



World Geography

The Atacama Dispute

Name: _____

Section: _____

Score: _____/5

Directions: Read the two articles below relating to the territorial dispute between Chile and Bolivia and then answer the thought questions at the end of the articles.

Bolivia seeks return to sea

The Washington Times
Monday, March 29, 2004

Bolivian and Chilean news-papers these days are filled with minute details of a 125-year-old border conflict that has come back to life as one of South America's top issues.

In 1879, Chile seized 75,000 square miles of territory and 250 miles of coastline from Bolivia in a conflict that also involved Peru and is known as "the War of the Pacific."

Ever since, Bolivians have fumed over the loss of the Litoral de Atacama, the seaside area that now belongs to Chile. In a succession of conflicts during the next 55 years, Bolivia also lost the oil-bearing Chaco region to Paraguay and rubber-growing areas to Brazil, but being cut off from the sea and not having access to the world hurts most.

In October, widespread opposition to plans for exporting Bolivian gas through Chile contributed to a popular uprising that ousted Bolivia's elected president, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada.

His vice president and successor, Carlos Mesa, is making the recovery of some sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean his government's No. 1 foreign-policy priority.

Mr. Mesa has called off free-trade talks with Chile and stressed in speeches at home and abroad that any further postponement of a solution to Bolivia's landlocked status could "destabilize the region" because it "has put Bolivian democracy at risk."

In a interview with The Washington Times at the presidential palace, Mr. Mesa, a former historian and journalist, said lack of access to the Pacific through a shoreline of its own has contributed to Bolivia's severe underdevelopment in the past century.

"The issue of sovereign access to the sea — for reasons that any person who understands economics knows — is much different than merely seeking a piece of territory," he said.

"To lack access to the sea is without a doubt a very serious handicap that has very seriously affected the economy of Bolivia and continues to be a problem. And for historical reasons, this has a deep emotional component that is very important for our country," he said.

Since the forced departure of Mr. Sanchez, there has been a flurry of international diplomacy in support of Bolivia's need for sea access. On a recent trip to South America, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan offered his offices for eventual talks between Bolivia and Chile. Mexican President Vicente Fox and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter have volunteered to mediate.

Bolivia also has received encouraging words from the European Parliament, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Argentine President Nestor Kirchner and the Vatican.

However, Chilean officials adamantly deny that their country hampers Bolivia's economic development by denying it a slice of the Pacific coast. They point out that under a 1904 treaty between the adjoining countries, Bolivia has duty-free access to the northern Chilean port of Arica, and Chile paid for and built a railroad linking Arica with the Bolivian capital, La Paz.

The Bush administration has reversed a long-standing policy of U.S. support for Bolivia's quest for sovereign access to the Pacific. Acting as mediator in 1926, the United States recommended that the port of Arica in northern Chile be given to Bolivia. At the time, Chile agreed, but Peru refused to accept the proposal.

Peru had been an ally of Bolivia against Chile in the 1879 war, but had borne the brunt of the fighting, in which its navy was destroyed and its capital, Lima, badly damaged. Bolivia had no navy and withdrew from the fighting early.

Both the Reagan and Carter administrations were vocal supporters of Bolivia's rights to the sea. Since 1979, the Organization of American States (OAS) has passed 11 resolutions in support of Bolivia's "maritime rights." The Reagan government was especially supportive of Bolivia's efforts through the OAS to regain sovereign access to the Pacific.

But the Bush administration contends that Bolivia has only itself to blame for its economic woes. In a January speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Phil Chicola, director of the State Department's Andean office, said, "We sympathize with some of Bolivia's problems. We don't sympathize so much with some of the excuses they give."

Mr. Chicola said that if the lack of sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean explains the underdevelopment of Bolivia, then "that immediately makes one think about what happened with [landlocked] Switzerland."

But a 1998 Harvard University study by renowned development economist Jeffrey Sachs, a former adviser to Bolivia, backs that country's thesis. It found that "location and climate have large effects on income levels and income growth" and that at "particular disadvantage are regions located far from coasts and ocean-navigable rivers, for which the transportation costs of international trade are high."

Mr. Sachs said that if a country is landlocked in the middle of one of the world's richest markets, as Switzerland is, there is no great disadvantage. But for countries landlocked in poor regions — and there are many like Bolivia in Africa and Asia — it probably costs them up to two percentage points in annual economic growth.

