FIVE

Beyond the "Desert"

Indigenous Genocide as a Structuring Event in Northern Patagonia

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Introduction

This chapter deals with state policies, government mechanisms, and various social agencies involved in the process of state consolidation and the subjugation and incorporation of indigenous people in northern Patagonia. The period focuses on the military occupation known as the "Conquest of the Desert"—1878 to 1885—as well as its short- and long-term effects once the campaigns ended. The aim of this work is to balance the conceptual scope and limits of analyzing this complex process in terms of war, assimilation, or genocide. At the same time, it seeks to contribute to historical knowledge about the social structure of the National Territories, Patagonia and Chaco, which were incorporated with subaltern status within the national territory from 1884 to the 1950s. Thus, a second part of the chapter will attempt to periodize indigenous genocide, bearing in mind the different steps that led to genocide as well as the outcome of this event. Finally, we will acknowledge the particularities of the Argentine experience in the construction of subalternity within the state-nation-territory matrix.

This chapter is the result of our participation in different collective research projects that have studied indigenous peoples' history in Patagonia, from their subjugation to the present. We have especially analyzed indigenous agency and

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political organization, as well as the subjugation, exploitation, and discrimination that indigenous peoples have been suffering in Argentina's society. Our work also draws from debates within Red de Investigadores en Genocidio y Política Indígena en Argentina (RIGPI).[1] RIGPI's first aim has been to study the historical grounds of Natives' subjugation to the national states in order to make visible the contemporary demands and conflicts of indigenous peoples. Our first task was to understand what happened to the Mapuche and Tehuelche peoples during the Conquest of the Desert. As simple as it may sound, the question has not been academically addressed for over a century, even though the military side of the conquest constituted the last event regarding indigenous peoples registered by national historiography during most of the twentieth century. Bearing this in mind, we have sought to reexamine the process known as the Conquest of the Desert.

In this chapter, in order to study the process of subjugation and incorporation of northern Patagonian peoples, we suggest a classification of periods into a "nation-state-territory matrix." This is a historical relation that is punctuated by the military campaigns but that extends over our national history to the present time. We use the concept "nation-state-territory matrix" to refer to the hegemonic and complex process that simultaneously led to the intertwined construction of state, nation, and territory, establishing values and meanings in spatial, sociological, and institutional senses. The idea of a matrix refers to the analytical possibilities in linking the terms "state," "nation," and "territory" in different ways. For example, it allows us to regard the differences between thinking about a national territory and a territorial nation, like the construction of one territory for the nation or the construction of a nation for one territory. Speaking about indigenous incorporation into the nation-state-territory matrix implies not only a historical description of indigenous bodies' subjection and the persecution of indigenous peoples' social organization, but also the incorporation of the "indigenous issue" as a political, cultural, and ideological issue within this matrix in Argentina. Mainly, this process implies the construction of the indigenous peoples of northern Patagonia as an internal other.[2]

War, Assimilation/Incorporation, or Genocide

Since the 1980s in Argentina, and coincidentally with the return of democracy, there has been a notable expansion of historiographic, ethnohistorical, and

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anthropological approaches to the historical relationship between indigenous peoples and the process of state formation. What has been questioned again and again, from different perspectives and for different scholarly purposes, is the empirical and conceptual description of indigenous subjugation and forced incorporation. Works such as those by Raúl Mandrini (1992), Martha Bechis (1992), and Enrique Mases (2002) began a critique of traditional hegemonic views. During much of the twentieth century, such hegemonic constructions characterized the Conquest of the Desert as part of the dispute over sovereignty between the Argentine and Chilean states in the Southern Cone;[3] or they described it apolitically, as part of a natural and evolutionary history[4] (see Carolyne Larson's chapter 1 in this volume). In this context, and in direct opposition to these tendencies, new analyses regarding the conquest as a genocide emerged, voiced first by indigenous organizations (1980s) and, in due time, by researchers as well (1990s). In general terms, although our proposal may be somewhat schematic, we identify three possible interpretations that over time have been applied to the process of indigenous subjugation and incorporation in Argentina. Those frames of interpretation of the Conquest of the Desert as an event are: war, assimilation/incorporation, or genocide. Thus, we need to inquire, what are the implications of these three ways of approaching the conquest process? What are their origins and what are their potentials and limits?

WAR

Yesterday and today, we find the discourse of the Conquest of the Desert as a victorious war. The actual participants in the military and political processes of subjugation and incorporation were also the narrators of a history that legitimized their own agency in terms of a war between civilization and barbarism (Ramayón 1980). President Nicolás Avellaneda (1874–1880) remarked on the difference between previous wars against the Indians, which he understood as wars over internal frontiers, and the new narrative of state advance emerging during the conquest. In a daily order delivered to Argentine soldiers on January 11, 1879, he affirmed: "After so many years of war against the Indians, today it [the nation] comes out of the dark and there is a whole People cheering the winners" (Walther 1970, 446).

One central element of this argument was the identification and construction of an internal enemy as a threat to the goods and persons as well as the

Larson_TXT1.indd 124 8/5/20 9:24 AM

social order of the nation. To this end, the political discourse created and promoted—through the media and even through scientific discourse—an *indio malonero* (raiding Indian) stereotype[5] (Zeballos [1878] 1958; Zeballos [1880] 1960).[6] By the end of 1878, just before the military advance began, an editorial in the newspaper *La Tribuna* identified the origins of the Ranquel people: "Due to the fusion of an inferior race and a corrupted race, true monsters have been born."[7] The monstrosity of the Other consisted of its identification with degenerate races by crossbreeding, by constituting bands of alleged thieves of cattle and persons, by not obeying any law, and by its provenance, especially if from the west of the Andes (as these Indians were suspected of being linked to Chilean interests). This construction of the enemy enabled the Argentine government to erase and ignore three centuries of diplomatic, political, and economic relations between Hispanic creoles and indigenous peoples.

