Alta California and Spanish Naval Strategy in the Pacific:

An Overview from the 16th Century to the early 19th Century

by Jack S. Williams, Ph.D.
The story of Spain in the Pacific is one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of European expansion. Between the middle of the sixteenth century and the early nineteenth century, Iberian mariners defined and partially charted a body of water that was so vast and complex that it is even now hard to imagine. More remarkably, Spaniards conceived of themselves not only as explorers but as conquerors. In Madrid, imperial administrators envisioned the vast Pacific Ocean on the other side of the globe as a watery highway that connected the staging areas of the New World to the far-flung military bases that were then the most distant outposts of their empire. The dream of a Spanish-dominated Pacific was never fully realized, however, the level of success the Iberians did achieve is nothing less than astonishing.

The remote region of California had a varying degree of importance in Spain’s naval strategy. Like so much of the territory that surrounded the Pacific Ocean, it was not seen as having any inherent economic value. The region’s Indian people did not have the treasures that inspired the conquistadores who laid waste to the ancient civilizations of Mexico and Peru. From the sixteenth century onward, the Spaniards realized California’s ports could provide naval bases for a European rival. If they fell into enemy hands, these outposts would become ideal launching points for attacks on the rich Spanish possessions that lay to the south. California’s coastal waters were also a perfect place to ambush the treasure ships – the Manila galleons – that made an annual journey from the Philippines to Acapulco. Throughout the long period that stretched from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth century, Spanish approaches to the colonization of California were tied directly to a perceived need to occupy its strategic ports. This objective, rather than any relentless zeal for extending Christianity, or lust for the acquisition of riches or land, remained the central concern that underlay Spain’s commitment of men and other resources to California.

The Development of the “Spanish Lake” 1530–1600

For hundreds of years, political and geographic barriers had set sharp limits on European activity. The Christian world was surrounded in both the east and south by Muslim peoples who controlled the lines of communication and trade with more distant civilizations. To the west of...
Europe lay an Atlantic Ocean that had become, for all intents and purposes, an equally effective barrier. All this changed radically during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A series of dramatic advances in military technology provided a means to shatter the old barriers. The Europeans combined innovative methods in shipbuilding and artillery manufacture to produce a new kind of mobile gun platform. Although they appear to modern eyes as primitive war machines, the new vessels propelled Europeans into waters they had scarcely known.¹

Another important factor in advancing the Europeans’ determination to push East and West in such a short period of time was perhaps the fact that they had faced so many centuries of external threats from Africa and Asia, which made them particularly inclined to seize an opportunity that could give them an advantage. It certainly was not the case that Christian Europe’s triumph was inevitable. During the same period that Europeans pushed into the Pacific, Muslim raiders devastated the coastal areas of the European continent. These operations pushed as far north as Iceland, carrying away whole villages of people from the shores of Ireland, Wales, England, Spain, France, and Italy. These men, women, and children, became slaves who were auctioned off in the markets of North Africa and the Near East.² Meanwhile, an even greater threat was observed in the armies and navies of the Ottoman Turks. The sultans’ expeditions pushed deep into the heart of Eastern Europe. Vast Ottoman naval squadrons menaced the Mediterranean, and at times, threatened to obliterate what remained of their Christian opponents.³ Meanwhile, to the north, the Muslim descendants of the Mongols continued to raid and destroy the outposts of the Russian Empire. The Tartars blocked any Eastern European movement toward the Far East.

To the astonishment of the Muslim world, the leaders of the maritime technological revolution in the Iberian Peninsula would soon outflank it. By 1600, Portuguese expeditions set up outposts that stretched from India to Malaysia. Spain, which followed the lead provided by the Portuguese, acquired incredible wealth in the Americas before turning its attention to an even more ambitious goal of invading Asia from the west. By 1650, European fleets had cut off the lucrative Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean, and effectively established strategic barriers that would largely define what were still the geographic limits of the Islamic world.

