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**The Chilean Navy as a case study
in the value and performance of
medium and small naval powers
in South America**

Richard John Kouyoumdjian Inglis



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- The Chilean Navy has been a good investment for Chile during its 200 years of existence. It was a key player in the consolidation of its independence and in the expansion of Chile both south, north and west, and after that it has helped to sustain a long period of uninterrupted peace.
- How can this be continued at a time when Chile has neither serious issues with its neighbours nor direct threats to its maritime and physical territories?
- The Chilean Navy's culture is based on its victorious warfighting experience of the 19th but this will have to change as it actually spends a good part of its time on the delivery of maritime services rather than preparing to fight other navies.
- The Chilean Navy is a highly efficient organisation capable of performing both these essential functions and should be valued and protected, not least because Chile has extensive maritime interest at home and a broader interest in the global sea-based trading system as a whole.
- Like other South American countries, Chile must decide on how best to balance these two sets of tasks and what they require.

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By Richard John Kouyoumdjian Inglis

1. Foreword

This paper examines the utility of the Chilean Navy, to discover what has made it successful so far and what it needs to do in order to continue being successful and a good investment in the years to come. Identifying Chilean maritime interests and what increases or decreases the utility of a navy are key to recommending changes that may be needed (if any).

This work is based on my personal experience both as a Chilean naval officer in active and reserve conditions with the first-hand knowledge that comes with this and an independence of view that comes from currently being in retirement. A very important aspect and value of this research are the interviews of Chilean senior naval active and retired officers, including the current Commander In-Chief of the Chilean Navy, former Commander In-Chief Admiral Miguel Angel Vergara, the new under-secretary of defence (as from March 11th 2018), Vice Admiral (Retired) Cristian De La Maza, and the current Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice Admiral Rodrigo Alvarez, plus some brilliant young officers. The research is also based on plentiful public sources on the Chilean and other South American navies. These local sources of information used for this research are all in Spanish and I have avoided the use of translations so as to be sure that the information is correct. Where necessary I have translated this to enable better understanding.

The paper begins with a review of the Chilean Navy's past – a past that has shaped its present and future, through influencing its culture, its values and its way of thinking as a **warfighting** navy. This provides a sound basis for an examination of Chile's maritime requirements and the balance that now needs to be struck between the Navy's various roles.

2. The Chilean Navy's Past



'Combate Naval de Iquique, 21 de Mayo de 1879' – Iquique naval battle, May 21st, 1879¹

The Chilean Navy has been a very good investment for Chile. A quick look at a map of 1810 compared to a current one validates a comment that the Commander in Chief of the Chilean Navy, Admiral Julio Leiva Molina, made to me during an interview that took place in the Santiago Headquarters of the Armada de Chile.² The Navy was a key element in defeat of the Spanish during the Chilean Independence War, in the process of expelling the Spanish from

¹ Imagen Combate Naval de Iquique, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-iquique-21-de-mayo-de-1879/2015-04-06/153416.html>, 23 March 2018

² Interview to the Commander in Chief of the Chilean Navy, October 17th 2017

the South American pacific coast; in gaining command of the sea in the Pacific War of 1879 to 1883³, and therefore allowing the free movement of troops all the way up to the south of Lima, Peru; in the expansion west to Easter Island; and in the consolidation of the sovereign rights Chile had in the Magellan Straits and Cape Horn regions. It was also the driving force in establishing the Chilean presence in Antarctica.⁴

The Chilean Navy is currently celebrating its 200th anniversary. It came to life with the need to make sure that the Spanish did not take back their Chilean possessions. The exact date of its foundation is not clear, but what is clear is that during 1817 it started to get organised and operate as an organised force.⁵

The Chilean Navy is an institution that values its past and celebrates its history in a very active way, its highlight being the commemoration of the Naval Battle of Iquique that took place on May 21st 1879⁶ and in the example set by notable captains such as Arturo Prat⁷ as role models of the naval officer that the Chilean Navy expects all graduates of the Escuela Naval to follow. The past establishes the values that are the foundations of the Chilean Naval culture and purpose. This culture establishes the way an institution works, what is important, and at the end of the day, sets the limits of what can be done and the limits of the adaptive capabilities that are needed to engage the future.⁸ The Chilean Navy sees itself as a war-fighting navy and has its roots in its first successful century of life. This resultant sense of purpose is part of its DNA and drives much of what it does.



Capitan de Fragata 'Arturo Prat Chacon' being shot after boarding the Monitor 'Huascar', Peruvian Navy, in the Iquique Naval Battle, May 21st 1879⁹

In 1818 the Chilean Navy was lucky enough to count on a surplus of Royal Navy officers who had been made redundant after the Napoleonic Wars. These officers together with some locals such as Admiral Blanco Encalada¹⁰ who had been trained in the Spanish Armada were the pillars with which the Navy started its organisation and functioning. Above all, Admiral Lord Cochrane¹¹ was responsible for producing a successful, war fighting navy. Cochrane had to leave the Royal Navy under complicated circumstances, but that allowed Chile to employ him as the head of the navy. His 3 years' service proved invaluable. He conducted some of the more strategic naval battles of the independence campaign. His victories at Corral, Valdivia and Callao in Peru eliminated the Spanish naval

³ Till (2013), p.26

⁴ Chilean Navy Vice Admiral Cristian De La Maza Presentation "The Wider Use of Maritime Capabilities", Royal United Services Institute, London, September 9th 2013

⁵ Primera Escuadra, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-de-la-independencia-1810-1826/formacion-de-la-primera-escuadra-nacional-piedra-angular-de-la-armada/2015-03-19/114126.html>, 23 March 2018

⁶ Combate Naval de Iquique, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-iquique-21-de-mayo-de-1879/2015-04-06/153416.html>, 23 March 2018

⁷ Capitán Arturo Prat Chacón, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/biografias/p/agustin-arturo-prat-chacon/2014-01-20/111911.html>, 23 March 2018

⁸ Eichholz (2014), p.6

⁹ Imagen Combate Naval de Iquique, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-iquique-21-de-mayo-de-1879/2015-04-06/153416.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰ Almirante Manuel Blanco Encalada, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/biografias/b/manuel-blanco-encalada/2014-01-16/161840.html>, 23 March 2018

¹¹ Almirante Lord Thomas Alexander Cochrane, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/biografias/c/thomas-alexander-cochrane/2014-01-16/161221.html>, 23 March 2018

presence in the South Pacific and allowed the independences of Chile and Peru to go forward because Chileans and Argentines could then move their troops around freely in South America.¹²

The Navy initially followed Spanish naval regulations, but with the incorporation of former Royal Navy officers, the way it operated and was organized changed and in some way, resembled very much the practice followed on British ships. From then on, Chilean naval traditions start to take shape and become part of its culture.¹³

After the War of Independence, a good part of the navy was made redundant, both in terms of people and vessels, being left with only two old ships in service. This put Chile in an initially unfortunate position in 1836. At that time, what is now Peru and Bolivia were under the leadership of Marshal Andres de Santa Cruz as a form of Confederation.¹⁴ Santa Cruz had managed to establish control over both countries and his aspiration was to recreate the Inca Empire. That necessarily meant invading and taking control of Chile. Cutting a long story short and after a series of minor encounters, the Chilean Fleet which had by then been supplemented with other vessels, managed to beat the Confederate Fleet in the Battle of Casma that took place on January 12th 1839. After this encounter the remains of the opposing fleet sought protection under the guns of the Callao fortress and remained there for the rest of the war.

As a result the Chilean Fleet had command of the South Pacific and was free to move the Army that beat Santa Cruz at the Battle of Yungay on January 30th 1839.¹⁵ These two experiences became part of the DNA of the Chilean Navy together with others to follow.

Again and for inexplicable reasons, the navy was disbanded for a second time in spite of the lessons learnt in the last war. The parliamentary records of the 1840s show interesting material on the discussions that took place and the reasons provided to the Chilean parliament by the executive requesting funds to build two ships. These reasons were fundamentally the need to have ships to protect Chile's maritime trade and interests in other areas.¹⁶ By then Chile had already become a commodity exporting country with a good part of its production going to California and Australia. The funds for ships were not approved until 1854 and only for one vessel, the *Esmeralda*.¹⁷ The *Esmeralda*, together with the auxiliary steamer *Maipo* were the only vessels operational when Chile and Peru had problems with Spain in 1865.