These relations amounted to a legal corpus made up of agreements and treaties that explicitly recognized the indigenous sociopolitical units and their territories (Levaggi 2000). The indio malonero stereotype operated as a homogenizing label and as a menace to the indigenous people themselves. This stereotype converged with the construction of an Indian who could be assimilated; that is, an Indian who sooner or later would cease to be an Indian and could eventually be civilized.

In effect, when the military campaigns began, the Argentine state broke every treaty and historical agreement established with the chiefs (or *longko*) that had been signed from colonial times until 1878. At the same time, the army secured specific financing in order to modernize and professionalize the armed forces. Then, Minister of War Julio A. Roca established a multistage plan in order to conquer the so-called desert.

The armed forces narrated the Conquest of the Desert—with practically no notable battles or military losses—as an epic story in which they were the victors and agents of Patagonia's incorporation into the Argentine state's sovereign territory. Simultaneously, military commanders saw these campaigns as valuable training for officers. Roca, by then president of Argentina, wrote to General Conrado Villegas in 1883: "It is a pity that these romantic campaigns to the Desert are coming to an end, they were an admirable school for commanders and officers of the army."[8]

The indigenous population, stereotyped as indios maloneros, were not considered sovereign sociopolitical units or as people with rights but rather

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as savage elements. In addition, they were coded as obstacles to building national sovereignty. What is more, they were at times seen as a foreign presence that could eventually favor Chilean interests in Patagonia. Therefore, military historiography has understood the conquest as a war (Walther 1970), in the same fashion that the political and naturalist scientific discourse did. Jointly they legitimized and justified the Conquest of the Desert. The event was then inscribed in the national history (Schoo Lastra 1928; Marfany 1940; Biedma 1975) as a step toward the civilizing and modernizing of the state. Altogether, the historical narrative would continue to render invisible not only an array of policies and state actions toward indigenous peoples, but also those indigenous individuals themselves within the rest of the population.

As early as 1881, President Roca asserted the success of the campaigns: "In the near future, settlements will arise in those same places; where there are no longer Indians, tribes, or terrible chiefs to terrify the shepherds or prevent the cultivation of the fields."[9] Since then, Argentina's historiography—with some partial exceptions—has continued to reproduce this interpretation of the events that led to the subjugation and incorporation of the indigenous peoples of the south. These analyses evidently ruled out the stories of prisoners and survivors, and the policies that affected them and determined their destinies in collective and individual terms.

The war, its heroes, emblematic sites, and—fundamentally—the narrative and its achievements were immortalized in the daily geography of Argentina. Equestrian monuments and toponomy—names given to squares, streets, routes, and cities—have served over time to fix the hegemonic narrative of indigenous submission as a war won against "barbarism" and the wild "desert." One hundred years later, in 1979, the dictatorship of General Jorge Videla carried out a colossal commemoration of the campaigns to the desert with a series of activities that included the creation of commemorative coins, military parades, school events, horseback riding, and a massive history conference in honor to the so-called epic of the desert in the city of General Roca, Río Negro Province. In this context, the dictatorship celebrated the role of the armed forces in a war against, and the annihilation of, internal enemies that threatened the national order. The dictatorship identified the desert campaigns of the past with its own operations against rural and urban guerrillas. Civil society actively participated in the festivities that year: newspapers and children's publications produced illustrated supplements; Channel 9 of the city

Larson_TXT1.indd 126 8/5/20 9:24 AM

of Buenos Aires produced the first Argentine miniseries on color television related to the topic; and scout patrols raised towers—simulating observation towers used during the Conquest of the Desert—everywhere (see David Sheinin's chapter in this volume).

Some present-day authors have also chosen to use the term "war" in reference to the conquest. Marcelo Gavirati and Julio Vezub, for instance, propose to replace the term "Conquest of the Desert" with "war for the dominion of Pampa and Patagonia" (2001, 150). Others, like Luis Alberto Romero (2011), refer to an "inevitable war"[10] or underline the importance of the technological advantages such as the "train, the telegraph, and the modern Remington" (Vezub 2001, 196–99), in indigenous peoples' inevitable subjugation.[11] In other cases, the process is categorized as a "social war" or a "war for the construction of sovereign power" (Escolar, Salomón Tarquini, and Vezub 2015). This perspective focuses on the confrontation and the strategies developed both by the state and by indigenous polities. It inscribes the Conquest of the Desert as a long-term conflict in which the campaigns are only one episode within the growing tensions. These authors choose the term "war" to acknowledge the agency of indigenous peoples as well as to avoid their victimization.

ASSIMILATION

Second, we find the discourse of assimilation, which proposes the conquest as an apolitical outcome or as a naturalized and evolutionary history of civilization understood as universal. On March 1, 1878, an editorial in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa* claimed: "We are engaged in a contest of races in which the indigenous life carries on itself the tremendous anathema of its disappearance, written in the name of civilization." The editorial further stated: "Let us morally destroy that race, let us annihilate their economy and their political organization, let us disappear their tribes and if necessary divide the families." Some years later, Francisco P. Moreno, a scientist who had inspected the indigenous territory before the military advance, asserted in the context of the opening of the Museum of La Plata in 1887:

> The Argentine Republic is, without doubt, a vast necropolis of lost races. They came from the remotest theaters, pushed by the fatal struggle for life, in which the strongest survive, some conquerors and some conquered, and became extinct in our extreme south.[12]

Larson_TXT1.indd 127 8/5/20 9:24 AM

The museum, under Moreno's direction at the time, was built by prisoners of the campaigns, many of whose bodies became part of the museum's collection and exhibits immediately after they died. Within this line of thought, assimilation was the only viable option for the individuals or remnants of surviving tribes after the Conquest of the Desert, when the Argentine state announced the "end" of indigenous societies and peoples.