The mile posts that marked the Spanish advance in the Far East are well known. In the wake of Colon’s (Columbus’) voyages of discovery, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa reached the shores of the mysterious western ocean that Magellan would later name the “Pacific.” Fewer than six years later, in 1519, Hernán Cortés began the conquest of the Aztec empire. While Spanish vessels battered down the walls of the splendid city of Tenochtitlán, the Portuguese mariner (sailing under the Spanish flag), Fernando Magellan (Fernão de Magalhães), had reached the Philippines. After Magellan was killed there, Juan Sebastián de Elcano captained the Victoria’s return voyage to Spain. Spain’s long quest to reach Asia from the west had finally been achieved.
The fall of the Aztecs was followed in less than a decade by the conquest of Peru. By 1535, Spain had created a vital maritime link that stretched along the northwestern coast of South America from Panama to Callao. This naval link would remain the primary avenue used to reach much of Spanish South America through the later eighteenth century.4

Spanish interest in the Pacific would also be influenced by diplomacy at home. In 1529, the Iberian rulers agreed to the Treaty of Zaragoza, which left much of the Pacific Ocean inside what had been defined as the area rightfully belonging to Spain.5 By contrast, the route that stretched around Africa to India lay inside Portuguese territory. If Spain was to gain wealth from Asia, it would have to flow through the same western route as the one that had been proposed by Colon.

By the time that Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo set sail in 1542, the world had dramatically changed from the time of Columbus. The Iberians’ nascent empires now straddled the globe. This development was of far greater strategic significance than any of the previous events in Europe’s struggles against eastern rivals. Westerners had discovered a world that lay beyond the complexity of the Atlantic. It was made up of civilizations they had never

This 1589 map by Abrahamus Ortelius projected the European vision of the Pacific. Most significant is Magellan’s Victoria, dominating the earliest printed map of the Pacific as she sails under the Spanish flag toward the Far East guided by an angel and with her guns blazing.

*The British Library, C.25.e.12(6).*
known, of cultures barely understood. The basic impulse of the Europeans was not to develop peaceful relations with these distant civilizations, instead, they quickly expressed their intent on conquest. Despite the obvious logistical problems, they began to conceive of grandiose strategies – of conquering the great powers of the Far East, China and Japan. Nothing seemed impossible.6

Imperial ambitions brought Miguel López de Legazpi in 1567 to the strategic islands that lay to the north of Malaysia and the south of Japan. Elcano had brought back word that the islands stood at the threshold of the Far East. The 1565–1572 conquest of the Philippines was launched from the Americas.7 This expansionism brought the Spaniards into direct conflict with the eastern frontiers of their ancient Muslim foes.8 It also opened a door to the Spice Islands, China and Japan. The Portuguese had already penetrated into these lands and knew of the riches to be had, and they had begun their own ambitious program of conquest. As early as 1543, their Iberian rival had established contact with the most remote nation – Japan’s Empire of the Sun. Portuguese Jesuits soon developed an important role in trade and diplomatic relations between the Chinese and the Japanese. The new naval base at Manila gave Spain an opportunity to disrupt Portugal’s growing influence in the region.9

With the establishment of the new colony, Spain began to realize its ambition to acquire the spices, silks, porcelains, and other exotic products of Asia. However, there was no easy way to get this treasure back to Europe. In order to go west from the Philippines, Spanish ships would have to pass through Portuguese waters. The only safe route
would be to return to Europe by way of the Americas. Any journey of this type was complicated by the fact that the land mass of the New World did not have an easy passageway to facilitate movement from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Nevertheless, Spain did control the territory that would be required to transport the materials via a short land route. The decision to move forward on this project created the trade route involving the “Nao de China” (known in the English speaking world as the Manila galleon.) These vessels would continue their voyages through the early nineteenth century.10

The currents that flowed around the Pacific Ocean would largely determine the pathway of the galleons. Like an immense carousel, a vessel departing Mexico could sail to the southwest, passing into the South Pacific before arriving at Manila. Departing the Philippines, the current would carry ships to the northwest, skirting Japan and sailing far north, before turning once again to the south. The ships generally sighted land along the California coastline, somewhere between San Francisco and Santa Barbara. Sailing southward they could easily find their way to their home port of Acapulco, Mexico.11

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo had reported the existence of a number of ports along the coast of California that might be used by trading vessels. After 1565, Spain’s naval strategists would often return to proposals to colonize the region primarily as a means of securing safe havens for these merchant ships. The need for such bases was made all the more visible by the piratical voyage of Francis Drake, a man the Iberians fearfully called El Draque (the Dragon). He followed in the wake of the Magellan/Elcano voyage, securing a claim to the circumnavigation of the globe. Drake actually set up a winter’s camp on the northern California Coast, and laid claim to the surrounding territory.12 After 1577, the administrators in Madrid had to accept the reality that the Pacific was by no means as secure as they had hoped.