The Spanish had only recently recognized the independence of Chile, but had not done so with Peru. A Spanish fleet showed up in the South Pacific and problems immediately started. The Spanish fleet had eight ships with 238 guns compared to two Chilean ships with 22 guns.¹⁸ The Peruvians had another three ships, but as Peru had a revolution taking place at the time, their ships were divided between the warring factions and did not join up with the Chileans at inception, only doing so later on.¹⁹

Starting in September 1865 with the Chilean war declaration on Spain and until the end of March of 1866, two naval actions took place (Papudo and Abtao). In the first case the Chileans captured the gunboat *Nuestra Señora de la Covadonga* in Papudo, and in the second one the engagement was a draw. By then Chilean forces had been joined by four Peruvian ships after the crushing of the revolution and the installation of a new government

¹² Captura de la Esmeralda, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-nauales/la-guerra-de-la-independencia-1810-1826/captura-de-la-esmeralda-5-y-6-de-noviembre-de-1820/2015-03-31/103220.html>, 23 March 2018

¹³ Tradiciones navales, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/tradiciones-nauales/2014-05-15/111832.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁴ Origen de la guerra contra la Confederación, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-nauales/la-guerra-contra-la-confederacion-peru-boliviana-1836-1839/genesis/2014-01-21/112939.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁵ Conclusión de la guerra contra la Confederación, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-nauales/la-guerra-contra-la-confederacion-peru-boliviana-1836-1839/combate-naval-de-casma/2014-01-21/153938.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁶ Documentos parlamentarios, p.320 and p.329, https://books.google.cl/books/about/Documentos_parlamentarios.html?id=zw1AAQAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y, 23 March 2018

¹⁷ Corbeta Esmeralda, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/unidades-historicas/e/esmeralda-corbeta-2da/2014-02-14/112137.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁸ Guerra contra España, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-nauales/la-guerra-contra-espana/el-inicio-de-la-guerra/2014-05-14/150319.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁹ Guerra contra España, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-nauales/la-guerra-contra-espana/primera-operaciones/2014-05-14/150858.html>, 23 March 2018

supportive of Chile. These joint forces plus the Chilean knowledge of the geography made it possible to stop the Spanish fleet at Abtao in its purpose to destroy the combined fleet. Before leaving the South Pacific, however, the Spanish bombarded Valparaiso on March 31st 1866.²⁰

This exemplified, once again, the risks in letting the fleet decay and of having no or few naval vessels available. The lack of Chilean ships initially allowed the Spanish to operate at their will along the coast of Peru and Chile including their last act of bombarding Valparaiso. The Spanish did not succeed in their operations because of their own errors and bad luck. In any case, it was a war without a real reason for any of the participants, but in spite of that, the Chilean Navy celebrates Papudo and Abtao every year, incorporating the tactical skills showed in those engagements into the DNA of the navy.

Surprisingly, for one would have expected the Chilean government to produce a fleet immediately after this conflict, it was only in the early 1870s that they approved the purchase of two state-of-the-art British built armoured vessels, because of concerns over relations with Argentina, Peru and Bolivia.²¹ These ships were the base of the Chilean Escuadra in the War of the Pacific of 1879–1883.

The Guerra Del Pacifico or Pacific War of 1879–1883 had its origin in a dispute between Chile and Bolivia over an increase on the taxes charged on Chilean companies that extracted nitrate in the Antofagasta region that belonged to Bolivia. Chile invaded Antofagasta and a state of war existed between both countries after Bolivia declared war on Chile in March 1879. Peru had signed a secret treaty with Bolivia that obliged it to support Bolivia in a case of war with Chile. All countries were at war by April 5th 1879.

Chilean and Peruvian force levels were much the same, but the state of readiness of the Chilean Escuadra was higher than its Peruvian counterpart²². Bolivia did not have any naval assets. The first actions of the Chilean Navy were to blockade the port of Iquique that belonged to Peru. This started with an encounter between the Chilean gunboat *Magallanes* and the Peruvian ships *Union* and *Pilcomayo* that ended without major casualties. The good tactical performance of the *Magallanes* avoided its capture or destruction by a superior Peruvian force.²³ This is another naval action that is celebrated every year.

The three battles that settled the contest for the command of the South Pacific coast of South America were the battles of Iquique and Punta Gruesa that took place on May 21st 1879, and the battle of Angamos that happened on October 8th 1879. In the first case the Peruvian Monitor *Huascar* sunk the old Chilean Corvette *Esmeralda*²⁴ and in the second one, the Chilean gunboat *Covadonga* sunk the superior Peruvian armoured vessel *Independencia*.²⁵ In the case of Angamos, it was the two previously mentioned state of the art armoured vessels, the *Blanco* and the *Cochrane* that captured the Monitor *Huascar* in an engagement that is celebrated not only for destroying the Peruvian naval power and allowing Chile to enjoy the command of the sea and what comes with that (such as the free movement by sea of Chilean troops), but also for its tactical excellence and the fact that the Chileans managed

²⁰ Guerra contra España, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-contra-espana/bombardeo-de-valparaiso-31-de-marzo-de-1866/2014-05-14/152220.html>

²¹ Blindado Blanco Encalada, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/unidades-historicas/b/fragata-blindada-blanco-encalada-1/2014-02-14/105501.html>

²² Potencias navales comparadas, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/potencias-navales-comparadas/2014-05-14/153119.html>

²³ Combate Naval de Chipana, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-chipana-12-de-abril-de-1879/2014-05-14/153344.html>, 23 March 2018

²⁴ Combate Naval de Iquique, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-iquique-21-de-mayo-de-1879/2015-04-06/153416.html>, 23 March 2018

²⁵ Combate Naval de Punta Gruesa, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/combate-naval-de-punta-gruesa-21-de-mayo-de-1879/2015-04-29/092243.html>, 23 March 2018

to capture the *Huascar* and prevent it being scuttled.²⁶ The *Huascar* is still in the hands of the Chilean Navy and is a floating museum based in the Naval Base of Talcahuano.²⁷



The Monitor Huascar in its present condition as a floating museum based in the Talcahuano Naval Base²⁸

As Professor Geoffrey Till indicates in his book *Seapower, Chile* independent of its size and the size of its navy, acted as a seapower that looked for the command of the sea, achieved it and then exploited it to its will and benefit.²⁹ After the victory at Angamos, Chile moved its troops freely up and down the coast and by 1881 had taken Lima and defeated Bolivia. The strategic lessons that Angamos taught the Chilean Navy are grounded deep into the soul of the navy, very much in the same way that the tactical excellence showed by Carlos Condell in defeating and sinking the Peruvian Armoured Ship *Independencia*, and the sacrifice of the *Esmeralda* when engaging the far superior Monitor *Huascar* in Iquique. It is this last event that in spite of being defeated is the most celebrated and recognised action in the Chilean Navy. It is because of the conduct shown by the Captain of the *Esmeralda*, Arturo Prat Chacon by the way he and his crew conducted themselves, but mainly because of his action and of others that accompanied him when boarding the *Huascar* knowing the danger it meant and that they paid with their life. The *Esmeralda* did not surrender and went down without lowering its flag.

Arturo Prat, Ignacio Serrano and Juan de Dios Aldea are the examples to follow that the Chilean Navy hammers into all officers and ratings throughout all their careers and not only when attending initial training. Prat is to the Chilean Navy what Nelson is to the Royal Navy. Together with that the Chilean Navy motto is 'Vencer or Morir' - Victory or Death, and this motto is engraved in all the steering helms of all Chilean Navy ships whether they are naval or maritime vessels.

After the Pacific War, Chile went through a civil war in 1891. A major part of the navy supported the Parliament side and the fact that the Parliament had the Navy on its side was crucial in the defeat of the side that supported the President Balmaceda. The unfortunate side of this conflict for the Navy were the consequences for those of the navy who nonetheless found themselves on the losing side. As mentioned several times so far, the one that had command of the sea or control of the sea, especially of the west coast of South America, when necessary was to be the winning side. This lesson as it may be evident, and after all these examples is rooted into the navy's doctrine, and even into its soul.

Because of its nature as a civil war, the navy does not celebrate the actions that took place, nor does not commemorate or record in its public web pages the mutiny of the fleet of 1931 (very similar to what happened with the British Home Fleet at Invergordon in 1931), nor its participation in the coup of 1973 where it had a leading role.