In the National Congress, and in the press of the time, a debate began on the destiny of the indigenous populations subjugated, rounded up, and deported from their sovereign lands to different areas of the country. Among the different proposals voiced by Catholic and liberal commentators, ranging from physical elimination to the granting of land to establish agricultural colonies, there was no agreement on a single strategy that would determine the fate of those subjected (Lenton 2014). This legal vacuum favored the processes of deportation (from sovereign indigenous territory in Wallmapu to Argentine state territory)[13] and redistribution of indigenous people to different regions of the country, undertaken by state agencies and civil organizations in response to the interests of the different fronts of progressive capitalism: viticulture, sugar and cotton cultivation, domestic service, and recruitment into the armed forces. In these debates, which continued into the twentieth century, the idea of imminent assimilation remained the primary statement. Despite the differences of opinion that emerged depending on the debaters' respective political positions and social sectors, each nonetheless sustained the need to tutor the indigenous population in this process of assimilation and incorporation as citizens, Christians, and workers.

The discourse of assimilation is linked to, and is to some extent a continuation of, the narrative of war. According to this perspective, the surviving Natives would gradually assimilate through citizenship, education, military service, and labor, as well as via state agencies that would gradually establish a presence in Patagonian territory (Quijada 1999; Argeri 2005). At the same time, this discourse has a conceptual counterpart: the gradual—and often forced—loss of culture. Some commentators have described this assimilation as the gradual and successful result of state conquest; others have focused on the actions of the evangelizing agencies; and finally, we find those who identify the outcome only as an epiphenomenon of the processes of capitalist expansion.[14] In more recent times, assimilation has also been analytically employed by authors who denounce it as a result of subjection. These authors identify

Larson_TXT1.indd 128 8/5/20 9:24 AM

assimilation as forced acculturation and, in general terms, propose to dewesternize the history that explains these processes. Some authors who support this perspective identify as members of indigenous groups themselves and propose a decolonization of knowledge, in the recovery of the forms of knowledge proper to their peoples (Comunidad de Historia Mapuche 2012).

GENOCIDE

Finally, recent scholars and activists have reconceptualized the Conquest of the Desert as genocide. The first to propose this understanding of the conquest were indigenous activists in Argentina, in the context of the democratic recovery that began in 1983 and especially in the context of the quincentennial celebration of 1992. Subsequently, academic scholarship has made use of the concept (Trinchero 2005; Bartolomé 2004), in some cases based on the definition formulated by the United Nations convention, but sometimes transcending this legal framework in order to broaden the concept's significance as a category of analysis (e.g., Díaz et al. 2007; Delrio et al. 2010). Thinking of the conquest as a genocide implies, in the first place, understanding the process in terms of crimes against humanity, as the Argentine state identified indigenous populations as a dangerous "internal other." This process allowed the forced incorporation of the Natives into the labor market at the same time that they were stripped of material belongings, territory, and their own forms of social organization and cultural production. The genocidal process was successful in the sense that it achieved the definitive subjugation of the Natives and their incorporation into the Argentine state-nation-territory matrix, denying their existence as cultural and sociopolitical units.

These three interpretations have limits that we will briefly discuss before detailing our argument that the conquest was indeed a genocide. To begin with, the discourse of war has been hegemonic and predominant in national narratives and has had four central consequences. First, history as a discipline accepted for decades, without further examination, the victorious outcome of incorporation, taking for granted the resolution of the "indigenous issue" with the Natives' military defeat. This discourse did not contemplate as an object of study the indigenous peoples and the processes that affected them after the campaigns of submission. The policies deployed against indigenous populations from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth were invisible within this historiography. Second, this type of historiographical

Larson_TXT1.indd 129 8/5/20 9:24 AM

discourse has been intertwined, in different historical moments, with the objectives of the political and economic sectors, which have politically capitalized on the so-called war or conquest and which have benefited from indigenous lands and labor forces. Third, this discourse has facilitated the construction and maintenance of the stereotype of wild and violent indios maloneros, as well as the idea of the desert as empty and in need of civilizing, installing these notions in popular culture as symbols and truths of the national imaginary and folklore (see Jennie Daniels's chapter in this volume). Fourth, the interpretation of war has enabled, and continues to enable, a fictitious reality in which comparable sides would have faced each other.

Current scholars who employ war as a conceptual frame seek to differentiate themselves from their predecessors by vindicating indigenous struggle. They argue that other options—such as talking about genocide—victimize indigenous people and deny their agency. However, indigenous peoples' struggles to defend their territory were always a theme of military and nationalist historiography on the war.[15] From this perspective, resistance (or struggle) is limited to violent confrontation, and therefore many different political practices and strategies are diminished.

In addition, the description of the "war" that some authors propose has framed certain indigenous people and individuals as guilty of "treason" or "collaboration" with the Argentine state. This interpretive framework, enabled by the language of war, presupposes a possibility of choice in the context in which the military campaigns of conquest were deployed. An evident problem with the war interpretation is that it focuses mainly on the great leaders, leaving aside the histories and trajectories of other historical actors: the tens of thousands of families who cannot be understood only through the fate of the chiefs. Finally, in the past as well as today, it is also a discourse with connections to political conflict. The Argentine media refers to the current conflicts involving Mapuche communities in terms of "war" and "confrontation." Newspaper headlines regarding a 2017 conflict between Argentina's national parks—a state organism—and a Mapuche community include:

> "A Mapuche band declares 'war' on Argentina and Chile."[16]
>
> "Patagonia: the war against the RAM[17] advances. The Ministry of Security will provide technical and professional resources to investigate with the prosecutors of Neuquén, Río Negro, and Chubut."[18]

Larson_TXT1.indd 130 8/5/20 9:24 AM

> "Villa Mascardi: the government confirms that the Mapuches used firearms and speaks of a 'declaration of war' from the RAM."[19]

