bankruptcy was constantly looming and any strategy seemed ineffective, even the decision to introduce paper money and to let the American entrepreneur and railway builder Henry Meiggs issue banknotes on his own. Moreover, from 1874 both the government and Albert Dreyfus considered each other as a slow payer debtor<sup>31</sup>. In a certain sense, Peru entered the war already politically and economically defeated, hence the military failure is the litmus paper of its internal diseases which in the end played a major role in the following events we are dealing with.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Pease G.Y., *PERU HOMBRE E HISTORIA*, La República, III, p.191.

<sup>28</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 237.

<sup>29</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 238

<sup>30</sup> Pease G.Y., *PERU HOMBRE E HISTORIA*, La República, III, p. 205.

<sup>31</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 239

### 1.3 Chile

In 1870 Chile was the only country in Hispanic America which stood out for an incredible politico-institutional continuity as well as a forty-years-old stable multiparty system. This coincided with the establishment of a conservative order which began as soon as the role of the army was severely limited. Indeed, the latter had acquired an enormous prestige during the so-called First Pacific War, but military officers considered the army the belligerent expression of the nation and only secondly as the guardian of the internal order<sup>32</sup>. Although hard to believe, they were aware of the benefits this idea of the armed forces would eventually produce, an apolitical role that they willingly accepted along with the election of generals as presidents during first twenty years of conservative rule.

This demonstrates that the Chilean case is more of a European rather than Latin-American experiment and it is not just simply the expression of the ruling elites but of the whole nation<sup>33</sup>. From this point of view, Chilean nationalism has much in common with the Habsburg Empire of the XX century, where the composition of the army reflected the stability of the state despite no ethnic group of European descendants occupied a privileged position. Given these circumstances, it is not wrong to state that in this country nationalism did not come only from dominant cultural groups like in the case of Germans, Italians and Poles<sup>34</sup> and cultural divisions seemed invisible compared to indigenous people's traditions.

However, as Julio Vega claims, when Chile started its republican era there were only two social classes: the well-off creoles and the Spanish elite, which made up its mind to remain in the country and the lower classes of which mestizos, those who represented most the working force, and other educationally disadvantaged groups were part. Independent indigenous populations kept living separated from these two<sup>35</sup>. However, in the period between 1841 and the conflict's outburst the highest class was made up of the traditional landowner aristocracy and by a new powerful group that is possible to tie in with the bourgeoisie whose economic power

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<sup>32</sup> Ibidem

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p.242.

<sup>34</sup> Breully, John, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 121

<sup>35</sup> Vega Julio, extracted from de León, César A, *Las capas medias en la sociedad chilena del siglo XIX*, p. 62.

no longer relied on agriculture but on the mining sector<sup>36</sup>. Even during the first twenty-years-old conservative leadership of the generals Prieto and Bulnes the latter introduced a new economic element in a society until then dominated by the estates of Central Valley<sup>37</sup>.

Regarding the composition, this elite was formed of foreign people who had come to Chile soon after the latter was proclaimed an independent republic and of those Chileans that César A. de León referred to as “hombres nuevos”<sup>38</sup>. Eventually this group started posing a real challenge to the recently mentioned aristocracy for the control of the state administration until the two most important economic sectors reached a silent agreement over two basic premises: sharing both the political power and the exploitation of natural resources while respecting each other’s interests. Indeed, this growing cohesion within the better-off social stratum, prompted by the fact that once the most outstanding members of the so-called bourgeoisie managed to increase exponentially their fortunes they tended to secure their social position by purchasing estates across the country emulating the propertied aristocracy, is a factor which helped fostering the politico-institutional continuity we have been recently discussing.

Differently, the middle class in the years between 1810 and 1840 is of a minor social reality and only after the mid-1800s it is possible to quantitatively assess its economic hatching, mostly for what concerns the urban middle-class<sup>39</sup>. During this period, the strength of such a social group resides in the service industry sector, representing a profitable internal market for goods domestically produced. Moreover, by the final quarter of the century the middle-class starts flourishing at an incredible rate which fosters more and more the necessity to partake in the political process of decision-making, as a viable way to defend its interests. On the other hand, the lower classes are inclusive of the working class as a whole and were the main expression of the industrializing Chile<sup>40</sup>. Although, economically speaking, development was not numerically surprising, it had been constant and

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<sup>36</sup> León, César A, *Las capas medias en la sociedad chilena del siglo XIX*, p.70.

<sup>37</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p.242.

<sup>38</sup> This Spanish expression is the translation of the Latin term “homo novus” or “new person”: a man who was the first in his family (gens) to become consul.

<sup>39</sup> León, César A, *Las capas medias en la sociedad chilena del siglo XIX*, p. 91.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p.62.

strongly related to the production, but also the exportation of primary goods – i.e. copper – which provided the government with an incredible source of wealth.

Thus, thanks to the latter, the Chilean government could afford the construction of a national transport system and spend more on education as well as on the maintenance of public order (especially in the largest cities). For instance, having in mind the education of the Chilean people, the government took an active interest in creating circulating libraries in a certain number of urban centres. Initially, it acted in accordance with the conservatives regarding these issues and hindered every reform aimed at lowering the level of education requirements. However, this caused such liberals' protest that president Errázuriz was forced to give in<sup>41</sup>. As Hancock claims "it was an era of discussions, of zeal for education and for reforms, of the beginning of democracy in its true sense".<sup>42</sup>

These questions tended, however, to separate the parties more and more. The president even went so far as to declare that the teaching of the Roman Catholic religion in the colleges was not obligatory with the sons of dissenters"<sup>43</sup>. Contrasts with the Catholic Church were part of an ideology strongly related to the process of modernization Santiago fostered and which was looking for challenging expressions against the dominant ruling forces of which conservative Catholicism was part<sup>44</sup>.

Moreover, the Chilean population had grown at a remarkable rate, reaching out two million people the year before war's outbreak. Though the increasing population and the separation between parties we recently pointed out, but also the emerging of new social classes such as a strong bourgeoisie, helped in activating a dangerous time bomb which could blast at any moment and, as we will see further on, only a distracting but cohesive vent valve like a war would eventually play a deterrent in averting the outbreak of an internal social conflict.

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<sup>41</sup> Hancock, Anson Uriel, '*A History of Chile*', Anonymous Translator, (United States, 1893), p. 257.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p.242



## Chapter II

### *From peace to war*

#### 2.1 The Failure of diplomatic relations

As we said before, from the 1840s, guano and saltpeter started to play a major economic role in Peru, Bolivia and Chile since the exportations of these primary goods to North America and Europe were growing at an incredible rate. However, the most conspicuous facilities were placed in a deserted and so inhospitable area that even during the colonial age there was no clear mapping of them and still the southern borders of Peru and Bolivia with Chile fell short of accuracy from a geographical point of view. Anyhow, from 1842 Chileans endeavored in various voyages which have been organized in the prospect of drawing once and for all the northern boundary of their country.

In particular, they went on exploring the area between the port of Coquimbo and the Morro de Mejillones; on their opinion, Santiago had the right to exert its sovereignty also over those facilities of guano present on that territory<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, since several other demonstrations of force took place in this hard-to-live region, the relations between Chile and Bolivia became tense and, to avert the risk that further intrusions might endanger the Bolivian mining elite's interests, the government of general José Ballivián started a complex and long-lasting process of negotiations with its respective Chilean counterpart. The situation was so troublesome that "on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1863 the Bolivian Parliament allowed the Executive to declare war on Chile if, exhausted all conciliatory means of diplomacy, did not obtained the vindication of the occupied territory or a pacific solution was reached as long as it was compatible with national dignity"<sup>46</sup>.

However, because of Spain's project to retake the control of its ex-colonial possessions on the Pacific area, the two arguing countries agreed to sign a treaty among them which temporarily settled these territorial disputes. Yet eventually, the

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<sup>45</sup>Di Cio, Miguel Angel, Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883, p 23.

<sup>46</sup>"Memorándum acerca de los motivos que dificultan el ajuste de paz con Chile presentado al Congreso Nacional de 1883", Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Bolivia, La Paz, 1883. Extraídas de Di Cio, Miguel Angel, Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883, p 24.

two countries signed a new treaty in 1874, which established “the 24<sup>th</sup> parallel [as the new territorial border] and [among] the dispositions [it provided] about the exploitation of natural resources also included a clause which imposed that the tariff on exportations between grades 23 and 24 “should not exceed the amount which had been charged until then”<sup>47</sup>.