Bolivian Deputy Foreign Minister Jorge Gumucio said that despite its exemption from Chilean trade tariffs, Bolivia incurs hefty transportation and port costs under the current system.

At a minimum, Bolivia seeks a 6-mile-wide corridor stretching roughly 100 miles from its border with Chile to the Pacific — perhaps just below Chile's present border with Peru — plus a small stretch of shore in which to develop commercial and industrial activity under its flag.

Mr. Gumucio said there is historical precedent for Bolivia's demand. He pointed particularly to the land corridor that Croatia ceded last year to landlocked Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving the latter direct access to the Adriatic Sea through the fishing village of Neum.

"That corridor actually splits the Croatian coast in two," he said, which would not happen if Chile pulled back southward a few miles from its present border with Peru.

In its attempts to deflect the growing criticism provoked by Bolivia in international forums, Chile insists that Bolivia's aspirations should not be "multilateralized."

A Chilean Foreign Ministry official who declined to be named said Santiago wants to deal with the issue on a bilateral basis, because "with international intervention, we would then be forced to negotiate."

Chile says that it would be willing to discuss improving Bolivia's access to the Pacific coast when international attention subsides but that it opposes giving Bolivia sovereign access. Santiago says the 1904 treaty put the issue of sovereignty to rest.

"For this issue to be put on our agenda," Chile's Deputy Foreign Minister Cristian Barros told the Santiago newspaper *La Segunda*, "we would have to have a pending problem with respect to borders, and we do not."

But Bolivian historian Leonardo Jeffs, a specialist on the Bolivia-Chile conflict, says the center-left government of Chilean President Ricardo Lagos is staking out a stronger position than past Chilean governments because it is "afraid to be labeled antipatriotic by the armed forces and the political right."

“Throughout the past century, many past Chilean governments offered to give back to Bolivia some sovereign access to the sea, including the [1973-90 military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto] Pinochet,” who, Mr. Jeffs said, “twice was close to returning Bolivia a sea corridor.”

Mr. Mesa insists that “this is a multilateral issue, because only a continental conscience that there is a problem is going to oblige Chile to negotiate with us.”

Chile laments World Court decision to hear Bolivia sea dispute

Reuters.com

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By Yoruk Bahceli

Bolivia won the first round of its battle against Chile to gain unfettered access to the Pacific Ocean, as an International Court of Justice decision went in its favor, disappointing Chileans who had hoped the case would end on Thursday.

The ICJ, also known as the World Court, said on Thursday it will continue to hear the case brought by Bolivia against Chile, which seeks to force its neighbor to enter negotiations to grant it a corridor to the Pacific Ocean.

Chile had argued that the court had no jurisdiction to hear the case because of a 1904 Peace Treaty that fixed its border with Bolivia.

But on Thursday the court rejected Chile's argument, saying that Bolivia's claim that Chile has an obligation to negotiate "sovereign access" to the Pacific is not dealt with in that treaty.

“The matters in the dispute are not matters already settled by arrangements between the parties ... or governed by treaties in force,” Presiding Judge Ronny Abraham of France said, reading the 14-2 decision by the international panel of judges in The Hague.

But the dispute is far from over. The decision does not address the merit of Bolivia's case. It only means that the case will continue.

The court did not say when it would make a ruling, and neither side has advanced its actual arguments.

Bolivians gathered outside the court cheered the finding, and a beaming President Evo Morales said he was "enormously satisfied" with the result.

In Chile, where the decision had been closely followed and broadcast live, President Michelle Bachelet said: "We maintain the firm conviction that the Bolivian demand lacks all basis, as it confuses rights with aspirations."

Landlocked Bolivia lost access to the Pacific following an 1880s war, but it has remained a thorn in the side of relations with its more affluent Andean neighbor ever since.

In 2013, Bolivia took up the case with the court in the Hague, demanding Chile negotiate to grant it sovereign access.

Bolivia, which still retains a navy and wants a corridor to the sea to boost exports of natural gas and minerals, currently has low-cost access to Chilean ports.

The International Court of Justice is the United Nations' court for resolving disputes between countries. Its rulings are binding and cannot be appealed.

(Additional reporting by Toby Sterling in Amsterdam and Rosalba O'Brien in Santiago; Editing by Dominic Evans and Jonathan Oatis)

