

# **MANAGING INTERSTATE CONFLICT, 1945-74: Data with Synopsis**

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with Margaret E. Scranton



JX1291  
B86

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International Standard Book Number: 0-916002-09-8 (paperback)  
0-916002-15-2 (hardback)

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Butterworth, Robert Lyle.  
Managing interstate conflict, 1945-74.

Includes index.

1. International relations—Research.
  2. International relations—Case studies.
  3. Security, International—Case studies.
- I. Scranton, Margaret E., joint author. II.

Title.  
JX1291.B86            327.1            76-11001  
ISBN 0-916002-09-8 pbk.

Additional copies are available in both paperback and casebound editions from:  
University Center for International Studies  
Publications Section  
G-6 Mervis Hall  
University of Pittsburgh  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many colleagues generously contributed time, insights, and encouragement toward the completion of this project. Several members of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Political Science read various portions of the manuscript and assisted our research; the overall design owes a great deal to Hayward Alker and Cheryl Christensen. Any shortcomings in the result are of course our own.

For financial support we are grateful to E. Joseph Shoben, Associate Provost; William Keefe, Chairman of the Department of Political Science; Hayward Alker; and especially Carl Beck, Director of the University Center for International Studies, without whose intellectual and material support this work could not have been done.

Several graduate assistants also provided important help by researching various conflicts. In particular, we profited from the energy and talents of Luis Abugattas, Candace Eckert, John Giles, Richard Morris, Nguyen van Hien, Constance Rea, Uma Shrivastava, and Denis Stadther.

Special thanks are due to Georgia McClellan and the UCIS Publications staff for their patience and expertise.

of the Tunisian border; the 70-80,000 inhabitants of the zone were to be relocated. This plan promised to cripple further rebel infiltration into Algeria from Tunisia, since the French forces would then be instructed to fire upon anyone moving through the area. The refugees created by this plan, however, and its "scorched earth" aspects provided additional fuel for Franco-Tunisian tensions.

Many incidents occurred in the ensuing weeks, and the GOC efforts seemed to prove fruitless. Tunisia insisted that the only terms acceptable to it for ending the crisis involved complete French evacuation from Tunisian territory; France was adamant in its refusal to consider such a demand and further insisted that Tunisia stop aiding Algerian revolutionaries. Tunisia also demanded additional territory in the Sahara (see case #187: Algerian Sahara, 1961-70). On 20 February French troops arrested several Tunisian citizens at Remada in retaliation for a mine explosion that had killed two French soldiers. Tunisia charged that this incident confirmed that France still thought of itself as exercising sovereignty in Tunisia, and Tunisian police closed French consular offices in the country (France had refused repeated demands that the offices be withdrawn earlier that week). Further deadlocks ensued over the issue of controlling the Tunisian-Algerian border.

Negotiations were halted during the French constitutional crisis of April-May 1958; Premier Gaillard had decided in early April to resume direct negotiations with Tunisia, but the French National Assembly had refused to support his policy. Gaillard resigned, and when it became apparent after several days that Pflimlin would be likely to replace him, the French Army—especially the units stationed in Algeria—seized political control, threatened to drop paratroops on Paris, seized control in Corsica, and led to de Gaulle assuming power and a new constitution (Fifth Republic) in France.

De Gaulle was generally in favor of easing tensions with Tunisia, but in May an outbreak of hostilities at Remada and at the French military base at Gabes (200 miles north of Tunis) caused a rapid deterioration of the situation. Fighting broke out at Remada when French troops attempted to cross a Tunisian blockade. Military incidents became increasingly serious; Tunisia ordered total mobilization of its forces, and France resumed bombing raids. This series of clashes left 300 Tunisians and 5 French dead; as the fighting halted, Tunisia proclaimed a state of emergency and requested direct Anglo-American intervention.

Additional minor clashes occurred in late May and early June, and the Security Council met on 2 June in response to complaints from both parties. The GOC was making progress, however, and so the Council adjourned to permit direct negotiations to proceed. By that date France's buffer zone along the Tunisian-Algerian border had suc-

ceeded in greatly reducing the flow of arms to the Algerian revolutionaries, and Tunisia had decided that the major French base at Bizerte was an issue for later negotiations. With GOC assistance, the parties agreed that French troops would be evacuated from all bases in Tunisia except for Bizerte, where a force of approximately 12,000 troops would remain, but Tunisian sovereignty over the base was recognized; the customs union between France and Tunisia established prior to the latter's independence would be abolished; and the Tunisian educational system would be Arabized. Thus, the outcome of the dispute was a general reduction of French influence and presence in its former colony. However, the agreement's first provision, permitting French forces to remain at Bizerte, later led to renewed hostilities (see case #190: Bizerte, 1961-63).

Refs: *NY Times*, 1958

Mark W. Zacher, *Dag Hammarskjold's United Nations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) 94

#134: CHILEAN-ARGENTINE BORDER, 1958-

Parties: Chile v. Argentina

Agents: UK

Definition of the boundary between Argentina and Chile has historically been a source of continued conflict between the two states. Various border agreements and protocols were signed in 1881, 1883, and 1902; the latter was a general arbitration treaty which provided that either party could submit any dispute that could not be settled through direct negotiations to arbitration by the UK and that the other party would submit to such arbitration. From 1958 until the present the two states have been in nearly constant conflict over their frontier; there have been frequent border violations, but except for one incident in 1965 there has been no bloodshed. Confrontations involving shooting, however, have occasionally flared.