²⁶ Batalla naval de Angamos, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/batalla-naval-de-angamos-8-de-octubre-de-1879/2014-05-13/123614.html>, 23 March 2018

²⁷ Monitor Huáscar, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/unidades-navales/superficie/reliquia-historica/rh-huascar/2014-04-17/121133.html>, 23 March 2018

²⁸ Imagen Monitor Huáscar, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/principales-acciones-navales/la-guerra-del-pacifico/corrierias-del-monitor-huascar/2014-05-14/155034.html>, 23 March 2018

²⁹ Till (2013), p.26

At the end of the 19th century Chile had a very powerful fleet that was funded mainly by the proceeds of the nitrate mines in the north of Chile and was considered to be the eighth in size worldwide.³⁰ Obviously this situation is hallmarked and incorporated into the narrative that the navy has developed through time. That situation lasted until the early 1930s when the global depression took its toll on Chile. After the Great War, Chile acquired in the United Kingdom its only battleship together with a series of other naval assets that were all by the standards of the day, state-of-the-art naval vessels. The Battleship *Latorre* is still considered the most powerful naval artefact that the Chilean Navy has had in its inventory. The economic crisis of the 1930s started a decline in its naval power that was only repaired with the fleet renovation process of the first decade of the 21st Century. In that 70 year gap, the situation was always unfavourable because of the poor economic performance of Chile. After World War II its material was mainly surplus ships from the US Navy that had been mothballed after the war, with the exception of the destroyers bought at the end of the 1950s in the UK, or the Leander frigates and Oberon submarines bought at the end of the 1960s and delivered during the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s except for the used Israeli missile boats and the German 209 class submarines, the navy mainly comprised former County Class destroyers and Leander Frigates, all of them by then at the end of their operational lives.

Submarines in the Chilean Navy have existed for a century and they celebrated their centennial last year.³¹ Its submarine force normally comprises four operational boats but sometimes has had only two operational. It has operated with very high standards and as expected, they have developed a submarine culture different from surface warfare operators but nonetheless feel part of the war fighting navy.

Naval aviation recently celebrated its 95th anniversary.³² During this time, this part of the Armada de Chile has suffered the same issues other naval aviation forces experienced in different parts of the world with the appearance of air forces as part of the armed forces. However, it survived the ordeal and became an integral part of the navy. Their pilots very much in the style of the Royal Navy during this period alternated between flying assignments and positions on board surface vessels. They consider themselves to be absolutely part of the war fighting navy and while having their own culture, even if this is not as strong as in submarines and the Chilean Navy Marine Corps.

Another organisation that is part of the Armada de Chile and that has been present since it was born is the Infanteria de Marina (Chilean Navy Marine Corps).³³ Very much in the fashion of the navies of the 19th century, Chilean ships had a Marine Corps garrison as part of the crew. From the garrisons that were part of the crew of a man of war, the force evolved into a coastal defence organisation that manned guns located in strategic locations, and from there to an amphibious force that could be landed in beaches in the fashion established by the United States Marine Corps in World War II. In recent years it has evolved one step further and is now organised as an expeditionary, amphibious force with the required assets needed to operate as such.³⁴ The culture and purpose of this part of the Armada is unique to its function. While considered to be part of the operational forces of the Armada de Chile, they are still, at the end of the day, a Marine Corps.

Although existing since the creation of the Navy in the early 19th, the maritime rather than simply naval component started to grow in assets and importance during the 1990s and the first decade of the 20th century. The maritime authority offices, located mainly in the coast, larger inland lakes and riverine areas are called Gobernaciones Maritimas (maritime authority covering maritime regions), Capitanias de Puerto (maritime authority for ports and some in-land lakes and rivers with nautical activity) and Alcaldias de Mar (maritime authority for

³⁰ Buques de guerra chilenos, 1850 – 1950, Revista de Marina, <https://revistamarina.cl/revistas/2012/1/valenzuela.pdf>, 23 March 2018

³¹ Centenario Fuerza de Submarinos, Armada de Chile, <https://www.gob.cl/noticias/presidenta-bachelet-encabeza-conmemoracion-del-centenario-de-la-fuerza-de-submarinos-de-la-armada-de-chile/>, 23 March 2018

³² 95 años Aviación Naval, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/noticias-navales/la-aviacion-naval-celebro-95-anos-contribuyendo-en-las-emergencias/2018-03-16/153034.html>, 23 March 2018

³³ Efemérides navales, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/efemerides-navales/junio/16-de-junio-de-1818/2014-02-17/114216.html>, 23 March 2018

³⁴ Fuerzas, Armada de Chile, https://www.armada.cl/armada/nuestra-armada/nuestras-fuerzas/2015-06-11/151918.html#vtxt_cuerpo_T4, 23 March 2018

smaller ports in coast, lakes and rivers). They started to receive investments that allowed for an increase in quantity and the quality of their installations. Also an increase took place in the quantity of patrol boats and offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) available to the maritime function.³⁵ The first rear admirals that came from the maritime branch were promoted to flag rank during this period.

The increased importance of the maritime function in the Armada de Chile is very much coincident with the implementation of the UN law of the sea convention (UNCLOS) in the 1990s. The Chilean Navy is by law the national maritime authority and also the agent of the Chilean state for all maritime affairs, including its representation in international organisations dedicated to these matters.³⁶ The maritime responsibilities also include the Navy Meteorological Service (Servicio Meteorológico de la Armada - SMA³⁷), the Oceanographic and Hydrographic Service of the Navy (Servicio Hidrográfico y Oceanográfico de la Armada - SHOA³⁸) and the management of the National Oceanographic Committee (Comite Oceanográfico Nacional - CONA³⁹).

Clearly the Armada is more than simply a war fighting navy. It has a strong maritime component that has developed through time from the 19th century, a growth in importance that has not gone unnoticed in the Navy and its personnel. The dominating culture is still the one of a warfighting navy, but with time the importance of this branch is starting to impact the way the navy thinks and acts. Most of the Chilean Navy news published in recent times is related to maritime affairs.⁴⁰

The Armada de Chile developed from the very beginning the logistic support it needed to keep and maintain its ships. This capacity evolved over time and facilities were built in Valparaíso, Talcahuano and Punta Arenas. Initially owned by the navy, these facilities became in the 1960s what nowadays is known as ASMAR (Astilleros y Maestranzas de la Armada – Navy Shipyards and Workshops), a state owned company that provides services both to the Armada and others.⁴¹ With time it developed the capabilities to build ships and perform complex submarines overhauls and mid-life extensions. The development of this logistical capacity over time has allowed the Armada de Chile to reduce its dependence of foreign shipyards with the efficiencies that come with that. There was a time when all Chilean naval ships would be sent to the UK for major works. ASMAR is managed by a rear admiral in active service from the engineering branch⁴² and its board is presided by the vice admiral that supervises all logistics and services of the Armada.⁴³

Six other aspects of the recent past of the Armada de Chile need to be mentioned because of the impact they have in the current narrative of Armada de Chile. The first one is the Beagle channel conflict of 1978. Chile and Argentina were very, very close to war in December 1978.⁴⁴ The conflict had its origin in the Argentine refusal to accept the result of Her Britannic Majesty Government's arbitration that had been requested in 1971 by both countries. In 1977 the British approved the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that gave most of the claims to Chile.⁴⁵ The Armada mobilized in full and sent its fleet down south. The same happened with most of the Infantería de Marina that was placed in the disputed islands. The Army and Air Force were also mobilized. This happened to take place when the Military Junta was in power and because of the Human Rights issues, a weapons and spare parts embargo was enforced by the US and the UK on Chile. This meant that solutions had to be found with non-traditional providers or local solutions had to be implemented so as to increase or maintain the operational

³⁵ Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.249, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

³⁶ DGTM, Armada de Chile, http://transparencia-armada.cl/transparencia_activa/organica/dgtm.html, 23 March 2018

³⁷ Meteo Armada, http://meteoarmada.directemar.cl/prontus_meteo/site/edic/base/port/inicio.html, 23 March 2018

³⁸ SHOA, Armada de Chile, <http://www.shoa.cl/php/misionvision.php?idioma=es>, 23 March 2018

³⁹ CONA, <http://www.cona.cl/>, 23 March 2018

⁴⁰ Noticias, Armada de Chile, https://www.armada.cl/armada/site/tax/port/all/taxport_1_1.html, 23 March 2018