By the third quarter of the sixteenth century, it appeared that Spain and Portugal were headed for some kind of military exchange.13 Through dynastic inter-marriage, however, Felipe (Philip) II, the Hapsburg King of Spain, inherited the throne of the second Iberian crown in 1580. While limits were set as to how far he could consolidate the two imperial entities, Felipe nonetheless coordinated their forces and used them effectively in what became a series of wars with the Dutch and British. These conflicts were primarily fought in Europe, but eventually spilled over into the waters of the Europeans’ most remote colonies in the Far East.14

The high-water mark of early Spanish ambition for California was clearly achieved during the voyages of Sebastián Vizcaíno (1596-1603).15 The capture of the Manila galleon, Santa Ana, in 1587 by the English pirate, Thomas Cavendish, had reinforced the need for timely action in regards to maritime security along the California coast.16 In 1602-1603, Vizcaíno pushed to the north to find ports that could be used by the Manila galleons on their
homeward trips. When he returned to Mexico, his efforts at court produced a detailed plan for the occupation of the region. Monterey and San Diego were named as locations that would serve well as colonies. Nevertheless, the Crown was persuaded to divert the funds that were initially set aside for the project in favor of a fruitless search for treasure islands in the South Pacific. It would be more than one hundred and fifty years before Vizcaíno’s colonization proposals would be acted upon.

California and Spanish Naval Decline 1600–1700

At the end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish Hapsburg Empire seemed to be on the verge of a period of unprecedented political prominence. No scheme of conquest seemed too unreasonable. During the century that followed, this optimism would vanish. Spain experienced a slow decline as a naval power. By 1700, it was unclear if Spain would be able to defend any of her overseas possessions.

From the beginning, Spanish ambitions in the western Pacific were never as easy to achieve as they had been in the Americas. Native Muslim people of the Philippines offered stiff resistance. Iberian ships also found themselves under siege by Japanese and Chinese pirates. Even greater conflicts were created by Spain’s Protestant enemies, especially the Dutch. This emerging nation’s maritime capitalists had more limited objectives than the Hapsburgs in Asia. The newcomers were largely focused on profitable trade rather than the occupation of the region. The limited nature of Dutch ambitions would prove more palatable among many of the peoples of the Far East.

Left: Detail from an engraving by Theodor de Bry of a late 16th-century Spanish galleon in Venezuelan waters. By the end of the 17th century the Spanish navy had lost much of the ability that had heralded the advances of the early colonial era. Most of the King’s fleet was made up of purchased foreign ships. Spain had fallen behind other European nations in regard to military technology.
The changing circumstances of the seventeenth century would emerge gradually. By 1609, the Dutch, who were once an integral part of the Hapsburg Empire, had become a rival maritime power. Sailing from ports along the coasts of Africa, they struck out at the Portuguese outposts. Over time, nearly all of the Iberian settlements were captured. The loss of these possessions was undoubtedly linked to the disinterest of the Spanish monarchs who ruled Portugal. They focused to a considerable extent on the successful preservation of their increasingly valuable American possessions. When Portugal became an independent monarchy again in 1640, they inherited an empire that would largely be confined to the Atlantic coast of South America. The remote waters off California witnessed the changing strategic situation. An unstipulated number of Dutch, French, and British vessels appeared to threaten Spain’s hold on Northern New Spain. Their crews were made up of privateers and pirates whose primary ambition was the capture of the Manila galleon. It is unclear how many of these freebooters were present, and it is also unclear how far to the north they sailed. Some stayed in the south for extended periods. Their blonde-haired Native American descendants would be recognized among the Indian people who met Spanish missionaries during the eighteenth century.

Above: As international conflicts of the seventeenth century continued, Spain was increasingly threatened by the Dutch in the Far East. Illustrated is the Spanish ship, San Diego, sunk by a smaller Dutch vessel, the Mauritius.