Though, as Klein claims<sup>48</sup>, during those years the population on the Bolivian coast was mainly coming from Chile. As a matter of fact, the interests of the Chileans entrepreneurs were the hinges of the economic life in this part of the county. Not surprisingly, this was mainly due to the incapability of Sucre’s authorities to stimulate the local mining sector and to boost the number of people living on the southern border lands. In fact, Bolivia had to face the worrisome situation of its public finances which, because of a fraudulent and unfair use by the military elite, were dramatically reduced. Given these political and economic circumstances, in 1878 the Bolivian government promulgated a new law clearly at odd with article 4 of 1874 treaty we presented earlier which imposed the contracting company to pay a ten cents tariff for each Spanish quintal of exported saltpetre<sup>49</sup>.

As one may expect, this decision provoked Chile’s complaints which also threatened to consider void the 1874 treaty; Bolivia justified it by saying that the promulgation of this law was simply a private law regulation and the settlement of disputes was a matter which fell within the faculties of ordinary tribunals<sup>50</sup>. However, from now on a long diplomatic struggle started and it reached the peak when Videla, the Chilean ambassador to la Paz, was ordered to leave Bolivia and return to Santiago while the Chilean army was preparing to occupy Antofagasta. In conclusion, this complicated situation came to a tragic end when the Bolivian government repealed the Chilean ultimatum and the town we recently mentioned was militarily occupied. In the meanwhile, Lima decided to respect the secret alliance, of which Chile was fully aware, because the Peruvian government was concerned about the possibility that Santiago and Lima might form an anti-Peruvian coalition.

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<sup>47</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883*, p 24

<sup>48</sup> Klein, Herbert S., *A concise history of BOLIVIA*, p. 143

<sup>49</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p.

<sup>50</sup> Guzman, Augusto, *Historia de Bolivia*, segunda edición, p. 302

## 2.2 Fighting the war

### 2.2.1 Military preparation

Many scholars like Camacho<sup>51</sup>, believe that Chile had previously prepared its forces to eventually face an armed conflict against its northern neighbours and was just waiting the due moment to legitimize an expansionary war at the expenses of Peru and Bolivia. Though, Di Cio argues the following: “the state of military preparation of the three countries was mediocre; [...] [moreover] Chile was on bankruptcy” and the infantry equipment was not so different from that of Bolivia and Peru<sup>52</sup>. Even Bethell claimed that war outbreaked at a time when Chile was not prepared for it neither politically nor economically<sup>53</sup>. Despite the internal diseases we mentioned above and the alarming conditions of the military, it seemed that Chile had meticulously prepared for war in comparison to his adversaries and the strong nationalist sentiment, almost absent in the other two countries, turned out to be a decisive factor<sup>54</sup>.

The only element that might suggest the war did not happen all of a sudden is the arms race between the naval forces of Santiago and Lima to get the most modern and powerful battleships; as it is calculated that few months before the war Peru could approximately deploy a total fleet tonnage of 6.930 while Chile of 7.302<sup>55</sup>. Even if was possible to consider verisimilar the eventuality of a naval war against Peru, the creation of such a mighty fleet was strongly affected by the tense and problematic relations with Buenos Aires. In other words, it is possible to say that Chile, in the period before the declaration of war, did not deliberately provoke the conflict, although it considered the northern border the most suitable to carry out its expansionary plans and plausible a conflict against Argentina and Peru. Between the latter and Chile there was a strong and long-lasting rivalry which went back to the Spanish domination<sup>56</sup> and it was not by chance that in 1873 Lima accepted to secretly make an alliance with the Bolivian Government. The two allied powers made also pressures on Argentina to join them with a clear anti-Chilean spirit; the

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<sup>51</sup> J.M. Camacho, *Historia de Bolivia*, p. 307

<sup>52</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú*, 1879-1883, p. 47 y 48

<sup>53</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c. 1870-1930, p. 160

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>55</sup> Lacoste, Pablo, *La imagen del otro en las relaciones de la Argentina y Chile*, p. 305

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 301

first article of this treaty states that the two countries would have combined their forces to preserve their sovereignty and territorial integrity against whatever external threat<sup>57</sup>.

Anyway, it is important not to forget that Chile by the mid of 1870 had been stroke by a severe social and political crisis and many started to think that a distracting event such as a military victory might avoid Chile's collapse. In order to give an answer to our main research question, clarifying whether Chile is the true responsible for the war, we will compare the views of the Peruvian Jorge Basadre and of the Chilean Francisco A. Encina. The former quotes José Francisco Vergara's point of view about the necessity Chile had of going at war, with the ultimate end that of averting internal social conflict<sup>58</sup>. In his memories Francisco Vergara<sup>59</sup> states the following: "I've received information from La Paz which revealed the very first war's symptoms. Although alarming, this news filled me with hope since I was persuaded we were gliding towards a social struggle. Extreme poverty and discomfort were so great in Chile that even the most insignificant thing could have sparked a conflict between those who were starving and the ones who were owners of something. Given these circumstances an international war whether against Bolivia or Peru, which would inevitably be involved, were a salvific event and as such I considered it. As soon as these symptoms got more evidence, I fervently and obstinately endeavored myself to promote war...".

It is interesting to observe the strong similarities between the conjectures of Vergara and those shared by several Austro-Hungarian diplomats and politicians. For example, immediately after the war the former Habsburg diplomat Count Andrian-Werburg conceded that: "We started the war, not the Germans and even less the Entente – that I know. ... I myself was in lively agreement with the basic idea that only a war could save Austria."<sup>60</sup> Generally speaking, many Historians of the Habsburg Empire largely agree, with Evans observing that: "Vienna was certainly not waiting for instructions; indeed, the Habsburg capital exhibited a rare harmony of its military and civil leadership," or as Fellner remarks: "The will to this third

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<sup>57</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú*, 1879-1883, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> Basadre, Jorge, *HISTORIA DE LA REPÚBLICA DEL PERU*, tomo VII, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Extracted from Basadre, Jorge, *HISTORIA DE LA REPÚBLICA DEL PERU*, tomo VII, p. 37 Edición de Fernando Ruiz Trujillo, Santiago, Editorial Andrés Bello 1979.

<sup>60</sup> Fisher, Conan, *Europe between Democracy and Dictatorship 1900 –1945*, p. 12

Balkan War dominated the thoughts and actions of Austrian politicians and military men.” Ironically, the very assassination of Franz Ferdinand had not merely provided the pretext for war, but also removed from Austrian public life the figure most likely to oppose such a strategy<sup>61</sup>”.

On the contrary, Francisco A. Encina<sup>62</sup> believes that Chile was not prepared for war nor it had been organizing a clear expansionary plan. In fact, according to him the war was a surprising event to a country which was in that very moment undoubtedly unprepared. Moreover, he makes an interesting comparison with Prussia, saying that whenever Berlin or another European country is constrained in the unpleasant circumstance of going at war, everything is ready: supplies, weapons, ammunitions can be easily deployed and used. In the case of Chile, the commanders had no experience of war since the expeditions against the Peru-Bolivian Confederation, nor they regularly engaged in military maneuvers; general mobilization required an incredible amount of time and the supply system backing the troops did not expect a war in the desert; in addition, the boilers of several battleships required maintenance without they would prove useless against Peruvian naval forces<sup>63</sup>.

To this end he strongly criticized the eminent Chilean scholar and politician, Vicuña Mackenna, who, without considering any logistic difficulty, demanded the conquest of Lima in a very short period of time<sup>64</sup>. Vicuña Mackenna had emerged as the ultimate leader of the public opinion and was among those who endeavored in the galvanization of the popular sentiment. Although Encina describes his country as not ready for war and far from being a cynic expansionary power, recognizes that the conflict which had been frozen since 1867 would eventually outbreak at a time when a distraction was needed and the recovery from the great 1873-1879 crisis had to follow unconventional paths conveying all the disrupting energies into the reorganization of the army and supply transports<sup>65</sup>. In conclusion, Chile cannot be deemed responsible for the war, however war was a social vent valve and Chile did and extraordinary performance. Instead, as we will see at the end of the chapter,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>62</sup> Although some of his positions may sound racists to a modern reader, we decided to quote only those statements of which we previously checked the references and first hand sources.

<sup>63</sup> Francisco A. Encina, *Historia de Chile*, desde la preistoria hasta 1891, tomo XVI, p. 366

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, p. 387

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, p. 87

several foreign enterprises had a great responsibility in provoking and spreading the conflict since the only thing they cared of were their interest and when Bolivia due to its internal contradictions seemed to put at risk these, nothing could prevent them to spur the Chilean counterpart to step in and finally legitimate their ends.

Before we move to the next section we will briefly describe the military strength of those countries involved. For what concerns terrestrial forces, Bolivia had a nacional civil guard (Guardia Nacional Cívica) and a regular army (Ejército de Línea). Numerically speaking it could count on between 2.000 and 54.000 soldiers which were scarcely prepared and trained. Also, the armed forces of Peru were in a situation which did not differed so much from Bolivia's, although it is difficult to assess the number of men it could count on<sup>66</sup>. It is also interesting to observe that the Peruvian infantry was armed with an approximate number of 5000 modern rifles of at least six different models; cavalry was practically inexistent and ammunitions were scarce<sup>67</sup>. Regarding Chile, terrestrial forces were not so different in terms of the effective number of soldiers nor in the equipment, but, as we previously said, in the homogeneity of its population and in the patriotic spirit that animated Chilean troops<sup>68</sup>. Moreover, although the law of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1878 established that the army should be of 3122 soldiers, the government, due to economic constraints, decided to reduce it to 2440 by 1879<sup>69</sup>.