⁴¹ ASMAR, <http://www.asmar.cl/corporacion/historia>, 23 March 2018

⁴² CA Luis Kohler Gary, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/la-armada/alto-mando-naval/contralmirantes/ca-luis-kohler-gary/2015-12-22/114202.html>, 23 March 2018

⁴³ VA Cristian Ramos Perez, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/la-armada/alto-mando-naval/vicealmirantes/va-cristian-ramos-perez/2017-11-13/092832.html>, 23 March 2018

⁴⁴ Beagle Channel Conflict, CIA, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005617746.pdf, 23 March 2018

⁴⁵ Beagle Channel Conflict, Stanford, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/2083-1981-07-Keesings-a-PWJ.pdf>, 23 March 2018

readiness of the Chilean forces. The Chilean fleet had the advantage of its positions in the Chilean fiords south of Punta Arenas and good information of the whereabouts of the Argentine fleet. This was provided by naval aviation assets that operated out of Punta Arenas. More than once the fleet went to encounter the Argentine ships, the last occasion being on December 22nd 1978. After that the Argentine fleet left the area and went back to its base port in Puerto Belgrano.⁴⁶ The Argentines although having a better fleet that included the Aircraft Carrier *25 de Mayo*, did not have the advantage Chile had of its protected berthing in the fiords and suffered greatly from the bad weather of the South Atlantic. There is doubt whether bad weather prevented the conflict or if it was the acceptance of the mediation of the Pope that saved both countries going to war, but in the case of the Chilean Navy and the generation that manned the ships at the time, this is considered a quasi-victory and shaped the minds of generations, whether they were present on-board, or by means of the war fighting narrative of the navy. Recently the Armada was handed a work of several years that documented the experiences of the ones that participated and were present in the Beagle in 1978 before they get too old.⁴⁷ This documentary is now going public and the press has used it to reinforce the role of the navy and the fact that its presence and determination prevented conflict.⁴⁸



The Chilean Navy Escuadra that went south to defend Chilean sovereignty in the Beagle Channel December 1978⁴⁹

The second aspect to be considered is the renewal of the Escuadra in the early 2000s. As mentioned before, the Chilean Navy had a fleet at the end of the 1990s that was pretty old and expensive to keep. It was composed of four former County class destroyers and four Leander class frigates. The Admiral Class destroyers (DDG *Williams*⁵⁰ and DDG *Riveros*⁵¹) had recently been decommissioned. Three of the County class had been converted from DLGs to DLHs, the latter being helicopter carrying destroyers, a capacity acquired via eliminating the entire Sea-slug missile system. Of the Leanders two had been bought brand new at the end of the 1960s and received in the mid 1970s, and

⁴⁶ Clavel (2017), loc.3660 Kindle edition

⁴⁷ Documental conflicto del Beagle, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/noticias-navales/armada-recibio-documental-sobre-el-conflicto-del-beagle/2017-09-05/124830.html>, 23 March 2018

⁴⁸ El Mercurio de Santiago Domingo 18 de Marzo de 2018, Cuerpo D Reportajes, pagina D13

⁴⁹ Escuadra Chilena 1978, <https://www.taringa.net/posts/info/17473137/Conflicto-del-Beagle-1978---La-Gran-Movilizacion.html>, 23 March 1978

⁵⁰ DDG Williams, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/unidades-historicas/w/destructor-almirante-williams-2/2014-02-14/102041.html>, 23 March 2018

⁵¹ DDG Riveros, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/unidades-historicas/r/destructor-almirante-riveros-3/2014-02-14/095846.html>, 23 March 2018

the other two had been bought second hand from the Royal Navy. The Chilean Navy by the end of the 90s was starting the process of decommissioning its fleet without a clear idea of how and when it would get replacements.

The renewal process started under the tenure of Admiral Jorge Patricio Arancibia (1997–2001) and was finished by Admiral Miguel Angel Vergara (2001–2005). The initial idea was to build eight frigates in the Talcahuano ASMAR shipyard, but because of the lack of resources, it was changed for a four first and four later building plans, but it did not prosper when Admiral Arancibia decided to run for parliament. Admiral Vergara managed to buy a total of eight second hand ships that were in good shape. He was lucky that at the time the Royal Navy and the Dutch Navy were reducing their inventories. The Armada de Chile ended with one type 22 Frigate Batch 2, three type 23, two Dutch class M and two Dutch class L. When interviewed, Admiral Vergara indicated that the key to the fleet renewal was the support and approval of President Ricardo Lagos, a person with very clear views on the purpose and utility of the Armada de Chile such that the Admiral did not need to develop and sell the Chilean naval narrative. He considers this something unique in the history of Chile. Support in Congress, he indicated, was mixed and the press did not treat this process very well.⁵² It is not sure that Admiral Julio Leiva, the current Commander in-chief, will be as lucky as Admiral Vergara when facing the same task in the next few years,⁵³ but so far he has had favourable treatment by the main Chilean newspaper.⁵⁴ Admiral Leiva indicated in his interview that he was aware of the need of having a strong narrative because the current situation was not the same one Admiral Vergara faced in the early 2000s.⁵⁵ In another interview with former Chief of Defence Staff (1999–2000), Vice Admiral Hernan Couyoumdjian, told me that he does not recall having needed in his forty years of service to develop and communicate the Armada's narrative. It was just taken for granted.⁵⁶ Last but not least, this last renewal process was tainted by accusations of wrongdoings by some former naval officers,⁵⁷ something that the Armada de Chile will make sure does not happen again as part of its learning because of the impact it has on its national prestige.

The third influence to be identified is the impact on the Armada of the 2010 Tsunami that hit the coast of Chile on the night of February 27th 2010 due to an 8.8 earthquake that took place near the central south coast of Chile. The Tsunami destroyed a good part of the ASMAR Talcahuano shipyard, assets of naval base and vessels that were under repair that night on floating docks.⁵⁸ The shipyard and the naval base not only were rebuilt, but also the reconstruction took into consideration the lessons learnt that night to be prepared for a next one if it ever hit this place again.⁵⁹ The whole process put a lot of stress on the finances of the navy, but luckily enough, the price of copper was high allowing this stress to be mitigated. Related to this same event, the other issue the Armada had was the problems it had with the Servicio Hidrografico y Oceanografico de la Armada (SHOA) the night of the earthquake. That night the SHOA along with other responsibilities had the management of the Tsunami tracking and alarm, wrongly cancelled the Tsunami alarm.⁶⁰ It is said that this wrongful action was one of the reasons why some Chileans died that night. Whether this had such a direct impact or not is difficult to prove, but it did change the way the navy now manages the whole process and the agency in charge (SHOA). It changed the reporting line of the SHOA to the maritime authority and led to large investments in state-of-the-art technologies so as to avoid a repeat of the night of February 27th. This event together with the not so quick reaction of the Commander in-chief of the Navy brought negative public comment and took some time to fix.⁶¹ That night was not one of brilliant performance for the navy and is something that again the navy will take care to avoid.

⁵² Interview Admiral Miguel Angel Vergara Villalobos, March 1st 2018

⁵³ Entrevista Almirante Julio Leiva Molina, El Mercurio, <http://www.economiaynegocios.cl/noticias/noticias.asp?id=434707>, 23 March 2018

⁵⁴ Editorial El Mercurio, Renovación de material de las FFAA, <http://www.elmercurio.com/blogs/2018/01/18/57366/Renovacion-de-material-de-las-FFAA.aspx>, 23 March 2018

⁵⁵ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina October 17th, 2017

⁵⁶ Interview Vice Admiral Hernan Couyoumdjian Bergamali, March 22nd 2018

⁵⁷ Caso Fragatas, The Clinic, <http://www.theclinic.cl/etiqueta/caso-fragatas/>, 23 March 2018

⁵⁸ La desconocida y sabrosa trastienda del otro maremoto que enfrenta la Armada, <http://ciperchile.cl/2010/04/09/la-desconocida-y-sabrosa-trastienda-del-otro-maremoto-que-enfrenta-la-armada/>, 23 March 2018

⁵⁹ Crónica, Revista de Marina, <https://revistamarina.cl/revistas/2013/4/cronica.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁶⁰ Tsunami paso a paso los escandalosos errores y omisiones del SHOA y ONEMI, Ciper Chile, <http://ciperchile.cl/2012/01/18/tsunami-paso-a-paso-los-escandalosos-errores-y-omisiones-del-shoa-y-la-onemij/>, 23 March 2018