The language of war, as well as its conceptual framework, shapes the understanding of present-day conflicts in Argentine society and inhibits other political possibilities. It is powerfully based on the stereotype built since the conquest and throughout the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, the discourse of assimilation identifies and analyzes the processes of nonmilitary violence but frames them within declaimed civilizing, modernizing, or citizen-inclusion processes. Therefore, quantifying the degree of indigenous peoples' cultural, political, economic, or social assimilation frequently depoliticizes these processes. Second, the assimilation narrative leaves unexplained the so-called indigenous revitalization processes in Argentina, especially those with enormous presence since the return of democracy in 1983. It disconnects those processes from their particular histories, because they have been invisible to historiography. Third, the assimilation argument has served to question the legitimacy of the "new communities."[20] It has instituted the stereotype of the indigenous *trucho* or fake, which implies an association with foreignness and a threat to the national social order.[21] Fourth, new approaches that denounce the violence of assimilation also entail essentialization in their interpretations. That would be an original starting point from which to think about cross-breedings, acculturation, or gradualization of cultural change. From this point of view, there would be then the possibility of reversion to a prestate or original stage of life in Wallmapu. And fifth, what assimilation stories have in common is presupposing assimilation as a permanent state of loss, whether through earlier narratives of extinction, evangelization, and civilization or later ones of citizenship, development, and ethnic revitalization.

Finally, genocide as a framework of interpretation has been criticized by scholars who assume that the concept refers to the total elimination of the indigenous population or the absence of agency, resistance, struggle, or defense on the part of the same. It is also criticized for being anachronistic, since it was a nonexistent category at the time of the campaigns. And those who employ the concept are also accused of essentializing the state as a Leviathan. We will now explore the usefulness and limitations of this conceptualization.

Larson_TXT1.indd 131 8/5/20 9:24 AM

Subjugation and Settler Colonialism

Genocide studies has become a growing field in the past decades. In part this is because the concept is complex and controversial, and therefore it enhances many different questions that challenge researchers from different fields. We choose the concept because it helps us to bridge and understand the relationship between the subjugation and incorporation of indigenous populations in the nineteenth century, and the construction of a resulting social order that continues today. As Zygmunt Bauman has argued (1989), genocide can be understood as only an "end" in itself or, better, as both an "end" and a "means to an end." As an end, the attack against indigenous populations had a significant economic outcome by the late nineteenth century, which we will sketch briefly in this section, as well as political consequences. But it also had a profound and less evident social impact. Therefore, and following Dirk Moses (2008) and Patrick Wolfe (2006), we analyze the effects of genocide as a settler colonialist deep structure. That is to say, we understand the Conquest of the Desert not as an isolated and violent event but as an event that provided a structuring logic to Patagonian and Argentine society from then on. With this idea, we intend to discern Argentina's present reality, with its notorious silences and alleged truths that shape common sense. Thus, we will appeal to sources produced in the twenty-first century as well as those from the past.

The concept of genocide implies, to begin with, a crime against humanity. We have already analyzed its relevance and applicability in opposition to recent historiographical developments regarding the campaigns in the desert. We have shown elsewhere (Delrio et al. 2010) that the entries in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide were fully met during the military occupation of northern Patagonia.[22]

The military campaigns involved not only the advance of troops across Patagonian territory but the installation of forts along the Negro and Neuquén Rivers. These forts, which varied in size, lodged both troops and indigenous prisoners surrendered to the army voluntarily or by force. The Indians were detained in these camps not for any crime or alleged crime they had committed but because they were "Indians." The forts operated as concentration camps. In the official documents, we have found information on concentration camps operating from 1878 until 1888 (Pérez 2016). Although the campaigns were

Larson_TXT1.indd 132 8/5/20 9:24 AM

officially ended by 1885, we find evidence of camps supported by the state until 1888.

These camps were the bases from which at least ten thousand Indians were deported from their sovereign lands (Mases 2002).[23] Men, women, and children were transported on demand to the growing agricultural centers and the city of Buenos Aires. Many men were sent to work in slavery-like conditions in the sugarcane- and grape-harvesting regions of Tucumán and Mendoza. Young men were also made to join the army, with mandatory service terms of at least six years. Many families were deported to Martín García Island (Papazián and Nagy 2010). Women and children were mostly delivered to the cities in order to work as domestic servants. Although there was a long-standing debate in Congress over this practice, children were separated from their families and renamed after the families that kept them (Lenton 2014). The dismemberment of families, especially children, would guarantee their coming to civilization.[24]

Recent scholars have come to these conclusions in part because the object of study has slightly changed. The traditional historical narratives of the Conquest of the Desert focused first on the military "epic" and second on the lives and challenges of the caciques (chiefs). These new works, by contrast, reconstruct the trajectories and whereabouts of indigenous individuals and communities, and not just their leaders. We refer to those persons, who could be—or not—part of a prestigious indigenous family, those Indians who had been previously obscured behind the politics of leaders who were recognized by the state's administrators. The Conquest of the Desert took away the lives, organizations, families, homes, animals, and territories of the Mapuche and Tehuelche people, the great majority of whom had never been warriors or a menace to others.

As we have already stated, these violent events were not only aimed to destroy indigenous society and its sociopolitical organizations but were also a means of structuring a new Patagonian society following the military occupation. The control of territory was undoubtedly one of the primary aims of the military campaigns. If we examine these policies—their projects and implementation—we can better understand how they have constructed and organized a population desirable to the Argentine nation under racialized and stratified criteria.

The cartography of land privatization reveals that the most productive parcels of land were distributed en masse soon after the military occupation

Larson_TXT1.indd 133 8/5/20 9:24 AM

(Bandieri and Blanco 2009). For example, the first to receive land and titles were the land companies, such as the Argentine Southern Land Company.[25] By contrast, the indigenous families who survived the campaigns had to wait several years and establish multiple means of organization, agency, and strategy in order to secure even precarious access to land. In 2015, the Honorable Assembly of the province of Río Negro (northern Patagonia) published a report on the state of affairs of public lands. The report shows that one of the recurrent problems of the indigenous population is the precarious land tenancy they have experienced for the past century. Precarious tenancy was one of the principal means of expelling indigenous people from land throughout the twentieth century. On one hand, this leads to the concentration of land. On the other hand, the people evicted from the land add to the growing poor populations of Patagonian cities like Bariloche, Esquel, Comodoro Rivadavia, and Neuquén. (For more on maps and contemporary indigenous conceptions of land, see Sarah Warren's chapter in this volume.)