### 2.2.2 *The armed struggle begins*

During the initial phases of the conflict, the most relevant clashes occurred between the Chilean and Peruvian navies<sup>70</sup>. These naval confrontations were an impressive deployment of forces, as in the case of the battle of Iquique on the 21st of May 1879. During this fight the Chilean gunboats forced the armoured corvette “*Independencia*” to stir in direction of an area where it remained stuck and stranded and the Chilean fleet could finally and very easily bombard it<sup>71</sup>. However, after this episode, the Peruvian naval forces were still able to pose a real threat to the Chilean navy, thanks to the modern and powerful ironclad turret ship *Huáscar* which,

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<sup>66</sup> It is generally accepted an approximate figure of 4000 troops.

<sup>67</sup> Francisco A. Encina, *Historia de Chile*, desde la preistoria hasta 1891, tomo XVI, p. 304

<sup>68</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú*, 1879-1883, p. 47 y 48.

<sup>69</sup> Francisco A. Encina, *Historia de Chile*, desde la preistoria hasta 1891, tomo XVI, p. 302

<sup>70</sup> Datas about the Bolivian Navy are negligible.

<sup>71</sup> Lacoste, Pablo, *La imagen del otro en las relaciones de la Argentina y Chile*, p. 306

together with the super-dreadnoughts *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Encalada*, in October 1879<sup>72</sup> waged war against the enemy fleet nearby Punta Angamos<sup>73</sup>. The following battle resulted in a surprising Chilean victory which could even capture the *Huáscar* on October 8<sup>74</sup>. From now on Peru and its allied could no longer defend themselves from the raids of the Chilean navy, therefore Santiago had become the absolute winner on the Pacific Ocean. For what concerns terrestrial operations, we shall adopt the fourfold periodization devised by Di Cio<sup>75</sup>.

The first period of war can be deemed to correspond to the so-called Tarapacá campaign (April-December 1879); during this time-frame “the allied army was spread over an extension of more than a hundred leagues, from Pacocha to Loa”<sup>76</sup> and the troops which had to defend the harbour of Pisagua had to resist to a ten times outnumbering attacking enemy forces which under the command of general Erasmo Escala disembarked in that town and by the 19<sup>th</sup> of November succeeded in overcoming their adversaries led by general Buendía. These events determined the end of the Daza’s government in Bolivia and that of Prado in Peru which were respectively replaced in the first case by Narciso Campero and by Nicolás de Piérola in the second.

However, the Chilean army turned out to dominate the second phase of the war (December 1879- June 1880) as well, during which they won the gory battle of Tacna on May 26th, 1880 where more than 10.000 soldiers died<sup>77</sup>. This battle matched with the Chilean occupation of the river Sama Valley, which very important from a strategical point of view and, in the end, forced Bolivia to exit the conflict. A few days after the battle of Tacna, 7.000 Chileans conquered through naval support Morro de Arica on June 7, beheading more than 400 soldiers out of 1800 defenders who, under the command of the Peruvian coronel Francisco Bolognesi, tried to stop the Chilean advance<sup>78</sup>. Anyhow, it is important to say that between the battle of Tacna and Arica on one side and the terrestrial clashes at the beginning of 1881 on the other, Chile, Peru and Bolivia tried to find a diplomatic

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<sup>72</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>73</sup> J.M. Camacho, *Historia de Bolivia*, p.310

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883*, p. 48

<sup>76</sup> J.M. Camacho, *Historia de Bolivia*, p.311

<sup>77</sup> Di Cio, Miguel Angel, *Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883*, p. 48

<sup>78</sup> J.M. Camacho, *Historia de Bolivia*, p.323

solution and to finally put an end to the war; but unfortunately, the process of negotiation was unsuccessful and the conflict went on. Hence, in order to reach their economic and strategic objectives, after the Chilean victories in the battles of Chorillos and Miraflores in January 1881, general Baquedano forces started the so-called campaign of Lima which lasted until 1884 and corresponds to the third phase.

During the fourth and last period of the war hard-die nationalistic groups of guerrillas sprouted up in Peru and opposed a strong resistance to the occupying Chilean army. During this phase, outstanding figures like the coronel Avelino Cáceres were those who spurred the conservation of some patriotic identity and even played an important role in resisting the enemy, attracting the Chileans troops in regions where it was almost impossible for them to operate due to the inhospitable natural scenario and the opposition of the local populations. However, this topic will be better discussed in the final part of the dissertation and for this reason we prefer to conclude the narration of the conflict by analysing its consequences in Peru and Bolivia.

### *2.2.3 The war is over: conclusion and consequences*

For what concerns Bolivia, the military defeat of its allied led to an armistice between Santiago and La Paz on the 4th of April 1884 which finally ended the hostilities and put under the control of Chile of those territories which fell “between the 23rd parallel and mouth of the river Loa in the Pacific”<sup>79</sup>. In other words, Bolivia not only lost the possibility to economically exploit the facilities between parallels 23rd and 24th but also its access to the ocean. In addition, it is interesting to observe that the negotiations among the two countries aimed at reaching a normalization in the relations continued until October 1904, when finally, the definitive treaty of peace between Chile and Bolivia was signed, establishing the official Bolivian recognition of the regions which had been until then under Chilean occupation<sup>80</sup>. From a political point of view, the conflict provoked the end of “caudillismo” and led to the establishment of a modern parliamentary political system, although the sudden violent attempts of the military to seize power from the legitimate government were about to remain a recurrent pattern until 1934<sup>81</sup>. Though, the very

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<sup>79</sup> Extraídas de Eyzaguirre Jaime, *BREVE HISTORIA DE LAS FRONTERAS DE CHILE*, p.72

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>81</sup> Klein, Herbert S., *A concise history of BOLIVIA*, pp. 143 y 144



change in internal affairs it is not just the result of the armed struggle with Chile, but it is the product of several transformation at the economic level which had already begun approximately thirty years before<sup>82</sup>, for instance the increase in the exportations firstly of silver and, in a second moment, of stain.

With regards to Peru, only in October 1883 Chile successfully signed a treaty of peace in Lima, sanctioning the loss of the Tarapacá regions which, from this moment, had become territorially part of Chile. Furthermore, Lima had to give in to Santiago's rule the administration of other two regions, Tacna and Arica, for a ten-year period at the end of which a plebiscite ought to be held to decide the destiny of those areas. Also in this case too, further doubts and incomprehension would have been solved only many years later with a treaty signed in 1929<sup>83</sup>. Anyway, the fifty years which followed the Ten Cents War can be considered as seminal to the hatching of modern Peru. It is a period of intense economic modernization, characterized by very important changes for what concerns the nature of the political and social structure as well. Moreover, new elites emerged, whose political interests coincided with the ideas of the Civil Party or Partido Civilista<sup>84</sup>.

### **2.3 An expansionary conflict?**

The Pacific War cannot simply be studied as parted from the global geopolitical dynamics, but should be viewed as the intention "to reaffirm the economic control over the Spanish ex-colonial possessions situated in the Pacific, within the framework of the expanding English capitalist system"<sup>85</sup>. Therefore, countries like Bolivia and Peru from the middle of the XIX century had the difficult task but also the precious opportunity to oversee the exploitation of enormous deposits of guano and saltpetre. Though, they were not, as we demonstrated before, modern and developed states and were far from being integrated into the global market. Yet European investors, in particular British companies, understood the importance these natural resources had and knew how to take advantage of the semi-feudal system which characterized these regions. It was mainly due to this reason that

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<sup>82</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p.

<sup>83</sup> Eyzaguirre, Jaime, *BREVE HISTORIA DE LAS FRONTERAS DE CHILE*, p.75

<sup>84</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p. 233

<sup>85</sup> Fernández, Edgar Oblitas, *Historia Secreta de la Guerra del Pacífico*, 1978, p. 83

initially several English firms tried to penetrate into the economies of Peru and Bolivia, but their governing administrations did not perceive the great significance of such an occasion<sup>86</sup>.

Instead, Chilean authorities welcomed the incoming flow of capital; this attitude explains why they started to strategically organize several exploratory expeditions, while spurring firms to move to those desolated lands. The idea was to draw a clear border with Bolivia but one that territorially and economically favoured Santiago. In fact, the company on which Bolivia exacted a ten cents tariff was backed by British investors<sup>87</sup>, who did their best to make pressures on the Chilean government to solve the dispute. The basic idea was to avoid any obstacle to the advance of such private interest. In other words, the Chileans were giving in to the aims of powerful private enterprises which could also count on an incredibly efficient diplomatic machine; a Hegelian philosopher would say that the administration and those foreign companies were in a Master–slave relation.