⁶¹ Declaración Almirante Gonzalez, El Mercurio, <http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2013/05/24/600379/caso-tsunami-almirante-gonzalez-declaro-a-la-fiscalia-que-la-armada-no-podia-interferir-en-las-decisiones-del-shoa.html>, 23 March 2018

The fourth aspect that is relevant to the way in which the Navy has financed itself during the latter part of the 20th century and more recently is the role of what is called the Ley del Cobre (Copper Law). This assigns 10 per cent of the sales of Codelco (the state-owned copper mining company) to finance the investments needed by the Armed Forces. Initially it considered 15 per cent of the profits but this was modified in 1985. The other modification was to increase the original minimum proceeds from US\$ 90 million up to US\$ 180 million. This happened in 1987. The other modification was that originally the investments required the approval of Consejo Superior de la Defensa Nacional (COSUDENA – National Defence Senior Committee), but it was later changed to the Ministry of Defence.⁶² The 10 per cent of the sales of Codelco are split between the three armed forces institutions, but each of them sets apart funds to produce a strategic reserve account that is managed by Defence. With copper prices high this has meant that there has been funding available as never before. No one can be sure this will continue. Previous governments have presented projects to modify the financing of the Armed Forces and replace the Copper Law, but these efforts have not been successful so far.⁶³ We will see if the new government of President Sebastian Piñera that started on March 11th 2018 manages to change this way of financing.⁶⁴ Obviously the armed forces are not in favour of changes because the current method has worked well for them and past experience without it was not good. At least that is the case of the Chilean Navy.⁶⁵

The fifth aspect is the incorporation of women into the Armada of Chile. Women officers were accepted into the navy only in 2003 and that was only in the legal and medical branches.⁶⁶ They were accepted into the Naval Academy in 2007 and 2009 in the case of the ratings training school.⁶⁷ This process meant that premises on-shore and on ships had to be prepared. The process has not been free of problems. During 2016 at least two events were reported and some others during 2017.⁶⁸ As we speak, women have reached the rank of Teniente 2° (lieutenant JG) in the executive branch and of commander in the legal and medical ones. This process of incorporation is still at an early stage and the issues before reported are less severe than ones encountered by other navies and far less severe than the Tailhook scandal.⁶⁹ Long-term results of the incorporation of women into the navy are still not clear, but the fact that the navy started late in this process allows it to capture the lessons of other countries' experience as well as those of the Army and Air Force that also started earlier.⁷⁰

The sixth and final issue is the international role of the Armada. Except for some few cases in which the Chilean Navy sent ships abroad to protect national interests in the 19th century, the Armada does not regularly operate out of Chilean waters except for exercises such as RIMPAC and others.⁷¹ The Chilean Navy does use every occasion it has to improve its training and exercise with navies that operate under NATO standards. It has been doing so since the US started with UNITAS exercise in the beginning of the 1960s.⁷² The Armada regularly sends a training ship for an extended cruise that in some cases goes around the world. It has been doing this since the 19th century. For a good time, this role was performed by the Corbeta *General Baquedano*⁷³ but since the mid-1950s the Buque Escuela *Esmeralda*.⁷⁴

Before moving into the conclusions of this section, it should be mentioned that Chile moved from a condition in which it had significant limits and border issues with its Peruvian and Argentine neighbours to one

⁶² Ley reservada del cobre, defensa.cl, <http://www.defensa.cl/temas-de-contenido/ley-reservada-del-cobre/>, 23 March 2018

⁶³ Financiamiento de las Fuerzas Armadas, Defensa.com, <http://www.defensa.com/chile/chile-mantiene-capacidad-financiar-fuerzas-armadas-mediante-ley>, 23 March 2018

⁶⁴ Entrevista Ministro de Defensa, Alberto Espina, La Tercera, sábado 17 de marzo, p.28

⁶⁵ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina October 17th, 2017

⁶⁶ Mujeres Armada de Chile, Mercurio de Valparaíso, <http://www.mercuriovalpo.cl/site/edic/20011128203936/pags/20011129000513.html>, 23 March 2018

⁶⁷ Mujeres Armada de Chile, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/la-armada/responsabilidad-social-institucional/2014-04-28/165458.html>, 23 March 2018

⁶⁸ Casos de abusos sexuales Armada de Chile, diarioeldia.cl, <http://www.diarioeldia.cl/pais/nuevos-casos-abusos-sexuales-remecen-armada>, 23 March 2018

⁶⁹ Tailhook scandal, Newsweek, <http://www.newsweek.com/tailhook-scandal-time-200362>, 23 March 2018

⁷⁰ Mujeres Fuerzas Armadas de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-100707.html#cronologia>, 23 March 2018

⁷¹ Vice Admiral Cristian De La Maza, Presentation 'The wider use of maritime capabilities', RUSI, London, September 9th 2013

⁷² UNITAS exercises, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=101514, 23 March 2018

⁷³ Corbeta General Baquedano, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/unidades-historicas/b/corbeta-general-baquedano-2/2014-02-14/171134.html>, 23 March 2018

⁷⁴ Buque Escuela Esmeralda, <https://www.esmeralda.cl/esmeralda/buque-escuela-esmeralda/historia/2014-06-04/113135.html>, 23 March 2018

where most of these issues have been settled and Chile states it does not have claims over others territories.⁷⁵ This very much reduces the possibility of war with both countries. Bolivia has claims over Chile, but it is not something that could involve the navy as Bolivia is a landlocked country. Historically the Chileans used to plan for what is called the 'Neighbouring countries 3' (hipotesis vecinal 3),⁷⁶ but with the elimination of the sources of tension, this is no more the case. For the navy, the issue with this reduction of perceived threat is that it reduces the value of the military role in its overall narrative. This is something relatively new as final limits with Peru were settled only in 2014.⁷⁷ In the case of Argentina it happened in the mid 1980s.⁷⁸ Combined naval exercises have been taking place with Argentina since 1999,⁷⁹ but this has not happened yet with Peru.

What does the past bring to the present and the future of the Chilean Navy?

The past brings to the present a navy that has built a narrative of a warfighting navy based on the success it had during the 19th century and the strong stand the navy took in the Beagle channel conflict. These successes are celebrated every year so the warfighting narrative should not lose too much strength. It also celebrates the performance and heroic actions of the officers that lead the ships in those battles with the purpose not only of recognising them as model people, but also with the aim of using them as an example for the current and future generations of officers and ratings.

That experience also showed that if you do not invest in the navy the possibility of having problems increases, and on the other hand, if you have the appropriate assets, the possibility of commanding the Chilean Sea increases along with the liberty to move troops along the west coast of South America. In more recent times the navy learnt that public opinion is not that forgiving and easy to deal with when errors are committed and so that must be avoided. This applies to all activities that are done in the name of the Armada de Chile. Finally, you cannot let your fleet grow old and its renewal has to be approached in good time. This is not easy, and has to be done in a transparent way, but with a persuasive narrative because the Navy cannot count on the authorities being as enlightened as President Ricard Lagos Escobar was on naval power and its benefits for Chile, especially at a time when land and maritime limits have been agreed with neighbours⁸⁰ and the prospects of conflict are much reduced. Nor can it be assumed that there will be an excess or surplus of frigates and submarines in good condition that will allow you to buy good second hand platforms and not go for the more complex process of building new ships.

Now the Armada de Chile is more than just a traditional navy. This Armada includes a maritime component that has increased in size and complexity; it includes Marine Corps assets and traditions developed over time, it includes a naval aviation and a submarine force that form part of the operational forces of the navy, and something not mentioned before, it has responsibilities over a much larger ocean space than it had when it was born 200 years ago. The navy not only helped Chile to grow north up to Arica, south all the way down to Antarctica and west as far as Easter Island, but also was instrumental in the implementation of the law of the sea which increased its maritime territory to an equivalent of 4.5 times the continental and insular territories of Chile, excluding Antarctica.⁸¹ In summary, after 200 years we have a more complex organisation that faces a more complex maritime problem. What has not changed is the fact that Chile continues to be an open and exporting economy just as it was in the 19th century⁸² and because of that, needs and depends on the functioning of the global economic and maritime system.