Soon after the Patagonian campaigns were over, the "indigenous issue" vanished from the national agenda (even though military campaigns in the north of the country were only just beginning). However, the indigenous population that remained in the National Territories of the south was regarded by the state as a security problem. Therefore, an array of police forces were created and security measures enacted to forestall potential crises. Regular and special police forces were responsible for perpetrating attacks, evictions, kidnappings, and other kinds of physical abuse against indigenous people throughout the twentieth century. Some of these attacks were eventually reported to the authorities, but mostly they became a modus operandi against the Indians (Pérez 2016). This persistent violence is still part of the intimate and sad memories of the Mapuche and Tehuelche communities (see Ana Ramos's chapter in this volume).

An Attempt to Classify Periods of Genocide

We propose a division of periods of indigenous genocide in Argentina in order to facilitate an empirical approach as well as a conceptual definition of genocide. Much of the conceptual debate we have explored so far has addressed the silencing of historical events and the absence of images, with the aim of widening our interpretations of events during the second half of the nineteenth

Larson_TXT1.indd 134 8/5/20 9:24 AM

century. At the same time, we must broaden our definition of genocide beyond the legal framework in order to identify the conceptual and historical limits of genocide in analyzing violent events like the Conquest of the Desert. In this case, we propose three stages or periods of genocide, which does not preclude the possibility of other timelines such as, and especially, an indigenous one. What is more, we aim to deal with both indigenous and nonindigenous perspectives.

As we have already stated, we understand genocide as a *means* and as an *end*. As an immediate *end*, we identify the deployment of open violence during the military campaigns as a means of terrifying and subjugating the indigenous population. There was also a political and economical end to these campaigns, with the coming to power of a modern oligarchy in the National Autonomist Party (which ruled the country for nearly three decades). The campaigns also performed the long-standing tropes of civilization and barbarism. Thus, the victory of "civilization" over the Natives established a new context for this hegemonic discourse in Argentina, now more than willing to become part of the international world market as a white, modern, and progressive country. As a *means*, genocide enabled the configuration of a national and Europeanized society that excluded the survival of an indigenous social and cultural order, based on a logic of elimination over a (now) national territory.

We propose three periods (the manufacture of an internal other; open violence; and the construction of a new society), which are not necessarily identified with fixed dates and which may thus overlap. Instead, the periods correspond to moments of agency, mechanisms of negotiation, and forces in conflict within given space and local contexts. These periods, which are sometimes subdivided into more stages, are also identified in other genocidal processes by scholars of the field (Jones 2010; Stanton 1998).

In the first period, we consider the 1870s a key decade in the manufacture of an internal "other" in connection with the indio malonero stereotype. Immediately after Argentina pacified the internal conflicts that dated from the colonial period and stabilized its international borders, the war of internal frontiers emerged as the principal national conflict. In this context, the indio malonero became a figure who homogenized and invisibilized other previous constructions of alterity. The indio malonero was depicted and reproduced over and over through art, literature, and the press (see Daniels's chapter in this volume). The indio malonero was a sacrificial being (using Giorgio Agamben's term)[26] who needed to be eliminated in order to defend the goods and lives

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of Argentine society, as well as to protect national integrity. The Indians were therefore classified as foreigners, even though they were born on Argentine soil or had adopted Argentine residency (as specified by the constitution). As a result, centuries of interethnic and frontier relationships of all kinds—commercial treaties, political relations, shared towns—were trivialized and denied under the indio malonero stereotype. During the 1870s, intellectual and political elites debated the particularities and consequences of the physical, social, and cultural disappearance of the Indians. Despite the consideration of multiple proposals, the extinction—through various means—of the indigenous "groups" prevailed. Even within this discourse, the official criteria avoided naming Indians as nations, betraying every treaty and parliament agreed upon until that point. They were no longer considered societies or peoples (Briones and Carrasco 2000). In the words of the minister of war, Julio Roca:

> I will go to the Colorado and Negro Rivers, and if necessary to the utmost south. . . . I will not rest until I have finished them without mercy. . . . I dispatch your commission today, and desire that the treaty which has been arranged with the approbation of the President and myself be approved, and its fulfillment last forever; *whatever be the advancements of military posts of Frontier operations do not be alarmed, your interests, your camps, and those of your tribe will be respected*. The operations which may be made will be only against unfriendly Indians, against Namuncura, Pincen, or any other Cacique or tribe who continues invading the Frontiers, or consenting to parties leaving from among them to injure our camp establishments; it is they whom the Government has decided to chastise, and I shall persecute them without mercy, even to their extermination.[27]

A few days after, the minister of war presented his plan to the National Congress:

> The old system of going from place to place, fighting here and there, and the distribution of the National Forces over the frontier is an immense waste, open to all incursions which the Indians choose to make, [and] has been proved to be insufficient to insure the peace of the frontier inhabitants, who live in constant terror. It is necessary to abandon this method at once, and go directly and seek the Indian in his lair; to

Larson_TXT1.indd 136 8/5/20 9:24 AM

> submit or exterminate him. . . . The conquest of the Indians will be a matter of no great difficulty, as they have of late considerably diminished, whether taken or killed in invasions or preferring to live among their civilized brethren. The Pampas are not, as is sometimes supposed, covered with many Indian tribes; the Indians occupy fixed and determined localities. Their number is insignificant compared to the resources of the nation. We have 6000 soldiers armed with the most formidable modern weapons to oppose 2000 Indians who have no other defense than dispersion, and no arms except the primitive lance.[28]

In this first period of genocide, the indio malonero stereotype condensed the danger against society. The necessity to exterminate them was championed by the leading political voices of the time, whereas the economic interests of the conquest were kept out of the public eye.