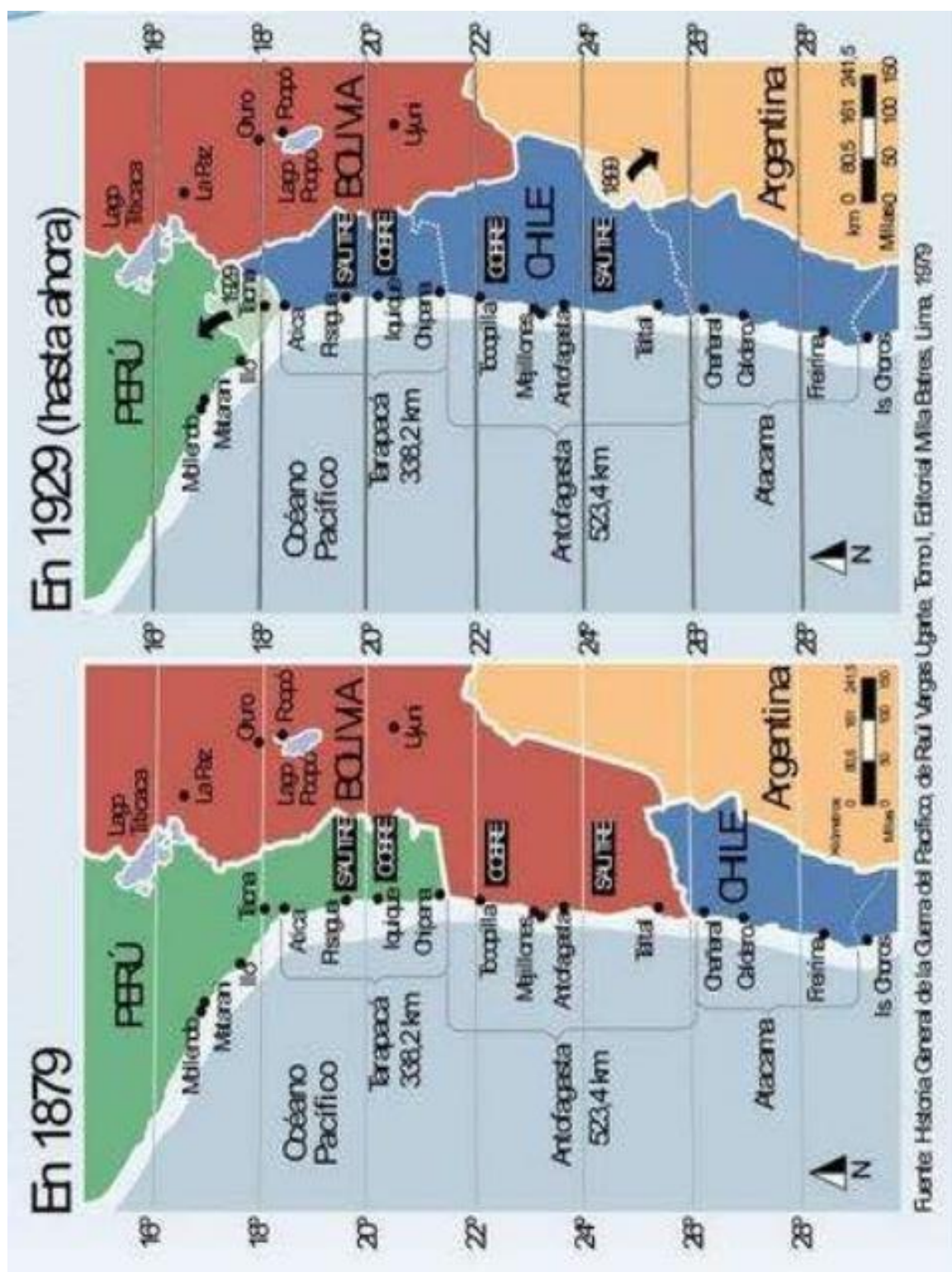
Therefore, it is correct to consider the conquest of the Bolivian coastal territories as the formalization of what until then had been a *de facto* Chilean colony<sup>88</sup>, thanks to the efforts of the foreign capital for the creation of an extensive area favorable to their economic activities. In conclusion, although the only viable way Chile had to expand its national territory was at the expenses of its northern neighbours, the war against Peru was among the first which presented undisputable post-imperialistic features, since was blatantly incentivized by some of the most influencing European powers.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>87</sup> Vease en tal sentido Di Cio, Miguel Angel, Chile contra Bolivia y Perú, 1879-1883, pp. 29,30 y 31.

<sup>88</sup> Klein, Herbert S., A concise history of BOLIVIA, p. 143



## Chapter III

### *A troublesome legacy*

#### 3.1 Turmoil and revolts in Northern Peru

Once Chile succeeded in occupying Lima, with the support of the Chilean army, Francisco García Calderón had been elected chief of the government. In the meanwhile, Cáceres started to organize his resisting forces in the mountainous region of the Sierra Central<sup>89</sup>. As Heraclio Bonilla argues, in case of foreign occupation Peruvian indigenous populations possess the capacity to put aside the particularistic differences which characterize those social groups and to adopt a firm nationalistic attitude<sup>90</sup>. Surprisingly, the war did not simply mean an outright humiliation on the battlefields and the guerrilla groups of Cáceres for the patriotic defence of the nation, but caused an economic and social crisis which highlighted the political difficulties Peru had to face.

Moreover, it is interesting to observe that in 1885 in the department of Ancash in the north-central highlands of Peru a major uprising broke out; the revolt was led by Pedro Pablo Atusparia and spread in almost all the valley known as Callejón de Huaylas. The reasons behind the decision of the indigenous leader to start the Peasant Revolution of Huaraz are to be seen in the fiscal policy reform resolution of the then chief of the executive Iglesias; in particular, the fact that it reintroduced the “personal indigenous contribution”, generally known as the indigenous tribute<sup>91</sup>. Another loathed old-fashioned measure was the return to of the so-called “corvée laboral” as during the extinguished Spanish Empire. Consequently, Atusparia which took part in the civil war on the side of Cáceres opposed the implementation of those outdated colonial institutions and called up a rural army which eventually succeeded in occupying the departmental capital.

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<sup>89</sup> Bonilla, Heraclio, *The Indian Peasantry and “Perú” during the War with Chile*, extracted from Stern Steve, *Resistance, rebellion, and consciousness in the Andean peasant world, 18th to 20th centuries*, cap. 8, p. 223

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 224

<sup>91</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p. 239.

The lurking cause of this revolution was the War of the Pacific, which determined a major budgetary crisis and, as one may expect, impoverished all social classes. The immediate cause were the abuses of the prefect Francisco Noriega, which, as we said before, adopted several old-fashioned measures “to restore the war-torn economy of the area and at the same time profit himself. He forced the Indians to work for him and on public works projects without remuneration, altered the tax system, imposed a monopoly on the sale of salt, made the locals pay for new plaques after he had the streets renumbered, and allowed the police to take the Indians' animals and crops without payment. His most unpopular act was to reimpose the hated personal contribution”<sup>92</sup>. In addition, the indigenous population feared to get into debt with the great landowners of the Callejón de Huaylas, as it occurred in the past, to pay the new tax and for which, given the situation, they had to beg for monetary support to the opulent “hacendados”<sup>93</sup>.

In February 1885, about forty indigenous leaders from the villages and farmers around Huaraz sent a list of complaints to Noriega. This list lamented the non-abolition of the compulsory forced labour to carry out public works, tariffs on salt and the reintroduction of the personal contribution. Regarding this aspect, they did not expect the abolition of it but they strongly desired that at least it should be limited only to a single person<sup>94</sup>. However, this memorial was far from being an outright declaration of war on the state, nor a revolutionary manifest; it was simply an invitation to peacefully negotiate. Yet, Noriega, who was not disposed to deal with them made a huge error, he ordered the imprisonment of Pedro Pablo Atusparia, major of Marián and one of the indigenous leaders that signed the document, with the excuse that he refused to supply the barracks of Huaraz with straw<sup>95</sup>.

Not happy with this, Noriega also ordered that Atusparia should be tortured to confess of being the real author of the list of complaints. However, Blanchard argues that Noriega wanted to know who were the other alcaldes that signed the

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<sup>92</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century, The Americas* 38.04 (1982), p.454

<sup>93</sup> Landowner.