⁷⁵ Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.36, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁷⁶ Hipótesis vecinal 3, soberaniachile.cl, http://www.soberaniachile.cl/hipotesis_vecinal_maxima.html, 23 March 2018

⁷⁷ Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.45, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁷⁸ Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.44, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁷⁹ Ejercicios navales con Argentina, emol.com, <http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2008/12/12/334975/armadas-de-chile-y-argentina-culminan-con-exito-ejercicio-combinado.html>, 23 March 2018

⁸⁰ Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.36, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁸¹ Libro de la defensa 2017, p.40, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁸² Chilean exporting economy 19th century, <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-647.html#cronologia>, 23 March 2018

The navy feels that it has been useful so far and a good investment for Chile in the last 200 years.⁸³ It has performed the military and policing roles as defined by Ken Booth,⁸⁴ and to a lesser extent, the diplomatic role. It is a navy that in spite of not having been at war in the last 135 years, prides itself in being a successful and trained warfighting navy.⁸⁵ But now this role seems rather less relevant and the fear of the warfighting admirals is that the Chilean Navy could end up as being a navy of OPVs dedicated to the extensive and important maritime affairs that the EEZ, Antarctica and offshore islands generate. What it sometimes overlooks however is the extent to which it has a good case to make, even so.

3. How the Chilean Navy Currently Operates



⁸⁶ Chilean Navy Organisational Chart 2018

The maximum authority of the Chilean Navy is the 'Comandante en Jefe de la Armada' (CJA). He is a 4-star admiral who is selected by the President of the Republic of Chile every four years from the five most senior vice admirals, as selected by the CJA since he proposes to the President and the Minister of Defence the rear admirals who should be promoted to vice admirals and the admirals who should retire.⁸⁷ CJA has complete authority over the navy⁸⁸ except in case of war or emergencies where he has to hand over the operational forces to the 'Jefe Del Estado Mayor Conjunto' (JEMCO). This is the Chilean version of a Chief of the Defence Staff. Having said that, in a peace time navy this handover of power only happens when troops are sent on a peacekeeping operation or there is a state of emergency that requires naval forces support.

⁸³ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina October 17th, 2017

⁸⁴ Booth (1977), p.17

⁸⁵ Palabras Almirante Julio Leiva Molina inaugurando el año 2018, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/palabras-del-cja/almirante-julio-leiva-da-inicio-al-ano-2018/2018-03-05/084328.html>, 23 March 2018

⁸⁶ Organigrama Armada de Chile, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/quienes-la-componen/2014-05-05/102017.html>, 23 March 2018

⁸⁷ Alto mando 2018, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/noticias-navales/alto-mando-2018/2017-10-20/122220.html>, 23 March 2018

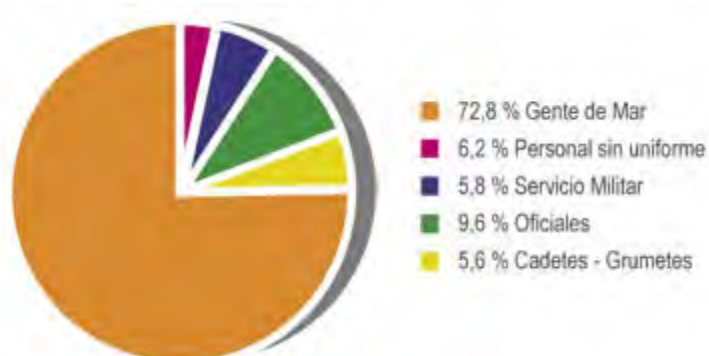
⁸⁸ Facultades, Funciones y Atribuciones, http://transparencia-armada.cl/transparencia_activa/organica/cja.html, 23 March 2018

The CJA's authority does not extend to the approval of the investments the navy needs. These currently are suggested by the navy but the government approves,⁸⁹ although that will change when the new definitions are introduced by the 'Libro de la Defensa 2017' (LDN 2017) or Defense white paper 2017. This document released on March 9th 2018 also assigns the definition of capabilities to the political power. Currently each service is free to establish its own needs.⁹⁰ The LDN 2017 will be fully operational once the financing of defence changes from the current mechanism that continues to assign a third of the sales of CODELCO to each armed service and give the management of the financing to the Ministry of Defence. With that said, the CJA at least knows at the moment that he has the funding, but not the approval to go ahead and spend the money. If that changes his current power could be severely compromised.

Reporting to the CJA as part of his office is the 'Estado Mayor General de la Armada' (EMGA). This corresponds to the navy staff and is managed by a three-star admiral who normally is the navy's second-in-command. This organisation together with the 'Secretaría General' (General Secretariat), 'Contraloría' (Internal audit & control), 'Auditoría General' (Legal counsel), 'Dirección de Inteligencia' (Naval Intelligence) and 'Dirección de Comunicaciones' (Internal & external communications) make up the central nucleus of the Chilean Navy administration and work together in supporting the CJA in leading and administering the navy. Navy planning takes place here and so does the control and coordination of the navy day-to-day operations. The relationship with Defensa is managed by the CJA with the support of EMGA and the rest of the departments that work with the head of the navy.

Reporting to this nucleus you have the operational components that are separated in the warfighting navy (Comando de Operaciones Navales - COMOPER) and the maritime service (Dirección General Del Territorio Marítimo - DGTM), plus the support functions that care for people (Dirección General del Personal - DGPA), logistics (Dirección General de los Servicios - DGSA) and Finance (Dirección General de Finanzas - DGFA). These support functions are vice admiral positions and take care of all of the Armada de Chile regardless of whether the function being performed may be of naval or maritime nature. Together with the functional organisation there is a geographical organisation that reports to the navy administration hub. The Armada has five naval zones that cover all of Chile. The focus of these naval zones will vary and depend on the nature of the naval and maritime activity to be found along Chile's coast.

The Armada comprises 26,000 people including marines, of which 72.8 per cent are non-commissioned officers (Gente de Mar), 9.6 per cent officers (Oficiales), 6.2 per cent civilian staff (Personal sin uniforme), 5.8 per cent military service personnel (Servicio Militar) and 5.6 per cent naval academy and seaman training school (Cadetes – Grumetes).



Composition of the Armada de Chile personnel⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ley Reservada del Cobre, <http://defensa.cl/temas-de-contenido/ley-reservada-del-cobre/>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁰ Prologo Libro Defensa 2017, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁹¹ Dotación Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/quienes-la-componen/2014-05-05/102017.html>, 23 March 2018

The responsibility for the training and education of the Chilean Navy personnel belongs to the 'Dirección de Educación de la Armada' (Naval Education Directorate) that is part of the DGPA. It manages the schools and defines the educational programs to be followed in its establishments. Because of the importance of naval education for the navy, the CJA recently created a cross functional senior committee to advise him on naval education matters.⁹² The Chilean Navy has always been proud of the quality of its people and the education provided to them. The Armada identifies its people as its main foundation.⁹³

The navy has a well-balanced inventory of naval and maritime assets to support its missions.⁹⁴ This is not a surprise considering that as mentioned before, currently it is up to the navy to propose what it needs. During the last 16 years, the inventory of units has basically remained constant when it comes to naval assets but has increased in maritime vessels (OPVs and patrol boats).⁹⁵

Upcoming operational issues are:

- Maritime responsibilities are increasing with the creation of the maritime protected areas which are equivalent to 43 per cent of the EEZ.⁹⁶ The Armada has identified that these areas will need additional assets,⁹⁷ but having said that, the recently released National Oceanic Policy⁹⁸ and the LDN 217 both identify and assign all maritime security and surveillance to the Armada,⁹⁹ so it should not be a complicated task.
- The eight frigates that comprise the core of Chilean naval power are on average 27 years old. The CJA has publicly identified the renewal of the Escuadra as his main objective during his four year tenure.¹⁰⁰ This will not be something easy because of the amounts involved and because it requires persuading the government that Chile's maritime interests are global and not limited to the EEZ, so the navy requires vessels that have the corresponding capabilities.
- Of its four submarines, two are 33 years old (*SS-21 Simpson* and *SS-22 Thomson*). These boats are in good condition, but sooner than later, they will have to be replaced if the navy decides to do so. At the most they could undergo one more life extension starting this year and that will get them another 15 years. Approvals are in-place to go forward with this option.¹⁰¹ The issue here is that some senior officers assume these assets only serve for the defence role and are not good for other mission areas.¹⁰² That assessment assumes that the defence role is currently at a low point because of the absence of identifiable threats, and also assumes that submarines cannot perform functions in the constabulary and diplomatic roles. It is not the navy's top priority one, which remains the frigates replacement and in the case of the 209 class type 1400-L submarines a 15 years life extension.¹⁰³