Second, we identify a period of open violence that began with the military campaigns of 1878 and lasted until the closure of state-funded concentration camps in early 1888. The military campaigns unleashed unprecedented violence against families (women, children, and elders) and against the economic resources of those families. With these actions, the military expected the voluntary surrender of indigenous forces. By this logic, the cruel measures against families and the already subjugated population created fear, which spread throughout indigenous territory, even where the troops did not reach. Army officials were fully conscious that they were ignorant of the majority of the territory, and that they could not reach the entirety of it even if they wished to because of its vast size.

> The Indians, in fear due to the effects of our expedition last year, when they felt once again our troops reaching their dens, ran away scared into the deeper valleys of the Andes. The snow did not stop them in their escape. Many of these unfortunates were victims of inclemency and hunger in the same refuge where they seek salvation.[29]

> It is interesting to notice these recurrent incidents of Indians that frequently run away regardless of our good intentions toward them; this can be understood because of the terror planted among the savages bolstered by news of extermination that circulates in an amazing fashion

Larson_TXT1.indd 137 8/5/20 9:24 AM

among them. They share these stories in different ways and they provoke a perpetual distrust that produces as an outcome insecurity.[30]

The indigenous social memory recalls these episodes of loss, subjugation, hunger, social dismantling, imprisonment, massive deportation, torture, death, and the division of families. In 2013, a revealing source was translated for the first time from Mapuzungun to Spanish, the life story of Katrvlaf (Canio Llanquinao and Pozo Menares 2013). This source—more than a hundred pages long and recorded in systematic interviews conducted by Roberto Lehmann-Nitsche over two months in 1902—has invaluable significance, as it allows us to understand the process of the Conquest of the Desert from an indigenous viewpoint.

> I had everything I needed. My father was alive, my mother, my brothers, my sisters. Everyone was alive. "Something bad is going to happen," people said in those days. Slowly, slowly, after a while, the soldiers came into our lands. First, they came to Patagones, the wingka [white people] captured any person they met. That was what happened to the people in our lands. In that way trouble started. Only, some time later, the *wingka* came in once again. Were they advancing over the Ngulumapu? So they said. We heard all this. That was how I grew up. In those days, we lived near the Welsh. (Katrvlaf, November 22, 1902, in Canio Llanquinao and Pozo Menares 2013, 371)

Katrvlaf narrates his youth and the time before the military occupation as well as the "news" they received before they actually met the Argentine army. After the "encounter" at the so-called Battle of Apeleg, his life, as well as that of his family and traveling companions, changed forever. The total dismantling of indigenous political organizations and the violence waged against their families explain the difference between the Conquest of the Desert and any previous confrontation between creoles and Natives.

Third, we mentioned the construction of a new society. After the concentration camps and the deportations, relocations, and distributions of people across Argentina, Patagonia was rebuilt as a new society administered as "National Territories." This society grew upon a successful genocide, not because the indigenous people were wholly eliminated but because the new society excluded them from full citizenship and the national imagination.

Larson_TXT1.indd 138 8/5/20 9:24 AM

What happened to the Indians after the Conquest of the Desert? The survivors were freed by 1888, when the most prosperous lands had already been distributed in Buenos Aires, preferably to foreign land companies (such as the Argentine Southern Land Company; see above). A small handful of indigenous chiefs received land for themselves and their "people" (closest relatives), but most families were excluded or only precariously considered as deserving of land. The impoverished and plundered survivors were dealt with as a security issue. Therefore, they were pursued as a menace to the newly created towns and new settlers, who kept arriving in the territory. Their ceremonies were controlled and interfered with by local forces such as the police. The use of indigenous language was attacked through schools and institutions that forbade its use in different ways. The multiple forms of discrimination led most Indians to deny or hide their indigenous identity. To avoid discrimination, they fragmented or silenced the transmission of their knowledge and culture to subsequent generations. Thus, official policies aimed to produce a homogeneous population as well as to silence the genocidal past, and to silence indigenous responses to and denunciations of that past.[31]

However, indigenous agency and the organization of indigenous families and communities resisted the constant attacks with different political strategies throughout the twentieth century. The multiple forms of struggle, which are still in the process of being remembered and studied, range from the preservation and transmission of painful memories in ceremonies and family narratives to the activities of community and supracommunal organizations such as the Aboriginal National Association (1918–1932), the Indigenous Advisory Council (1984–present), and the Mapuche Confederation (1983–present), among many other organizations that struggle against racism and for indigenous rights (land, culture, and respect). However, the indigenous peoples of the south are still scarcely acknowledged as part of the Argentine national community. Notwithstanding the mechanisms of assimilation and integration, the Indians continue to be considered internal others. And, therefore, they are considered sacrificial beings every time they are framed within the stereotype of the indio malonero.

If we adapt our analysis to include indigenous peoples' agency, the periods of genocide coalesce around precise moments. Soon after the frontier's negotiated order was broken by the Argentine state, there was a moment of organized resistance against the advance of both national states (Argentina

Larson_TXT1.indd 139 8/5/20 9:24 AM

and Chile) over the frontiers. The general uprising of the Araucanians in 1881 (Bengoa 2000) and the previous armed resistance led by Calfucurá in 1872 can be interpreted in this manner (see Vezub and Healey's chapter in this volume). However, with the 1878 campaigns, the context of negotiation changed significantly. Even though we can identify some recurrent practices, such as indigenous troops (whether forced or voluntary) in the national army, the military strategy and principal aims of the Conquest of the Desert were new and ambitious. They proposed the occupation of the territory and the destruction of indigenous ways of subsistence, and they did not expect to renegotiate the former frontier relations on new grounds. Rather, the military advance was planned to destroy those relations and leave them in the past. The habitual ways of the frontier's politics were disappeared, or were expected to do so as quickly as possible. The Conquest of the Desert was not the continuity of politics through different means, as Clausewitz postulated, but the final end of these negotiations.