The conflict has surrounded three areas in particular. One is the Beagle Channel, a strait separating Argentina's part of Tierra del Fuego from Chile's Navarino Island. A second is the Palena area, involving a 24 mile stretch of sparsely-inhabited territory along the Andes frontier between the two countries. The Laguno del Desierto region was a third area of conflict, also located on the Andean frontier to the south.

The most intractable of these three disputes appears to have been that of the Beagle Channel. The 1881 border treaty had split Tierra del Fuego, awarding half to Chile and half to Argentina; in addition, all of

the islands south of the Channel, and including Cape Horn, were to be Chilean. Cartographic errors placed the Channel as running north of the islands of Lennox, Nueva, and Picton; when it was discovered that its actual position was south of those islands, Argentina raised a claim to them. From time to time since 1900 the parties have attempted to submit the issue to arbitration, but various impasses reached during the preliminary negotiations prevented settlement. By 1958 the controversy was infused with general political and nationalistic considerations as well as national security interests. Chile was particularly concerned that control of the Channel would permit Argentina to control Chile's trade in the Atlantic; moreover, possession of the islands would strengthen Argentina's claim to Antarctic territories that Chile also claimed (see case #111: Antarctic Islands, 1956-58). Argentina contended that Chilean military control over the islands would threaten the Argentine town and naval base of Ushuaia, on Tierra del Fuego. Argentina pointed out that nearly half of the Tierran population on its side of the line was Chilean, and that percentage continued to increase as Argentinians moved away and more Chileans moved into the area.

Activity in this area created constant tension from 1958-72. When Chile constructed a lighthouse on Snipe Island (in the area of the Channel), the Argentine navy destroyed it; it was rebuilt and destroyed again, and Argentine forces occupied the island. After some diplomatic altercations, the parties agreed to restore the pre-1958 situation on the island. Conflicts continued along both the land (Palena district) and maritime frontiers, however, and it was only in 1960 that provisional agreements on the Palena and Channel borders were reached. The Chilean Congress objected to various protocols that were supplementary to these agreements, however, charging that they permitted Argentina too much freedom in Chilean waters; in 1963 Chile withdrew its agreement to the accords.

During the following year the Palena district was the focus of border conflict, and the parties agreed that the problem should be submitted to the UK. The Palena question was resolved when the British court of arbitration ruled on 14 December 1966; Argentina was awarded most of the territory, while Chile was awarded the part that had been settled by its nationals.

The parties had also agreed in 1964 that the Beagle Channel question should be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), once certain preliminary accords had been reached. In keeping with their determination to resolve the border question, Argentina and Chile agreed during October 1965 to take steps to avoid incidents in the Palena and Laguna del Desierto regions. On 8 November, however, a Chilean police officer was killed during a border confrontation in the Laguna area, reportedly the first loss of life in the conflict during

contemporary times. Argentina maintained that the incident occurred 20 miles inside its territory and accused Chile of aggression. Chile held that sovereignty over the area was still in doubt and that an Argentinian patrol had fired first, in violation of the October agreement.

Since the Argentinian armed forces wanted to settle the Laguna conflict militarily and were also posing a threat to the civilian government, the presidents of both countries were eager to resolve the incident. In December they reached an agreement to negotiate, and on 11 December the respective Ministers of Defense met to install a joint border commission charged with adopting procedures to set up new border landmarks.

No progress was made in the Beagle Channel controversy, however, and that conflict escalated significantly in 1967. During August of that year Chilean warships confronted an Argentinian fishing vessel in the Channel area, and the reaction in Chile was explosive. Various political parties proclaimed their fears of Argentina's "imperialist and expansionist" ambitions. At the end of November a Chilean patrol boat cruised within two miles of Argentina's naval base at Ushuaia, and Argentinian naval and air forces fired warning shots at it. On 23 December Argentina rejected Chile's proposal that the UK arbitrate the Channel question, arguing that British arbitration would be biased in favor of Chile given the contemporaneous UK-Argentina dispute over the Falkland Islands (see case #254: Falkland Islands, 1965-71). By the end of spring 1968 a mild war scare had built up; Argentina had reinforced Ushuaia with aircraft, an aircraft carrier, three cruisers, a submarine, and a patrol boat, and Chile also deployed various naval and air forces in the vicinity.

Chile's actions at this point became primarily diplomatic and were largely successful; by 1969 it had put Argentina in a relatively isolated position in continental politics. Further diplomatic efforts achieved a rapprochement between Argentina and the socialist Chilean government of Allende. On 22 July 1971 the two presidents met and announced their agreement that the Channel border would be established by the Queen of England on the basis of a technical decision by a five-man arbitration court drawn from the ICJ.

Argentina's concern over a British pro-Chilean bias was thus resolved for this particular case. It was settled in general when the two agreed in December 1972 upon a new ten-year arbitration agreement that provided for taking their differences to the ICJ.

Refs: *NY Times*, 1958-74

Robert N. Burr, "Argentina and Chile," in Steven L. Spiegel and Kenneth N. Waltz, eds., *Conflict in World Politics* (Cambridge: Winthrop, 1971) 155-176