<sup>94</sup> L. Klaiber S.J., Jeffrey, *RELIGION Y REVOLUCIONEN LOS ANDES EN EL SIGLO XIX*, HISTORICA, Vol I, Núm. I, Julio de 1977, p. 101

<sup>95</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century, The Americas* 38.04 (1982), p.454

declaration and, for this purpose, he did not refrain from torturing him<sup>96</sup>. Later, when fourteen indigenous leaders asked before him the liberation of Atusparia, he sent all of them to jail, but after some other excess that exacerbated further the situation he decided to release them.

However, the first of March, a mass of raging indigenous people descended from the hills and started pillaging the economic activities of the Asian people in a district of Huaraz, but soon the army succeeded in quelling the rebellion. Though in that very night the hills surrounding the town were brightening with the light of the bonfires. The following day 8,000 indigenous armed with pitchfork, slings, machetes and some guns captured from the Chileans conquered Huaraz. After the battle the streets of the town were plentiful of dead soldiers and indigenous but only few defenders managed to escape the fury of the locals<sup>97</sup>; among them Noriega, disguised as a peasant, reached the coast and then the capital Lima. Atusparia, as soon as he became the leader of this movement and after the conquest of Huaraz, sent emissaries throughout the Callejón de Huaylas to spread the revolutionary scope and include more and more people to the cause.

Within days other 101 revolts flared in the Callejón and nearby<sup>98</sup>, following the example of Huaraz. The lieutenant of Atusparia was Pedro Cochachín, or better known as "Uchcu Pedro", a mine-worker from Carhuaz. Atusparia and Uchcu Pedro controlled almost all the Callejón and conquered many little urban centers as Carhuaz, Yungay, Caraz and other little villages. Although some white people and mestizos took part in the revolution, the uprising was essentially an indigenous upheaval from the beginning to its end. Indeed, towards the end of March the Huaylas had been safely secured under the command of Pedro Pablo Atusparia and his revolutionary army<sup>99</sup>.

"The aims of the Indians were mixed. From Lima it appeared that they wanted to create an Indian republic. El Comercio reported that the Indians had issued a decree claiming to be the sole owners of Peru and that they were going to restore their lost

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<sup>96</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century*, *The Americas* 38.04 (1982), p. 454.

<sup>97</sup> L. Klaiber S.J., Jeffrey, *RELIGION Y REVOLUCION EN LOS ANDES EN EL SIGLO XIX*, *HISTORICA*, Vol I, Núm. I, Julio de 1977, p. 101.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*.

rights. This was not true of Atusparia. His primary concern seemed to be to end the oppression by local officials”<sup>100</sup>. On the contrary “Uchcu Pedro, who wanted more basic changes. He seemed determined to recreate an Indian state, allowing only Quechua speakers into his army and calling for the elimination of the white population and the destruction of their property. When his forces captured Yungay in April they massacred soldiers and white civilians and looted stores. Another goal may have been to overthrow the government of General Iglesias. Some among Atusparia's staff had ties with Caceres and tried to transform the rebellion into a pro-Caceres movement. However, they had little success and won only a few adherents<sup>101</sup>”.

Scholars claim that it was this difference among the leaders to constitute a dividing element which curtailed the strength of the movement. As a consequence, the regular forces managed to suppress the riot and retake the control of Huarás. They also captured Atusparia, while Uchcu Pedro escaped and reorganized some guerrilla groups and kept carry on several attacks to the industries in the area and other infrastructures. Unfortunately, he was betrayed by a friend and after being captured he was executed. This revolt provoked a high number of deaths: more than 3000 indigenous people died in the battlefields and many others were executed by the government.<sup>102</sup> However, the rebellion was not successful and although some improvements were won, inequalities and abuses continued. Surprisingly, the indigenous populations deemed their leaders responsible for the catastrophe and soon pleaded for the election of new alcaldes to replace those who died or escaped.

Indeed, it was one of the most interesting and unforeseen rebellion in this area since Túpac Amaru’s age. Several accounts about the destiny of Atusparia were made and some newspapers such as *El Comercio* reported in 1886 that the former alcalde moved to Lima, where he was now living worried that someone might attempt to his life if he returned to the Callejon. Other newspapers narrated his death by 1887 and are somehow contradictory<sup>103</sup>. However, this was not the only case of local

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<sup>100</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century, The Americas* 38.04 (1982), p.455.

<sup>101</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>103</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century, The Americas* 38.04 (1982), p. 455.

officials' exploitation; similar cases were common in this country, but none provoked such a violent result as that in the Callejon de Huaylas. For instance, excessive exactions led to many complaints by the indigenous populations also in Huancavelica in 1886 and in Barranca the following year. Even Tarma experienced one in 1896.

These abuses triggered the fury of the people in other areas; for example, in 1887 the governor of the district of Carhuamayo was assassinated for he obliged local villagers to work on his lands for free and introduced new fees with the excuse of supporting district's primary schools. Another case happened in September 1888, where many mine workers in Cerro de Pasco rioted since the local authorities arrested many indigenous on the streets and forced them to work in the mines for ten days under the command of a whip; they could come out from that troublesome situation only if they payed a fine. Finally, the government started a series of investigations to know more about the nature of these protests appointing a judge to this end, but the normalization of the relation with the rural indigenous communities was still far as the events of August 1889 demonstrated; the indigenous of Lambayeque went on strike after being forced to repair the course of a river<sup>104</sup>.

### **3.2 Towards pacification.**

These massive uprisings, along with the of frustration for the military defeat and the lack of enthusiasm, dramatically weakened the government of Iglesias. Without sufficient economic resources and identified more and more with the defeat, Iglesias finally gave up in December 1885 in a moment when Cáceres and his forces were very close to conquer Lima. Four months later, without opposition, he was elected president. The new president had made an incredible effort to reconstruct Peru and face all the post-war difficulties of a defeated country. Peru was economically in trouble, as the national budget was reduced from 74 million pesos before the war to a nominal level that varied from 1 to 13 million pesos in the ten years after the conflict<sup>105</sup>. Fortunately, the military governments managed to find a solution to the budgetary crisis by leaving the administration of mines, railways,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibidem, p. 456.

<sup>105</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p. 239.



harbours to the foreign creditors of Peru adopting developing models which were not suitable to this Andean context. However, this simplistic strategy revealed the hasty character of the military rule which did not resemble from selling pieces of the economic backbone of Peru<sup>106</sup>.

Moreover, this extended period of political and social crisis, eventually was one of the elements that favoured the establishment of a military regime which was about to last from 1866 until 1895. This was a period of reflections about what had been the real cause of the national disaster; Peruvians started an intense debate concerning the reconstruction and the future of the country which by this moment had to follow the decisions of Cáceres<sup>107</sup>. Eventually, in 1895 Nicolás de Piérola led the revolt against the military rule and after a bloody civil war, which caused the death of an incredible number of people, was elected president on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September of the same year. Soon became clear that he was no longer the hard-die opponent of the Civilista Party; instead he adopted several measures which followed the conjectured of this political force. For instance, he implemented an interesting monetary reform which introduced the gold standard in Peru; favouring commercial relations of import-export on one side but for several popular sectors of the society it meant a relatively deterioration of their economic conditions.

In addition, he also modernized the tax system charging private agencies with the collection<sup>108</sup>; the necessity of this reform had already become clear during the previous years and even Cáceres was forced to admit the difficulty of this usual task. Yet, his government tried to solve this problem by creating *ad hoc* rural police, but, due to the effective lack of metal coinage in circulation and by the fact that the indigenous communities refused to accept devalued paper bills for their wages whenever they engaged in working activities to procure the money exacted this measure lacked of efficacy. For this reason, they often could not afford to pay taxes or simply refused to work for it<sup>109</sup>. These reforms were part of Piérola's endeavour to create an administrative system more suitable to the necessities of the country. In particular, his policies helped the various sectors that composed the Peruvian

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<sup>106</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 305.

<sup>107</sup> Bethell, Leslie, *Historia de América Latina*, volumen 10, c.1870-1930, p. 340

<sup>108</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 305.

<sup>109</sup> Blanchard, Peter, *Indian Unrest in the Peruvian Sierra in the Late Nineteenth Century*, *The Americas* 38.04 (1982): 449-462, p. 458.

economy to recover and expand, but, not surprisingly, not everybody could enjoy this great prosperity; while the aristocratic elite in Lima occupied the top of the pyramid and the landowners still controlled a huge chunk of resources, the working class could only smell it. Not to say, the rural indigenous communities were almost completely excluded from this developing process, except those people that decided to move to the coast and work in the plantations<sup>110</sup>.

Although also Bolivia experimented a harsh post-war period, Peru turned into a major social cockpit where old and new problems smothered any attempt of redemption. In the case of Lima, the incapability of realizing a modern society were continuously frustrated by the lack of an efficient administration and a sense of nationalism that characterized other countries like Chile, as we said.