In this context, the longko—the indigenous spiritual and social authorities—as well as the indigenous communities more broadly evaluated, reinterpreted, and redefined their roles not only because of the physical elimination of indigenous individuals during the Conquest of the Desert but also due to the fracture of social bonds. The different forms of resistance and agency that developed during and after the campaigns should be contextualized and studied in order to understand the conquest within this absolute and asymmetric power relationship between the state's administrators and the indigenous survivors. Strategies such as regrouping to demand land, or escaping and hiding; or individual and collective strategies of invisibilization as well as the will to keep social memory alive and to continue ceremonial practices in the face of discrimination, all frame periods of genocide from an indigenous viewpoint. Within the settler colonialist new society in the National Territories—and after the deportations, family dismemberments, relocations, and killings—the Mapuche and Tehuelche people fought to stay within their territory, to survive, and to rebuild a community.

Even when they were denied and silenced by state bureaucracy, indigenous people found mechanisms and strategies to reproduce their own existence within the new social structure. They have since deployed their agency, aware of the effects and consequences of presenting themselves as indigenous people. The stereotyped performance, and its function in a society constituted as a

Larson_TXT1.indd 140 8/5/20 9:24 AM

result of a successful genocide, is well known and a constant element in present and past conflicts (see Delrio et al. 2018).

Conclusion

Understanding that the concept of genocide is key to avoiding reductionism in the analysis of indigenous incorporation and subjugation in northern Patagonia, it is clear that its use does not deny but rather incorporates other perspectives that focus on resistance, deployment of forces, and agency. More precisely, it is a category that, historically conceived, allows us to pose a large number of questions about a multiple, complex process with consequences for indigenous people in particular and for Argentine society as a whole.

Since Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide" in 1948, the concept has been related to the necessity of naming and establishing regulations on crimes against humanity committed by states, particularly at foundational moments or in the organization of new societies. When the UN convention defining genocide was drafted in 1948, the events of not only the previous decade were taken into account but also the background of the Armenian people in Turkey, imperialist colonization in Africa, and even westward expansion in the United States (Lemkin 1944). The time that separates the consolidation of the concept with the so-called campaigns to the desert of Argentina is less than the time that separates us today from 1948. The concept is not anachronistically used but is the result of the type of processes that we have presented in this chapter.

Studying the Conquest of the Desert as genocide does not imply thinking of the state as a Leviathan, consolidated and homogeneous. On the contrary, what new scholarship has demonstrated is that, in the same process of subjugation and indigenous incorporation, there were contradictions, disputes, the establishment of new forms of relationships, the construction of regulations, discord over resources, and political confrontations. Therefore, we choose to refer to the construction of a state-nation-territory matrix as a framework to analyze and understand how the various elements of the matrix are redefined and dialogically related: that is, state models, ideas of the nation, and ways of thinking of space as territory. By connecting indigenous submission and incorporation to this matrix in terms of genocide, we seek not only to understand the historical description of how the submission occurred—the control

Larson_TXT1.indd 141 8/5/20 9:24 AM

of bodies and prohibitions on indigenous forms of organization—but also to address the construction of the "indigenous issue" as an ideological, cultural, and political element in the development of this matrix in the Argentine case. In contrast, the interpretations framed within the ideas of war or assimilation operate, in some cases, as disguised modes of denial or relativization of the founding violence of a new societal order in the National Territories. In other words, they blur understandings of the sociohistorical complexity of the constitutive process of the state-nation-territory matrix that still configures social relations in northern Patagonia.

At the same time, the power of words to create stereotypes, and the relationship of scientific discourses to contemporary disputes over resources, merit attention here. In Argentina, the story of the desert campaigns as a war won over barbarism, which simultaneously halted Chilean ambitions in Patagonia, in the face of a monstrous and sacrificial enemy, has formed and is still part of the national imagination. But fundamentally it is also the tool with which large landowners and extractive companies act to defend their interests.

In sum, genocide does not imply the absence of agency or a mere construction of victims and victimizers. Its use as an analytical concept allows us to situate the process in its true proportions and avoids analogies with other types of conflicts that presuppose equality of value regimes and forms of state organization. However, during all three periods of genocide in Argentina, there have been crimes against humanity; therefore, there are victims and victimizers, and we must start pushing forward the question of reparation.

Notes

1. RIGPI is a network of researchers, journalists, film producers and directors, activists, students, and artists who work on the relations between indigenous peoples and the national and provincial states in Argentina. Since 2005, RIGPI has worked collaboratively on research, communication, and artistic projects in order to make the indigenous reality in our country visible, as well as to debate the consequences of genocide in Argentine society in general.

2. By "internal other" we understand the exclusion of a people or group from the imagined community of the nation, although they bear rights as citizens.

3. Raúl Mandrini criticizes these hegemonic views that prevailed until the 1980s: "First, we cannot reduce the frontier topic to the military issue. The war, which was

Larson_TXT1.indd 142 8/5/20 9:24 AM

by no means constant nor permanent, constituted in any case, one aspect of the whole complex relations" (1992, 67).

4. Even within the context of the subjugation campaigns, we can find these ideas in Francisco Moreno's writings (1893), and their continuance through different authors during the twentieth century.

5. This stereotype cast the Indian as a warrior and thief who engaged in cross-border raiding.

6. Estanislao Zeballos's *La conquista de quince mil leguas* ([1878] 1958) and other writings were published by the government and were compulsory reading for armed forces officials who were in positions of command during the campaigns.