Engraving by Theodor de Bry for de Noort, Olivier, Description du penible voyage fait autour l’univers du globe, general de quatre navires, 1602.
Throughout the seventeenth century, Alta (Upper) California remained a place frequently visited by Europeans, but no colonies were established until the Jesuits founded Misión de Nuestra Señora de Loreto Conchó in 1697. By 1600, Spain had focused a tremendous amount of its Asian strategy on Japan. The coastal tribes witnessed the spectacle of the passage of a Japanese-built galleon sailing southward to Acapulco in 1613. Its commander, Sebastián Vizcaíno, was bringing an embassy of the Shogun’s diplomats to the court of the Viceroy in Mexico City. By 1630, Portuguese and Spanish missionaries had made significant progress in introducing Christianity to the southern end of Japan and in cementing a political alliance with the Shoguns. The Hapsburg’s ultimate goal was a joint operation that would have seen the conquest (and conversion) of China. For a while, it seemed that this opportunity might take place. Between 1592 and 1598, the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi had invaded Korea. Despite considerable initial progress, this venture ended in failure. The Iberians remained hopeful that a second effort might soon be possible. Their dreams of such an operation ended in 1635, when Japan evicted the Iberians in favor of a more modest relationship with the Dutch. Japan then entered into a period where nearly all western ideas (including Christianity) and technology were rejected. The nation would not return to policies of territorial expansion until the middle of the nineteenth century. In fewer than fifty years, Christianity was outlawed and the small number of surviving converts were driven underground.
The decline of Spanish naval power in the Pacific can also be linked to other changes. The Iberians failed to keep up with the technological advances taking place in European warfare. The Spanish armies of arquebusiers, men armed with pikes and primitive matchlock firearms, and pike men guarding the arquebusiers while they reloaded had once seemed invincible, but were defeated again and again in their confrontations with the French. Before 1700, the bayonet and the flintlock musket had rendered the traditional Spanish weapons obsolete. The navy also suffered a sharp decline. Fewer and fewer ships were built in Spain. The shrinking squadrons depended increasingly on foreign-built vessels. As the century came to an end, the royal navy shrank in size to fewer than twenty-five warships. The regular army could not muster more than 20,000 men. Spain had become a pale ghost of what it once had been.

All the new challenges and losses forced Spain onto the defensive. Strategically, the goal was no longer expansion, but consolidation of what had already been claimed. The Philippines became Spain’s strongest defensive point in Asia. For the time being, these islands provided a significant if not impenetrable strategic barrier for any European power that might launch an attack on New Spain by crossing the northern Pacific. The successful development of the Philippines reduced the need for a defense effort in California. Within the context of Spain’s imperial decline, it is not too surprising that the region would largely be ignored. There were simply too many other more pressing demands.

The first permanent European colony was finally created in Baja California at Loreto, in 1697. It came into existence under a peculiar political arrangement in which the Jesuit missionaries who led the effort were given extensive autonomy in exchange for providing a safe haven and supplies for the Manila galleons. The Crown’s willingness to give up power in the province was based on the reality that Spain lacked the military resources to properly protect what remained a remote region.

The Renewed Abilities of the Bourbon Dynasty 1700 - 1765

In 1700, the death of Carlos II brought a period of civil war to Spain that ended with the ascension of Felipe V (Phillip V), and the creation of a French Bourbon dynasty. This event had a frightening significance for many rivals of Spain and France as the potential combination of these two empires created a unity of unmatched resources. As part of the treaty that ended the struggle for succession, the Bourbon monarchs of the two nations agreed not to create any over-arching security pacts. In fact, however, the two men secretly conspired to provide mutual aid in the event of any future conflicts.

By the 1700s, Spain was forced to consolidate its expansionist efforts and focus on protecting the ports and land areas it had laid claim to. The enormous defensive strategy fell to the Spanish navy, which depended on small launches and packet boats to patrol and defend its territories in the Californias.

Drawing by Jack Williams
Felipe V, and his son, Fernando VI (Ferdinand VI), brought French-style reforms that affected nearly every aspect of Spain’s governmental policies. Modernization of the army became a top priority of the monarchy. Meanwhile, France agreed to provide additional naval protection for Spain’s overseas empire. In the colonies, much of the reform effort focused on creating large forces made up of militia. By the time of Fernando’s death in 1759, considerable progress had been made in creating the new forces.

The reforms had little direct effect on the situation in California. In the far south, the Jesuit mission frontier had made some territorial gains, but proved to be an ineffective deterrent to the old foes. In 1710 and 1721, British privateers set up temporary residence at Cabo San Lucas. Some consideration was given in regard to Upper California. In 1719, a new plan had been drafted to develop the strategic port at San Diego. But nothing came of this effort. Between 1700 and 1720, British and French ships commanded much of the trade along the entire Pacific coast. It would take several decades before the Spanish fleet would recover from the disastrous period at the end of the seventeenth century.