Moreover, given the post-imperialistic nature of the Ten Cents conflict, the case of Peru is a precious example that demonstrates the impossibility of creating a world order where integration and tolerance are no longer a dream, insofar that complex economic and political processes determine a tragic oppression of people with the ultimate end ~~that~~ of making profits. González Prada, the father of modern Peruvian nationalism, believed that without a far-sighted social revolution that liberated the oppressed indigenous populations it is even hard to conceive the emergence of an integrated society in Peru. Therefore, the first thing to do, according to Prada, would have been to remove the exploitative shackles imposed by the great landowners on the rural communities. However, Prada's ideas can have a much greater scope than that of imagining the future of his country; his concepts may prove very useful in inspiring next generations of politicians and in determining the future of supranational institutions and their achievements.

For this reason, we consider the War of the Pacific still an actual topic and wrote a concise account of the most relevant revolutionary event in this area from the era of Tupac Amaru II, to stimulate further investigations on how post-colonial institutions affected the economy and the relations among individuals. In conclusion, Peru did not only experiment an explosive revolt but had to deal with a recurring pattern of revolution which was to become much more common in the following century's conflict aftermaths.

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<sup>110</sup> Halperin Donghi, Tulio, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, p. 305.

## **Conclusion**

The south of modern Bolivia and Peru by the end of 1870s became the scenario of a conflict that involved Bolivia and Peru on one side and Chile on the other to control the exploitation of guano and saltpetre. The Ten Cents War is a Janus-faced conflict for both nationalistic and post-imperialistic elements can be founded. For this reason, it is a case study that deserves particular attention not only in Latin America but should be considered a key point of modern contemporary history. In order to facilitate the comprehension of this study we decided to introduce the reader into the main aspects and problems of the age.

Regarding Bolivia, the situation after the independence was worrisome and there were difficulties both at the economic and political levels. The country which had for such a long time been under the Spanish colonial rule was by the mid of XIX century in an even worse condition than before the disruption of the Empire, despite the unexpected flourishing of the indigenous communities' commercial activities. Eventually, Bolivia along with Peru tried to carry out the ambitious project of uniting in a Confederation; but Chile that feared the military power and the economic weight of it intervened twice in the 1830s to annihilate this national entity. Although it was a period of frequent insurrections, after 1850s Bolivia's economy started to develop at a steady rate, but society still maintained its colonial structure and power was still in the hands of the oligarchic military elite.

Likewise, the legacy of colonialism in Peru was a huge obstacle to the consolidation of national political institutions and the emergence of a real patriotic spirit in recently independent Peru. Lima's political life consisted mainly in the struggle between the different factions of the creole elite to seize power and defend their interests. Peruvian economy went through many difficulties after the independence war, but thanks to guano it succeeded in reverting its fortune and begin an interesting process of modernization and development which was unfortunately interrupted by the tragic events of the Pacific War. Concerning Chile, this country enjoyed a surprising political and economic stability which was mainly based on the peculiar composition of the army. In fact, Santiago's army accepted to remain the military expression of the nation and did not saw itself as the guardian of the internal order. Yet Chile was all but without problems as the sprouting of new social groups demonstrated. The increasing population and the alarming separation

between parties but also the complex and problematic situation of the 1870s threatened to transform Chile into an explosive social battlefield. Therefore, a vent valve was needed to prevent any disrupting energy to harm the solidity of the Nation and once again a war against Bolivia and Peru saved the country from civil war.

Considering the causes of the conflict, we conclude that although Chile had good reasons to go at war and expand at the expenses of its northern neighbours, we believe that Santiago cannot be deemed responsible for it. Instead, Chilean forces were not ready for war and, although they performed their tasks superbly, several foreign enterprises played an important role in provoking and spreading the conflict since the only thing they cared of were their profits. Not surprisingly, when Bolivia due to its budgetary difficulties seemed to put at risk these, nothing could prevent them to galvanize the military spirit of the Chilean counterpart to intervene. However, we also think that the lack of coordination between the three countries may be considered the real cause for the war, and that this geographically remote event was not fully analyzed by those European states that on 1914 became the protagonists of WWI. In fact, the Ten Cents War demonstrates that an armed struggle can never be considered a good solution to internal and external disputes. To this end it is important to remember that supranational institution can limit the abuses of extreme realism in foreign politics.

We also decided to introduce the reader to one of the most surprising rebellions in South America since the War of the Pacific is also a war of states that were looking for an identity whether economically or socially. In particular, the post-colonial nature of the conflict highlighted the internal social weaknesses and the necessity to remove all the constraints and discriminating elements that oppressed the indigenous communities as during the age of the Spanish domination; exactly this was the spirit that animated Atusparia and many other leaders to rebel. The ultimate purpose of this study is to give European and North American scholars the possibility to contribute to a complex debate which until now has been unknown to many. In conclusion, these topics are open to new and more far-reaching investigations that this modest literary work tried to stimulate.

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## **Riassunto**

**La Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi:**

**un conflitto espansionistico o post-coloniale?**

## **Introduzione**

Negli ultimi decenni del XIX secolo, la costa sudamericana del Pacifico si faceva teatro di una diatriba tra Bolivia, Perù e Chile, conosciuta come la Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi o Guerra del Pacifico (1879 – 1884). Alla base del conflitto c'era il controllo di due risorse al tempo strategiche per l'agricoltura e la produzione di esplosivi: il guano ed il salnitro. Tali risorse si trovavano nel deserto di Atacama, in terra di confine. Nonostante tale conflitto sia avvenuto più di un secolo fa, è interessante da analizzare a causa delle sue caratteristiche: infatti, alcuni studiosi lo identificano come uno scontro tra tre stati-nazione, mentre altri lo identificano come un moderno conflitto post-coloniale. Entrambe le interpretazioni evidenziano considerazioni interessanti sulla natura dello stato moderno e post-moderno.

La qui presente tesi di laurea triennale si limiterà ad analizzare due periodi: il primo riguardante gli anni tra le guerre d'indipendenza e la Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi, prendendo in considerazione singolarmente i tre stati e le loro crisi economico-politiche; il secondo periodo invece si occuperà della guerra vera e propria e delle conseguenze che ha scaturito.

La ricerca è finalizzata a rispondere alla seguente domanda: il Cile ha provocato deliberatamente la guerra? Per rispondere, metteremo a confronto i punti di vista di due studiosi: il cileno Francisco A. Encina ed il peruviano Jorge Basadre, per poter stabilire se la suddetta guerra rivesta il ruolo di battaglia in difesa degli interessi delle potenze coloniali o sia semplicemente una guerra di espansione.

La Guerra del Pacifico ha importanza perché può essere considerata la prima di una lunga serie di scontri per il controllo di materie prime a basso prezzo, che fino ad oggi, non hanno ancora avuto fine. Inoltre, la qui presente tesi vuole sottolineare come le istituzioni sovranazionali siano importanti a fine di evitare le ambizioni, a volte estreme, di singoli paesi. Infatti, è stato proprio a causa del mancato coordinamento diplomatico ed il desiderio di potere economico che Bolivia, Cile e Perù si sono scontrati l'un l'altro. Sfortunatamente, tali eventi non sono stati d'esempio per l'Europa, la quale, nel 1914, si è ritrovata protagonista di una tragedia ancora più grande. Forse, se le nazioni coinvolte nelle due guerre mondiali avessero dato più importanza a rendere la diplomazia un mezzo solido per la



risoluzione di tensioni e conflitti, imparando così dalla Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi, la scienza non si sarebbe occupata dello sviluppo di macchine da guerra così letali.

## **Capitolo 1: La situazione politica ed economica della Bolivia, del Perù e del Cile dopo la fine del potere coloniale (1820-1870)**

**1.1 Bolivia.** Dopo la dichiarazione di indipendenza dell'allora Alto Perù nel 1825, la nazione si trovava in serie difficoltà socio-economiche: non solo aveva perso macchinari, molte miniere ed altre strutture strategiche erano state distrutte, ma doveva misurarsi con la perdita dei sussidi imperiali ed il monopolio delle esportazioni d'argento e l'imposizione di nuove tariffe doganali. Fino alla metà del secolo, i problemi persisteranno impedendo al paese di svilupparsi economicamente.

Nel 1829, Andrés de Santa Cruz diventa presidente della Bolivia: il suo progetto consisteva nel realizzare una Confederazione Peru-Boliviana, ma, non potendola realizzare per vie diplomatiche, decide di ottenerla invadendo il Perù nel 1836 e riuscendo nel suo intento. La mossa del presidente boliviano provocò allarme nel Chile, il quale si sentiva minacciato nella sua supremazia commerciale e militare: quest'ultimo strinse un'alleanza con l'Argentina e dichiarò guerra a de Santa Cruz nel 1837. L'invasione non ebbe successo, ma l'anno successivo il Cile ritentò l'impresa, stavolta supportato da generali peruviani quali Gamarra e Castilla, e finalmente riuscì nel proprio intento. La Confederazione si sciolse sul finire del 1839 ed il Perù tornò a essere governato da Gamarra. In una certa misura, questo scontro può essere considerato come l'archetipo della futura Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi.