The training of naval units is performed by the 'Centro de Entrenamiento de la Armada', an organisation that was set-up very much in the way that FOST of Royal Navy is organized. It operates two training centres, one for surface and another one for submarines. This is another aspect the Chilean Navy feels proud of and that has been recognized by Admiral Kurt W. Tidd of the United States Navy to the point of designating Chile the commander of

⁹² Primera reunión del Consejo Superior de Educación de la Armada, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/noticias-navales/primera-reunion-del-recien-confirmado-consejo-superior-de-educacion-de/2018-03-15/105643.html>, 23 March 2018

⁹³ Nuestras dotaciones, el principal pilar de la Armada, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/quienes-la-componen/2014-05-05/102017.html>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁴ Chilean Navy Units, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/chilean-navy/how-we-do-it/chilean-navy-s-units/2017-04-07/113048.html>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁵ Material de la Armada, Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.249, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁶ Consejo de ministros para la sustentabilidad aprueba la creación de dos nuevos parques marinos que suman más de 400 mil km², <http://portal.mma.gob.cl/consejo-de-ministros-para-la-sustentabilidad-aprueba-la-creacion-de-dos-nuevos-parques-marinos-que-suman-mas-de-400-mil-km2/>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁷ Entrevista Almirante Leiva, El Mercurio, <http://www.economiaynegocios.cl/noticias/noticias.asp?id=434707>, 23 March 2018

⁹⁸ Política Oceánica Nacional, p.6, https://minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/artic/20180309/asocfile/20180309143025/politicaoceanicana_nacional_de_chile_ok.pdf, 23 March 2018

⁹⁹ Política del Territorio Marítimo, p.64 - 65, Libro de la Defensa 2017, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁰ Entrevista Almirante Leiva, El Mercurio, <http://www.economiaynegocios.cl/noticias/noticias.asp?id=434707>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰¹ La verdad sobre la renovación de los submarinos U-209 de Chile, <http://www.defensa.com/chile/verdad-sobre-renovacion-submarinos-209-chile>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰² Interview Vice Admiral (Retired) Cristian De La Maza, advisor to the CJA, October 23rd, 2017

¹⁰³ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina March 20th, 2017

the maritime component of RIMPAC 2018.¹⁰⁴ Chile puts a lot of time and effort into training with other navies and not only the local training that is conducted in Chilean waters.¹⁰⁵ This international training not only provides first-class training opportunities, but also allows the Chilean Navy to show the flag and show-off in-front of other navies the level of operational excellence it has achieved, in other words, deterrence.

The DGTM as the maritime authority operates 17 'Gobernaciones Maritimas' (regional maritime authorities) responsible for maritime, lake and riverine activities that go from Arica in the north to Fildes in Antarctica.¹⁰⁶ These on the other hand have subsidiaries in the form of port authorities called 'Capitanias' if larger or 'Alcaldias' if smaller. The functional organisation includes two directorates in charge of rear admirals of the maritime officers' branch, one that takes care of maritime security and operations, and another one that looks into maritime interests and the oceanic environment. The functional organisation also includes the Oceanic and Hydrographic service of the Armada (SHOA), the National Oceanographic committee (CONA) and the Naval Meteorological Service of the Armada (SMA). By law the Armada de Chile is the national maritime authority.¹⁰⁷ This role in the navy is performed by DGTM and this function includes the representation of Chile in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and in all oceanographic forums, and also includes the management and coordination of the search and rescue area assigned to Chile in the South Pacific, that by the way, has 26 million square kilometres.¹⁰⁸

The Gobernaciones Maritimas have double reporting lines. The technical and functional one that goes to the DGTM and the military one that goes to one of the existing 5 Naval Zones. Assets for maritime assets such as ships, patrol boats, helicopters and surveillance may be directly controlled by the Gobernaciones Maritimas or by the naval zones, but that is not an issue because independent of the assets ownership, these are available for maritime work. Professor Geoffrey Till qualifies the Chilean Maritime Service or DGTM as a "semi-autonomous element of the navy",¹⁰⁹ and he is right in his assessment, but I would add that it is the Armada de Chile that has the state delegation of authority for maritime affairs and that as such has an organisation dedicated to that function due to its specific nature. Should it continue to be that way? That is something we will look into in the utility section.

When looking at the Chilean Navy from the perspective of the mission areas, it currently has five areas as assigned by Defensa.¹¹⁰ The mission areas are common to all three of the armed services. When looking at them, they look very like Ken Booth definition of the functions of navies¹¹¹ or the five functions of a post-modern navy as defined by Professor Geoffrey Till.¹¹² The issue here is not if the roles being performed are right or wrong, but the fact that missions such as nation building,¹¹³ and national emergencies and civil protection¹¹⁴ are getting more attention from politicians and press coverage than roles such as defence, constabulary and diplomatic. It would not be surprising if people started to believe that the role of the armed forces is not defence any more, but some sort of social and emergency services.

¹⁰⁴ Entrevista Admiral Kurt W. Tidd USN, El Mercurio, <http://impresa.elmercurio.com/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?dt=25-03-2018%20:00:00&NewsID=558772&dtB=25-03-2018%20:00:00&BodyID=1&PaginaId=6>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁵ Presencia internacional: La Armada de Chile alrededor del mundo, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/nuestra-armada/presencia-en-chile-y-el-extranjero/2015-09-22/125404.html>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁶ Gobernaciones Maritimas, Directemar, Armada de Chile, https://www.directemar.cl/directemar/site/edic/base/port/gobernaciones_maritimas.html, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁷ Política del Territorio Marino, p.64, Libro de la Defensa 2017, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁸ SAR MRCC – Chile, <https://www.directemar.cl/directemar/seguridad-maritima/mrcc-chile/area-sar-mrcc-chile>, 23 March 2018

¹⁰⁹ Till (2013), p.315

¹¹⁰ Áreas de Misión Armada, Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.284 – 285, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹¹¹ Booth (1977), p.16

¹¹² Till (2013), p.35

¹¹³ Defence Minister Alberto Espina on assuming as Minister of Defence, <http://defensa.cl/noticias/ministro-alberto-espina-objetivo-es-contar-con-una-defensa-nacional-al-servicio-de-todos/>, 23 March 2018

¹¹⁴ Defence Minister Alberto Espina visit to the Escuadra, <http://defensa.cl/noticias/en-visita-oficial-a-la-armada-ministro-alberto-espina-una-defensa-modernamente-calificada/>, 23 March 2018



Mission areas and Chilean Navy tasks as defined by the Ministry of Defense in LDN 2017¹¹⁵

As a final detail of this section, the Chilean Navy ranks 5th in the acceptance by the Chilean population in the survey that measures public opinion on different fronts.¹¹⁶ It comes after the radios, Investigations Police (Policia de Investigaciones – PDI), Airforce and Civil Registry. This leverage is something that the Armada can use when necessary, but also it only takes one big mistake to lose your position in the ranking. The navy needs to better understand the way this survey works so it can understand the consequences of its actions. What makes you go down can be obvious, but what makes you improve and the value of better positions is something that needs more understanding.¹¹⁷

4. The purpose and the utility of the Chilean Navy

“No podemos olvidar que somos una marina de guerra”¹¹⁸ Almirante Julio Leiva Molina, Comandante en Jefe de la Armada de Chile.

Admiral Julio Leiva Molina, the Chilean Navy Commander in-chief made a very clear statement that indicates: “We cannot forget we are a warfighting navy”. He did so in the video that he posted for all members of the Chilean Navy on Monday March 5th 2018 with relation to the end of the annual summer vacations and the start of the 2018 working year. The context in which he made that statement was one in which the navy was finishing the summer period of the southern hemisphere, a period very intensive in maritime related activities. It was a call of attention to navy personnel reminding them of the core business of the Armada.