On paper, the new military resources created after 1700 looked impressive. Carlos III (Charles III) inherited an apparently revived empire in 1759. However, during the Seven Year’s War (1756-1763), Spain experienced nothing short of a disaster. France turned out to be a poor partner, losing the war and nearly all of her American possessions. The strategic Spanish cities of Manila and Havana both fell to the British invaders. The militia armies backed up by the French fleets had simply failed.
The Final Move Toward Creating a Spanish Colony in California

In the wake of this catastrophe, Carlos III launched a series of dramatic reforms. He focused on the full modernization of the army. The expanded militia forces were to be expanded and supplemented by better-trained regulars. Henceforth, the navy would also be modernized and enlarged to protect Spanish interests around the globe. It was a return to the kind of aggressive offensive policies that had been the norm in the sixteenth century.

The spectacular naval build-up was most dramatically seen in the immense shipyard in Havana. More modern Spanish ships, modeled closely on those from Britain, were built there. Undoubtedly the most impressive of these warships was the Santisima Trinidad, the largest vessel of its kind built in the colonial period. By 1769, Spain had revived as a major European naval power. New fortifications and facilities were also added throughout the Caribbean, in the Philippines, and along the coasts of South America.

These new projects were badly needed. In the Pacific, the strategic situation had badly deteriorated. The Dutch were no longer the major threat. They had largely been replaced by the British, who now took a direct hand in Asian affairs from their bases in India. In 1788, the English Crown embarked on a large scale Pacific colonization program in Australia. An equally dangerous threat had been created by the Russians, who had pushed the borders of their empire to the Pacific. In so doing, they had effectively out-flanked the Philippines. A new Pacific route now lay open to the Americas. By 1784, the Czar’s vessels had begun to occupy Alaska. It was the beginning of a dangerous era, where the wealthy lands of New Spain and Peru provided tempting targets.

Now, more than at any time in the past, Upper California was a strategic asset that needed to be addressed. If Spain could only secure the region, they could effectively block Russian and British approaches to New Spain from the north. As long as the key ports remained in Iberian hands, an enemy fleet could only move southward by risking an interruption of its lines of supply and communication. No competent European commander would have risked this danger.

Inspector General José de Gálvez was dispatched to America in 1761 with orders to improve the defenses of New Spain. His biggest problem was his lack of financial resources to solve all of the kingdom’s predicaments. He considered the California dilemma with a clear understanding of what needed to be done. However, all the military resources that he could amass did not represent a force sufficient to create or sustain regular outposts in the remote region. Instead, he was forced to find some other kind of solution. Ultimately, he developed a plan where Spain would create frontier-style presidios at the key ports of Monterey and San Diego. These semi-self-sufficient military colonies had provided useful service along the northern Indian frontier of New Spain. In order to pacify the Indians and expand the self-sufficiency of the colony, he also proposed to include a series of Franciscan missions. Although schemes of this type had once been popular in the
empire, they had declined sharply after the arrival of the Bourbon monarchs. The new dynasty generally preferred to use military forces and trading posts as the focus of frontier expansion. Gálvez realized that the forces available were too small to really secure California. However, he was convinced that they could at least show some level of Spanish control, and in so doing, discourage the ambitions of Spain’s European rivals.

In 1768, Gálvez began to stage the operation that would see the long anticipated colonization of Upper California. He had no illusions about the region being of any inherent financial value. Throughout the remainder of the period of Spanish rule (1769-1821), California remained a strategic military colony that produced no revenues for the King. Whatever resources were produced by the presidios and missions were plowed back into frontier enterprises. California remained a financial loss for Spain, but it was also considered an asset essential for their defense of the supply and communication links to Asia.

Gálvez had hoped that the ships of the Naval Department of San Blas would eventually be able to patrol California waters. The royal squadrons provided supplies of essential military goods and luxuries to the new colonies. However, the department never had a sufficient supply of either ships or sailors to effectively face a potential invasion, or even a large-scale raid. A small number of ships were temporarily assigned to protect the coast during periods of declared war, but for the most part California’s defense against a seaborne invasion was left to the frontier troops of the presidios, and the Indian militias of the missions.

Throughout the Spanish Empire the inability of the King’s fleets to meet the needs of colonists stimulated an opportunity for illegal trade. The weakness of the strategic situation of the province was demonstrated dramatically in the numerous episodes of smuggling and poaching that took place along the California coast. Without ships, or even small patrol vessels, the presidio troops were not able to curb what became a thriving trade, which was illegal but often tolerated as a necessity. By the end of the colonial period the ships of Spain were outnumbered in California waters by those of her traditional rivals, along with those of the new emerging commercial power of North America – the United States.
After the death of Carlos III (1788), the Spanish navy as a whole entered a period of decline. Carlos IV lacked his father’s ambitions and military abilities. His reign was marked by military projects and treaties that almost never benefitted Spain. The worst disaster by far was the destruction of the finest vessels of the fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar (1803). Spain never fully recovered from this disaster.