Dal 1850, nonostante frequenti sommosse, la Bolivia vide crescere le sue esportazioni minerarie fino a farla tornare, attorno al 1880, uno dei più grandi produttori di argento, favorendo così il risanamento dell'economia nazionale.

**1.2 Perù.** L'eredità coloniale del Perù rappresentò, anche a decenni dall'indipendenza, la causa principale del mancato consolidamento della nazione: le lotte per il potere tra i vari gruppi che formavano l'élite creola rendevano impossibile la riuscita di politiche finalizzate alla coesione.

Il libero mercato dapprima fu nemico del Perù, il quale non riusciva a sostenere la competizione sui prezzi dei macchinari provenienti dall'estero e quindi si indeboliva economicamente. Dagli anni quaranta del 1800 però il Perù si sviluppò notevolmente grazie all'esportazione di guano, che si rivelò una preziosa fonte di guadagno dal momento in cui gli stati europei, nordamericani e asiatici iniziarono ad interessarsi delle sue qualità di fertilizzante. Infatti, il guano per il Perù divenne l'ancora di salvezza per uno stato senza nessun accumulo di capitale né risparmi.

Dal 1847, Lima riuscì a moltiplicare i guadagni, stabilizzando così il budget nazionale e, già nel 1848, riuscendo a ripagare il suo debito estero: tutto questo grazie al guano. Lo sfruttamento di tale risorsa era nelle mani di varie compagnie private che pagavano lo stato per poterlo estrarre, trasportare e vendere. Dal 1869 però il presidente de Pièrola stipulò un contratto con la compagnia francese Dreyfus, garantendole il monopolio sul guano in cambio di prestiti per far fronte ai debiti dell'amministrazione pubblica. Questo aumentò i livelli di corruzione e tra coloro che più criticavano questo dilagante fenomeno c'era Manuel Pardo, il fondatore de *partido civilista*, che proponeva di reinvestire i guadagni nella costruzione di infrastrutture.

Negli anni settanta del 1800, una grave crisi economica colpì il paese e Pardo che seppe abilmente cavalcare il malcontento fu eletto nuovo presidente nel 1872. Sfortunatamente, il nuovo governo non era in grado di promuovere nessuna riforma politica senza dover coinvolgere enti internazionali come la Banca Internazionale e la bancarotta rimaneva una preoccupazione costante. Per questo si può affermare che il Perù prese parte alla Guerra del Pacifico già sconfitto sul piano economico-politico.

**1.3 Cile.** Il Cile è il solo in America Latina a vantare una notevole stabilità politico-istituzionale grazie ad un efficiente sistema multipartitico che prese piede sin dall'indipendenza della nazione. Tale sistema acquisì sicurezza quando i ruoli di governo ed esercito furono ben delineati: l'esercito era l'espressione della nazione, mentre il governo dell'ordine interno. In tale contesto, l'esercito accettò di rimanere al di fuori della vita politica a condizione che la presidenza venisse assegnata ad un generale o esponente delle forze armate.

Il Cile ed il suo nazionalismo hanno molto più in comune con l'Impero Asburgico del XX secolo che con i suoi vicini Perù e Bolivia, nonostante nessun gruppo etnico di discendenti europei occupasse una posizione privilegiata. È da notare però che, una volta raggiunta l'indipendenza, il Cile era diviso in due classi soltanto, i creoli benestanti e l'élite spagnola da una parte – i quali, dal 1841, si arricchivano tramite l'agricoltura e l'industria mineraria – ed i gruppi più svantaggiati di mestizos e altri, mentre le popolazioni indigene conducevano una vita a sé.

L'élite era formata dall'aristocrazia latifondiarista; in parte da coloro che erano emigrati in Cile dopo la proclamazione d'indipendenza e in parte dai “hobres nuevos” che formavano invece la borghesia. Tra i due gruppi vi fu tensione fino a quando non decisero di condividere sia il potere politico e lo sfruttamento delle risorse naturali, rispettando gli interessi gli uni degli altri. La classe media si occupava principalmente dell'industria e dei servizi, e dalla metà del 1800 occupò un ruolo sempre più importante nella produzione nazionale ed ebbe una voce sempre più forte a livello politico. La classe bassa rappresentava invece il cuore dell'industria.

La crescita economica del Cile permise al governo di costruire infrastrutture nazionali e di investire nell'istruzione e nel mantenimento dell'ordine pubblico, la cui amministrazione però creò divisioni tra i partiti. Oltre a questo, altri fattori contribuirono a tensioni interne, come la rocambolesca crescita della popolazione che raggiunse i due milioni prima dello scoppio della guerra e l'avvento di nuove classi sociali avidi di affermarsi, come la borghesia.

## **Capitolo 2: Dalla pace alla guerra**

**2.1 Il fallimento delle relazioni diplomatiche.** Come abbiamo detto, dagli anni quaranta del 1800, il guano ed il salnitro rivestirono un gran ruolo nello sviluppo economico di Perù, Bolivia e Cile. Il problema però consisteva nel fatto che i maggiori giacimenti di tali risorse naturali si trovavano in una zona deserta ed inospitale dove i confini non erano stati ben definiti. Così, dal 1842, il Cile iniziò ad intraprendere viaggi di esplorazione per poter disegnare una volta per tutte e a proprio favore i confini settentrionali. Si preoccuparono inoltre di dar vita ad insediamenti cileni, una mossa strategica che ben presto saprà dare i suoi frutti.

Le relazioni tra Cile e Bolivia si fecero sempre più tese, fino a spingere le due controparti a intraprendere un lungo processo di negoziati tra gli anni sessanta e settanta del 1800. Nel 1863 la Bolivia sarebbe stata pronta a proclamare guerra al Cile se quest'ultimo non si fosse ritirato dai territori occupati. Tale intento dovette però essere accantonato per fronteggiare la minaccia spagnola; nel 1874, Cile e Bolivia firmarono un trattato che stabiliva il 24° parallelo come confine e imponeva che la tariffa sulle esportazioni sarebbe rimasta la stessa dalla stipulazione del trattato.

Nel 1878 la Bolivia, cercando di aumentare le proprie entrate fiscali, promulgò una legge che stabiliva una tassa fissa di dieci centesimi per ogni quintale di salnitro esportato. Il trattato del 1874 non era stato rispettato ed il Cile reagì minacciando la Bolivia con l'annullamento. Quest'ultima rispose ordinando all'ambasciatore cileno di lasciare la Paz, mentre il Cile iniziava a preparare l'esercito per occupare Antofagasta. La situazione si era ulteriormente complicata con la decisione da parte del Perù di rispettare l'alleanza segreta con la Bolivia al fine di evitare che il Cile si allearse con quest'ultima e dover affrontare una duplice minaccia.

## **2.2 La guerra ha inizio.**

*2.2.1 Preparazione militare.* Gli studiosi hanno punti di vista discordanti sulla preparazione del Cile alla guerra: Camacho sostiene che fosse già pronto e aspettasse il momento adatto, Di Cio ritiene che la preparazione del Cile non fosse migliore di quella di Perù e Bolivia – data la crisi degli anni settanta del 1800 – e Bethell osserva che non fosse preparato né politicamente né economicamente. Quello che il Cile aveva era un forte sentimento nazionalista, cosa che Bolivia e Perù non avevano. L'unico elemento che suggerisce una preparazione è la corsa alle navi da guerra di Cile e Perù. Tuttavia, per il Cile sarebbe stato quasi inevitabile proiettare le proprie ambizioni territoriali verso nord, è più opportuno credere che la corsa all'ultimo ritrovato in termini di corazzate fosse in realtà volta a contrappesare la crescente potenza navale dell'Argentina.

In quel tempo, data la crisi socio-politica nella quale verteva il Cile, si è pensato che una vittoria militare avrebbe potuto evitare il crollo della nazione. Ma il Cile è davvero il responsabile della guerra? Per trovare una risposta, analizzeremo i punti di vista del cileno Encina e del peruviano Basadre. Da un lato, lo studioso Jorge

Basadre sostiene che un conflitto contro la Bolivia sarebbe stato salvifico per il Cile, e avrebbe risparmiato alla nazione sommosse interne e un conflitto sociale, come osserva Vergara nelle sue memorie. A questo proposito, è interessante notare come vi siano delle similitudini con la situazione dell'Austria durante la Prima Guerra Mondiale. Il diplomatico Andrian-Werburg sosteneva infatti che solo una guerra avrebbe salvato l'Austria e storici come Evans o Fellner ritengono che l'Austria abbia agito unendo la sua leadership militare e civile e si sia servita dell'assassinio di Francesco Ferdinando come un pretesto per una guerra per salvare le sorti del paese. Dall'altro lato, Francisco A. Encina sostiene che il Cile non fosse preparato per uno scontro né stesse organizzando piani di espansione: la guerra lo aveva colto di sorpresa, i comandanti erano senza esperienza e senza risorse, al contrario di ciò che succedeva in Europa; in Prussia, tanto per fare un esempio, già si sarebbe saputo in caso di guerra dove andare a prendere le munizioni, come rifornire le truppe dei materiali necessari o quale strategia adottare. A questo proposito, Encina critica il politico cileno Vicuña Mackenna, il quale pretendeva l'immediata conquista di Lima senza tener conto delle difficoltà logistiche.