The constitutional and legal definition of the Chilean Navy mission is to deter or repel all threats, be they external or internal, to the sovereignty, the territorial integrity of Chile and to help guarantee the institutional order.¹¹⁹ In the new National Defence Book, the LDN 2017, the mission of the navy has been brought more in-line with the what the navy declares in public is their business. This more modern or enlarged definition says:

Through naval power and the maritime service, contribute to guarding the sovereignty of the territory and the territorial integrity, to maintain the security of the nation, to contribute to national development and support the national interests where needed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Áreas de Misión y Tareas Armada, Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.284, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹¹⁶ Encuesta Cadem, <https://www.cadem.cl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Track-PP-216-Mar-S1-VF.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹¹⁷ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina March, CJA, March 20th, 2018

¹¹⁸ Palabras Almirante Julio Leiva Molina, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/palabras-del-cja/almirante-julio-leiva-da-inicio-al-ano-2018/2018-03-05/084328.html>, 23 March 2018

¹¹⁹ Misión de la Armada de Chile, http://transparencia-armada.cl/transparencia_activa/publicaciones/potestades_armada.html, 23 March 2018

¹²⁰ Misión de la Armada, Libro de la Defensa 2017, p.276, <http://defensa.cl/media/LibroDefensa.pdf>, 23 March 2018

When interviewed about the purpose of the Navy, senior officers gave varied answers, but in general terms these answers were in-line with the mission defined as in the LDN 2017 and also with the Armada publishes in its webpage.¹²¹ Where their opinions differed was when it came to the definition of national interests and the required capabilities to support or protect those interests. The answers would vary from the minimum set by the EEZ, Antarctica and the off-shore islands, all the way up to the before mentioned trio, plus the protection of the international maritime system with a special focus on the western Pacific due to our commodities exporting business to China and other Asian nations. All of them were uncertain about the future of defence and diplomatic roles and concerned that the government would focus the navy more on the maritime constabulary area because of the absence of clear threats to the sovereignty of Chile, after the Hague ruling of January 2014 that settled the northern border with Peru.¹²² The CJA in his interview was wholly supportive of LDN 2017, but at the same time he was very clear that the Chilean national interests were in the Pacific and could well be in the Malacca Strait or the South China Sea. He did not see Chilean maritime interests could be limited to the EEZ and his request for eight new frigates to replace the existing ones when they reach their useful life is based on the fact that Chilean maritime interests require an oceanic navy with warfighting capabilities.¹²³ Others were concerned about a decline in Chile's capacity to deter conflict and contribute to UN peace-keeping operations, argued that the maritime is short term and defence is a long term view.¹²⁴ The Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, though supporting the roles the navy has been developing since the early 2000s emphasised the importance of the 'national' element and the importance of retaining public support through being available to help in emergencies and catastrophes. Additionally, there should be an international dimension in which the Armada focuses on the Pacific, especially Asia and Oceania, and in the participation in peacekeeping operations; with its British and Dutch equipment it could seek support from other navies in more distant operations in the western Pacific and elsewhere. Finally, there are responsibilities in the maritime dimension including all maritime interests, not least the new protected maritime spaces that have been created in recent times which represent 43 per cent of the EEZ.

Chilean maritime interests comprise the safeguarding of the EEZ and the protected maritime areas; the off-shore Chilean islands in the Pacific; the Antarctic territory claimed by Chile, and global maritime system on which Chile's very open economy depends for the transportation of its imports and exports.¹²⁵ Having said that, Chile has acquired the obligation of search and rescue in the South Pacific over an area of 26 million square kilometres, which has to be attended by the Armada and Chilean Airforce. But the Chilean Navy is also very proud that in 2018 it will be leading the naval component of RIMPAC, an exercise that is led and organised by the US with the objective of assuring the stability of the Pacific. Arguably given that China is Chile's main trading partner, it would not be wise for Chile to be part of a force being challenged by China. As we speak China is part of RIMPAC 2018 and as long as it is part, Chile can continue to participate in RIMPAC. If China is out, then it should reevaluate its participation.

The extent of Chile's maritime responsibilities moreover requires an ocean-going navy with guns and missiles. What is more, Geoffrey Till indicates that navies such as the ones of Chile, New Zealand and Australia need larger vessels of the type that usually are found in navies more than in coastguard because of the sea and weather conditions in which they have to operate.¹²⁶ On the other hand, to assume that the threats to Chilean interests will only be non-state actors that can be dealt with by coastguard and OPVs type assets seems naive. A very different game might ensue if Chile has no capacity for deterrence based on naval vessels and resources such as the existing Marine Corps Expeditionary Brigade that allow you to project power ashore. If by any chance you need to protect your interests far away from Chile, better have solutions at-hand because building a frigates based fleet or a

¹²¹ ¿Por qué es necesaria?, Armada de Chile, <https://www.armada.cl/armada/institucional/por-que-es-necesaria/2014-04-28/103537.html>, 23 March 2018

¹²² Interviews to Comodoro Yerko Marcic – Sub-Jefe del Estado Mayor General de la Armada, Capitán de Navío Carlos Schnaidt – Operaciones Estado Mayor General de la Armada and Capitán de Navío Alberto Soto – Jefe de Planes y Doctrina Estado Mayor General de la Armada, October 12th, 2017

¹²³ Interview Admiral Julio Leiva Molina March, CJA, March 20th, 2018

¹²⁴ Interview Rear Admiral Ignacio Mardones Costa, Comandante en Jefe de la Escuadra, November 11th, 2017

¹²⁵ Reporte Anual Comercio Exterior Chile 2017, DIRECON, <https://www.direcon.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Reporte-Anual-2017.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹²⁶ Till (2013), p.326

warfighting navy takes time to produce and you cannot count that the US will for ever and ever allow the rest of the world to get a free ride when it comes to keeping the system working.

How much warfighting capabilities are needed is an interesting question and a complex one because when being used to establish required force levels against the five missions discussed earlier, there is a tendency to regard them all as of the same worth, so an asset that covers them all comes out highly. Nonetheless Politicians and the Ministry of Defence very much like this method because it makes the justification for purchasing assets such as the purchase of the LSDH 'Aldea',¹²⁷ easier to explain to parliament and the public opinion, but has the flaw that it could take Chile to have a navy that is not in-line with what it needs in the primary and most important defence role. This issue needs to be addressed.

The Chilean Navy will find out in the next few years if its narrative is strong and if their case for an ocean going navy of eight frigates was successful.¹²⁸ The CJA set the agenda of the discussion of the Chilean maritime case when he was interviewed in January 2018 and received a big boost at the beginning of March this year when the maritime interests of Chile were identified in the national oceanic policy that was published on March 9th 2018.¹²⁹ This policy came as a great help to the Armada at a time it needs to work on creating a narrative that will support the capabilities it believes it should have and more important yet, continue being an oceanic navy.

The case for the Chilean Navy is strengthened by the cost efficiencies that come from operating the naval and maritime elements alongside each other and its relative freedom from corruption compared to the Army and Police, especially as the government is giving dealing with this a high priority.¹³⁰

5. Conclusions

The Chilean Navy has been a good investment for Chile and has a tremendous business case to present. The Armada has built its narrative based on its 200 years of existence, but with a strong bias in favour of its warfighting history of the 19th century. That narrative is deeply rooted into its culture, a culture that reinforces this value every year when the victories and heroes of the past are celebrated in a very important way. In the future it will need not only to recognize its fighting DNA, but also its maritime heritage and give it the space it deserves in the Armada de Chile narrative. The navy needs to keep in its culture that it is as much a fighting navy as it is a maritime services organisation. A good part of its utility is based on the fact that it combines both services in one creating efficiencies that other similar organisations are not capable of achieving. Not doing so would mean continuing to understate the value of what it does in its day-to-day maritime services.

The past 200 years have shaped Chilean Navy culture and values and provides the navy with a sense of purpose but a changing context increases the need to think seriously about the country's maritime interests and what is needed to defend them. Should it become an anti-access navy on the one hand or move forwards to help protect the international system from which it benefits? Either way the Navy needs to address its narrative as a sound foundation for a future as valuable as its past.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Presidente Piñera encabezó recepción del buque Sargento Aldea, <http://www.defensa.cl/noticias/presidente-pinera-encabezo-recepcion-del-buque-sargento-aldea/>, 23 March 2018

¹²⁸ Entrevista Almirante Leiva, El Mercurio, <http://www.economiaynegocios.cl/noticias/noticias.asp?id=434707>, 23 March 2018

¹²⁹ Política Oceánica Nacional, <https://minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/artic/20180309/asocfile/20180309143025/politicaoceanicanacionaldechileok.pdf>, 23 March 2018

¹³⁰ Reunión Ministro de Defensa con Presidente del Consejo de la Transparencia, <http://defensa.cl/noticias/encuentro-con-presidente-del-consejo-para-la-transparencia-ministro-alberto-espina-nuestras-ff-aa/>, 28 March 2018

¹³¹ A full biography of the mainly Spanish-language resources consulted in the course of this paper may be obtained from the author

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