In Retrospect

The California venture that had been initiated by Gálvez continued to endure during the waning years of Spanish political ambitions. Despite the military shortcomings of the effort, the basic wisdom of his actions were demonstrated repeatedly. Both the Russians and the British laid claims to the area north of San Francisco, although each of these nations enjoyed only limited success in their bids for colonization. The lines of communication and supply to the Philippines remained largely intact. The California outposts made it possible for the Naval Department of San Blas to successfully challenge the British at Nootka Sound (1789). Even after the Naval Department’s headquarters fell during the War of Independence in 1810, the colony continued to remain a loyalist stronghold. The troops in the region aggressively resisted the one major assault that took place in 1818. Without the modest forces deployed in California, it is hard to imagine that Spain would have been able to fix the border in its northern position in the treaty that was agreed to by the United States in 1819.

Romantic images of Spain in California remain an important part of San Diego’s cultural landscape. Much has been made of the drama that surrounds the story of the mission and presidio. To a considerable extent, people are unaware that San Diego was created first and foremost as a strategic naval base. Despite changes in governments, the city remains linked to strategic military concerns and its position on the Pacific Rim. The man who first envisioned its potential to serve in this role was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

This lithograph by Charles Koppel, 1853, illustrates the San Diego mission of 1813. The mission was moved in 1774 from its original site (now on Presidio hill overlooking Old Town) five miles up the San Diego River (now Mission Valley).
Notes

5. William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, (New York: P. Dutton and Company, 1939), 20. Spain ceded all claims to the Spice Islands to the Portuguese, but continued to assert rightful ownership of the Philippines based on Magellan's discovery. Ironically, these islands also lay within the latter's powers sphere.
6. Ibid., 30.
13. Ibid., 17.
15. Cortés had led the first aborted attempt at colonization of Baja California between 1533 and 1535. This operation was motivated in part by exaggerated reports of the region’s potential as a pearl fishery, Peter Gerhard, “Pearl Diving in Lower California, 1533-1830,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 25(1956):239-249. A hostile environment and Indian resistance put an end to this effort.
18. Vizcaíno planted only one colony in Baja California, which was ultimately abandoned in circumstances similar to those that had seen the end of Cortés’ effort.
19. See Additional Sources for further study of this pivotal era in Spain’s history.
22. Ibid., 293-94.
25. Known to the Iberians as “Pechelingués,” a term derived from the name of the Island port of Vissingen, or Flushing, in the Low Countries.
27. In 1632, 1664, 1668, 1679 and 1683, unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a permanent outpost in Baja (Lower) California, Engelhardt, *Missions and Missionaries*, 81-92.
28. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*. The most famous of the early shipwrecks was that of Sebastián Rodríguez Cermeño, which took place in 1595. He managed to return to New Spain using a small launch.
The War of the Spanish Succession was
Chapman, 
Ibid., 301.

with the Treaty of El Escorial. 

the French alliance was renewed in 1733

The Spanish-Napoleonic Wars, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 88. In 1788, the Spanish Navy was the largest in the world, Harbron, The Spanish Navy, 7.

Harbron, The Spanish Navy.

The Dutch nation was not inclined to send expeditions to attack the western coast of North America after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1649, Gerhard, Pirates on the West Coast, 132. However, Dutch, French and English pirates and privateers continued to undertake hostile operations in the region. There were also numerous attempts at large-scale smuggling operations, Ibid., 197-226; Harbron, The Spanish Navy, 79. In 1747, ships of the Dutch East Indies Company peacefully visited the California coast, Peter Gerhard, “A Dutch Trade Mission to New Spain, 1746-1747,” (Pacific Historical Review, 29(1954):225-226), Schurz, The Manila Galleon, 301-302.


Harbron, The Spanish Navy.


Additional Sources:

There are 241 microfilm reels taken from the Provincias Internas section of the Archivo General de la Nación, México, detailing the history of the northern provinces of New Spain from the early 1700s to the early 1800s. SDSU F-2545, reels 1-241.

Juan Gil, Mitos y utopías del descubrimiento, Vol. II: El Pacífico (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989). This remains one of the most interesting studies on the Spanish Pacific.


Chiyo Ishikawa, Spain in the Age of Exploration, 1492-1819 (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2004)