In conclusione, non possiamo considerare il Cile il responsabile della guerra, anche se la sua situazione interna trasse benefici dallo scontro. Invece, numerose imprese estere favorirono lo scoppio del conflitto, dal momento che avevano a cuore solo i propri interessi.

*2.2.2 La lotta armata ha inizio.* Il conflitto può essere diviso in quattro periodi. Il primo è contraddistinto da scontri navali nei quali dapprima il Perù e i suoi alleati sembrano resistere, ma poi la marina cilena ha la meglio. Nello stesso periodo ha luogo la campagna di Tarapacà (1879), caratterizzata dalla resistenza peruviana a terra. Nella seconda fase (1879-1880) il Cile domina la situazione, sconfiggendole forze dell'alleanza nella battaglia di Tacna e nel conflitto navale di Arica. La terza fase (1881-1884) è la cosiddetta campagna di Lima mentre la quarta corrisponde alla resistenza peruviana (1884).

*2.2.3 La guerra è finita: conclusione e conseguenze.* La guerra si concluse con l'armistizio della Bolivia e dei suoi alleati il 4 aprile 1884. La Bolivia non solo perse la possibilità di accampare i propri diritti nei territori compresi tra 23° e 24° parallelo, ma anche l'accesso al mare. Il trattato di pace definitivo fu firmato solo nel 1904,

dopo lunghi negoziati al termine dei quali la Bolivia riconobbe al Cile i territori occupati. In Bolivia il “caudillismo” terminò per lasciare spazio a un moderno sistema parlamentare. Il Perù dovette riconoscere al Cile parte dei suoi territori e, solo nel 1929, trovò un accordo conclusivo su Tacna e Arica. Dopo la guerra, la nazione si modernizzò economicamente e, negli stessi anni, emerse il “partido civilista”.

**2.3 Un conflitto espansionistico?** La Guerra del Pacifico va inserita in un contesto ben preciso: quello delle intenzioni britanniche di controllare economicamente le ex-colonie spagnole. Infatti, Bolivia, Perù e Cile erano lontani dal potersi considerare stati moderni ed essere integrati nel mercato globale. Le compagnie inglesi compresero l'importanza di guano e salnitro e provarono a penetrare nelle economie peruviane e boliviane, ma con scarsi risultati. Il Cile invece, accolse i flussi di capitale britannico e, proprio a causa di questo, iniziò a compiere spedizioni esplorative nelle zone desertiche del nord, dove si trovavano guano e salnitro. Per di più, la compagnia per la quale la Bolivia esigeva la tassa dei dieci centesimi era supportata da investitori britannici, che dall'altra parte faceva pressioni perché il Cile scendesse in campo a difesa dei propri interessi.

Sebbene il Cile non avesse avuto altra scelta per espandere il proprio territorio nazionale se non facendolo alle spese dei suoi vicini nordici, la guerra contro il Perù è stata tra le prime a presentare indiscutibili caratteristiche post-imperialistiche, essendo stata fortemente incentivata da alcune delle più influenti potenze economiche europee.

### **Capitolo 3: Un'eredità problematica**

**3.1 Tumulti e rivolte nel Nord del Perù.** Quando il Cile riuscì ad occupare Lima, Calderòn fu eletto capo del governo, ma Càceras organizzò la resistenza nelle impervie zone montagnose del paese. Infatti, le popolazioni indigene peruviane, se minacciate da un'occupazione estera, possiedono la capacità di mettere da parte le loro differenze unendosi per difendere la propria nazione. La sconfitta del Perù nella guerra non causò soltanto un'umiliazione, ma anche una crisi socio-economica. Infatti, nel 1885, nel Perù nord-centrale si scatenò una rivolta contadina guidata da Atusparia contro la riforma fiscale che reintroduceva il “tributo indigeno”, le corvée, la tassa del monopolio sul sale e altri soprusi considerati appartenenti a un

mondo coloniale che già non esisteva più. La sommossa raggiunse il capoluogo e lo occupò. Le cause di tale rivolta si possono identificare nella crisi fiscale e nell'impoverimento delle classi peruviane.

Nel febbraio dello stesso anno, un gruppo di capi indigeni firmò ed inviò una lettera di lamentele per la reintroduzione delle politiche sopra citate a Noriega, il quale di tutta risposta si rifiutò di dialogare ed imprigionò Atusparia e altri capi indigeni. Dopo averli torturati, la situazione gli stava sfuggendo di mano e decise di rilasciarli. Nonostante ciò, in marzo un gruppo di indigeni scese le colline e conquistò la città di Huaraz. Dopo l'evento, Atusparia divenne il capo del movimento di rivolta nella guerra civile e decise di coinvolgere più persone ed estendere la guerra civile ad altre regioni del Perù, riuscendoci nel giro di un mese. Il suo scopo era quello di mettere un punto alle oppressioni esercitate dagli pubblici ufficiali. Nella rivolta, altri leader manifestarono di voler raggiungere obiettivi spesso molto diversi fra loro, chi di costruire uno stato indigeno, chi di deporre il governo: proprio queste visioni contrastanti resero il movimento più diviso e lo portarono alla sconfitta. I soldati ripresero le città occupate, e chi prese parte alla rivolta o morì in battaglia oppure fu giustiziato dal governo, come successe ad Atusparia.

**3.2 Verso la riappacificazione.** La rivolta non ebbe successo però portò a qualche miglioramento in una situazione di abusi. Fu seguita da rivolte in altre zone del Perù dal 1887 al 1889 che, unite alla sconfitta militare e alla prolungata crisi socio-economiche in cui la nazione verteva ormai da decenni, indebolirono il governo già precario di Iglesias.

L'esteso periodo di crisi sociale mise il Perù di fronte a riflessioni sul futuro e, dal 1895, Nicolás de Piérola si mise a capo della rivolta contro il governo militarista. Dopo una lunga guerra civile, divenne presidente ma non riuscì a cambiare le sorti politiche del paese, nonostante avesse cercato di implementare alcune politiche per rafforzare diversi settori dell'economia.

Il Perù non solo fu teatro di una rivolta esplosiva, ma fu anche costretto a misurarsi con ricorrenti rivoluzioni: questo fatto dà da pensare su come le istituzioni post-coloniali possano influire sull'economia e la società di paesi meno sviluppati, un tema ricorrente ancora oggi.

## **Conclusione**

La Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi può essere descritta come “Giano bifronte”, in quanto presenta sia elementi tipici di conflitti nazionalistici sia post-imperialistici. Per questo il tema merita particolare attenzione e può essere considerato un punto fondamentale della storia contemporanea.

Bolivia, Perù e Cile presentavano diverse problematiche dopo la dichiarazione d'indipendenza dall'impero coloniale, da problemi di tipo economico a quelli di tipo sociale. Le tre nazioni videro nel guano e nel salnitro una soluzione contro le loro difficoltà, ma la corsa allo sfruttamento di tali risorse naturali portò a rivalità e scontri tra le nazioni, fino a culminare nella Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi (1879-1884). Perù e Bolivia entrarono in guerra già in difficoltà economiche, mentre il Cile sembrava avere un forte sentimento patriottico ma difficoltà sociali interne che soltanto l'avvento di una guerra avrebbe potuto evitare.

Il Cile può essere considerato come il responsabile della Guerra del Pacifico? Nonostante avesse buone ragioni per intraprendere una guerra ed espandersi alle spese dei confinanti Bolivia e Perù, abbiamo concluso che non debba essere ritenuto il solo responsabile del conflitto. Infatti, le forze cilene non erano pronte per la guerra e va notato che parecchie imprese straniere abbiano svolto un ruolo importante nel provocare e diffondere il conflitto, spinte solamente dai loro interessi economici. In ultimo, la scarsa coordinazione e le difficoltà diplomatiche tra le tre nazioni ebbero un ruolo centrale per lo scoppio della guerra.

La Guerra dei Dieci Centesimi dimostra come un conflitto armato non sia mai una buona soluzione per dispute esterne ed interne e questo è un insegnamento che ci ha dato anche la Prima Guerra Mondiale. Evidentemente, gli stati coinvolti in quest'ultimo conflitto non avevano tenuto in conto le lezioni insegnate dalla Guerra del Pacifico.