7. Juan Cruz Varela, La Tribuna (Buenos Aires), November 17, 1878.

8. Letter from Roca to Villegas, Buenos Aires, April 28, 1883, cited in Schoo Lastra 1928, 153.

9. Message from the National Executive Power in the opening of sessions of Parliament in 1881, Journal of Sessions from the Chamber of Senators, May 8, 1881, 19. Direction of Parliamentary Information, 1991, 203.

10. Romero writes: "The assertion of an internal sovereignty as well as the urgency to delimit the national borders explains the Conquest of the Desert. A territory like Patagonia, demanded by three state powers, usually generates a war" (2011).

11. The articles by Gavirati and Vezub (2001) and Vezub (2001) are included in the book *Patagonia: 13.000 años de historia*, edited by María Teresa Boschín and Rodolfo M. Casamiquela and financed by the Benetton Group in the context of the opening of a museum in the Leleque estate. The book is a celebratory publication of Benetton, the largest foreign landowner in Patagonia (the Leleque estate being only part of the 900,000 hectares the group owns in Patagonia). The estate has been in conflict with the Mapuche-Tehuelche communities since its constitution in the late nineteenth century. The Leleque Museum, built during the 1990s, has been repudiated by the indigenous communities of the region, who have been demanding for decades their right to the land. In general terms, the book and the museum support the discourse of an inevitable war and refer to the indigenous peoples only until the Conquest of the Desert, remaining silent about their subsequent survival, rights and demands, and twentieth-century history generally.

12. Francisco Moreno, *Revista del Museo de La Plata*, Talleres del Museo de La Plata, 1890–1891, vol. 1, 46. See Ricardo Salvatore's chapter in this book.

13. By deportation, we mean physical movement from one place to another, specifically forced movement between two different sociopolitically conceptualized spaces.

14. See, for example, Cabrera 1934; Canals Frau (1953) 1986; Clifton Goldney 1963; Franco 1967; and Terrera 1974, among others.

15. We can verify this by reviewing the titles of the papers presented at the 1979 conference in celebration of the Conquest of the Desert, mentioned earlier. These papers were published in four volumes in 1980. See Sheinin's chapter in this volume.

Larson_TXT1.indd 143 8/5/20 9:24 AM

16. "Un grupo mapuche le declaró la 'guerra' a la Argentina y Chile," *Perfil*, February 7, 2018, at https://www.perfil.com/noticias/sociedad/un-grupo-mapuche-le-declaro-la-guerra-a-la-argentina-y-chile-20141113-0031.phtml.

17. The RAM is an alleged (by the government) Mapuche terrorist group that has launched anonymous attempted minor attacks against property.

18. "Patagonia: avanza la guerra contra el RAM," *Noticias Urbanas*, February 7, 2018, at http://www.noticiasurbanas.com.ar/noticias/patagonia-avanza-la-guerra-contra-el-ram/.

19. Jaime Rosemberg, "Villa Mascardi: el Gobierno asegura que los mapuches usaron armas de fuego y habla de una 'declaración de guerra' de la RAM," *La Nación*, November 26, 2017, at https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2085946-villa-mascardi-el-gobierno-asegura-que-los-mapuches-usaron-armas-de-fuego-y-habla-de-una-declaracion-de-guerra-de-la-ram. It is important to clarify that no weapons or any trail of firearms were found during this so-called confrontation or declaration of war. Nevertheless, the naval police executed a young Mapuche male, Rafael Nahuel, who was in the area.

20. Some communities have only recently become visible to the state discourse and protocols, and they are criticized as opportunistic by state agents and part of Argentine society.

21. Jorge Lanata, a well-known journalist, denounced a "fake" community in Tucumán. "Jorge Lanata denunció que existe una comunidad originaria "trucha" en Tucumán," *El Tucumano*, August 28, 2017, at http://www.eltucumano.com/noticia/242814/jorge-lanata-denuncio-existe-comunidad-originaria-trucha-tucuman.

22. Article 2 states that genocide includes "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

23. The *Memories of the Ministry of War and the Navy* count as the outcome of the 1879 war operations "14,172 Indians suppressed from the Pampa. This figure excludes the number of Indians killed in persecutions or due to hunger in the desert" (*Memories of the Ministry of War and the Navy*, 1879, PVI, General Archive of the Nation Library, Buenos Aires). The *Memories* describe that more than ten thousand of these Indians were "chusma" (women, children, and elder people).

24. Articles 15 and 16 of the national constitution (1853–1994) promote the conversion of indigenous peoples to the Catholic faith in order to bring prosperity to the country.

25. This company was the largest British company in Patagonia. Today, these lands and their estates, like the Leleque estate, belong to the Benetton Group (see note 11 above).

Larson_TXT1.indd 144 8/5/20 9:24 AM

26. Agamben (1998) identifies as sacrificial beings any persons who could be killed despite the mandates of prevailing laws. These individuals constitute an exception to the regular norms that is socially accepted. The philosopher identifies these exceptions in different historical periods.

27. Letter from Julio A. Roca, minister of war, to Chief Baigorrita, reproduced in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, August 6, 1878.

28. Julio A. Roca, minister of war, presenting his project to Congress, reproduced in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, August 18, 1878. The *Herald*, an English-language newspaper, supported Roca's campaign as minister of war and his road to power. The editors not only published every speech he gave, but they also sent a field correspondent with Roca during the so-called Conquest of the Desert. On February 13, 1879, the editor gave a full-page answer to the *London Times*, which had headlined an article two days before referring to Argentina as "Immoral and Sanguinary." Warren Lowe, editor of the *Herald*, was gifted with land on the Negro River after the campaigns.

29. *Memories of the Ministry of War and the Navy*, 1882, vol. 2, 239, General Archive of the Nation Library, Buenos Aires.

30. Ibid., 295.

31. The indigenous emergency implies a very delicate, personal, and familiar process within the indigenous population as well. Recent generations have had to deal with their elders' silence and personal stories of racism and violence.

Larson_TXT1.indd 145 8/5/20 9:24 AM