

# DEFENCE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

## Communicating Threat In An Era of Speed and Fetishised Technology

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# SHAPING AN ANTARCTIC IDENTITY IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

**Ignacio Javier Cardone**

## **Abstract**

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both Argentina and Chile have woven Antarctica—the white continent—into the conception of their national territories and identities, establishing a tradition that continues today. To understand the process through which these identities have been constructed, this article examines the strategic communications of the countries involved in the dispute over territories south of 60° south latitude. Early negotiations were incidental and reactive, but as the situation evolved internationally the two South American countries became entangled in their strategies to incorporate portions of Antarctica into their national territories, employing diplomatic interchange, symbolic actions, and the projection of an Antarctic identity by means of public discourse, educational curriculum, and maps. Furthermore, they promoted the idea of an ‘American Antarctica’ as a way of linking Antarctica with the South American continent in an effort to obtain international recognition for their territorial claims. Both countries were successful in instilling a domestic ‘national Antarctic consciousness’, but failed to gather international support. Although their strategic communications regarding Antarctica were successful in terms of the original objective of integrating the idea into their respective national identities, resorting to territoriality seems to have limited their ability to adapt to new conditions, such as those established by the Antarctic Treaty in 1959.

**Keywords**—*strategic communication, strategic communications, Antarctica, Argentina, Chile, territorial claims*

## About the Author

**Ignacio J. Cardone** holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of São Paulo and King's College London. Post-doctoral researcher at the International Relations Research Centre of the University of São Paulo. His research interests focus on: Antarctic history and politics, science diplomacy, climate change and international relations, and political theory.

## Introduction

Geography is anything but neutral. The way in which a territory is presented, represented, and experienced has practical effects in social reality.<sup>1</sup> Territoriality, defined as the delimitation of and control over a geographical area, is a constitutive element of the modern nation-state. To assert its sovereignty, a state must define its 'borders'—the edges of the territory it claims for itself.<sup>2</sup> The extent of a nation's territory determines the benefits that could be expected to accrue to the nation through control over that territory, such as a place for its population to settle, the availability of natural resources, and the demarcation of defence lines in the face of external threats. The extent of a state's territory is linked to its identity in the eyes of the world. The constitution of a state's territoriality, both domestically and internationally, is essential to its core functions. Thus, territoriality and all communication regarding territoriality are of strategic importance.

Strategic communications is understood here as a practice involving the use of words, images, symbols, or actions (both by their presence and their absence)

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1 A contemporary discussion about the scope of the social and political implications of cartography could be found in: Barbara Belyea, 'Images of Power: Derrida/Foucault/Harley', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 29.2 (1992), 1–9; Jeremy W. Crampton, 'Maps as Social Constructions: Power, Communication and Visualization', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25.2 (2001), 235–52; J. B. Harley, 'Cartography, Ethics and Social Theory', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 27.2 (1990), 1–23; 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 26.2 (1989), 1–20; 'Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 1989, xv; and 'Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe', *Imago Mundi*, 40.1 (1988), 57–76.

2 Robert D. Sack, 'Human Territoriality: A Theory', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 73.1 (1983), 55; and Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 49–53.

to influence the attitudes and behaviour of a defined social group in pursuing interests or objectives considered to be strategic.<sup>3</sup> What distinguishes strategic communications from other, non-strategic communications is that they have lasting political consequences both domestically and internationally. Thus, the strategic character of a communication is defined both by its calculated relevant objectives as well as by its intended lasting effects.

As Agnew writes, the spatiality imbued in a nation-state's 'territoriality' is an historically determined feature that coexists with other forms of spatiality.<sup>4</sup> However, this 'territoriality' is also a characteristic of the formation of the nation-state as a political entity and underlies its expansion as the dominant form of political organisation around the globe.<sup>5</sup> The case I present here is the policy of two South American countries, Argentina and Chile, to link their identities with Antarctica. This case exemplifies the strategic nature of communication practices and their use as one of a state's main resources for identity building.

By integrating a sector of the Antarctic continent into all official maps of Argentina and Chile, those governments not only seek to inform domestic and international populations about the geographical features of Antarctica, but also intend to make a political statement about how they see the white continent in territorial terms.<sup>6</sup> As we will see in this paper, this approach is not new. Nor does it emanate from an isolated or sporadic attempt to project territorial ambitions onto Antarctica. Rather it results from a long historical tradition based on the symbolic and communicative aspects of political strategy.

The relevance of Antarctica to the strategic concerns of both Argentina and Chile does not stem from some form of stubbornness but is the outcome of successful strategic communications campaigns establishing an awareness of Antarctica as part of their national identities. While this strategy has been successful in promoting an internal consensus around the importance of

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3 Neville Bolt, 'Foreword', *Defence Strategic Communications*, 6 (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2019), p. 6; and James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012), xix.

4 John A. Agnew, 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory', *Review of International Political Economy*, 1.1 (1994), 53–80.

5 This understanding of strategic communications emphasises the capability of the communicative aspect to shape some intended social conditions, that is, the medium through which an organisational agent can put forward his reflective monitoring of such conditions. That is not to deny the multi-layered and multi-directional character of all communicative practice, but to focus on the agent for which the communicative action holds a strategic significance. I am following here Giddens's theory of structuration: Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Polity, 1984).

6 Examples can be found in: [Argentina's 'bicontinental' map](#) and [Chile's 'tricontinental' map](#).

Antarctica to Argentine and Chilean national interests, it has been less successful in gathering the support of other Latin American countries and obtaining global acceptance.<sup>7</sup> The objective of the pages that follow is to show how the territoriality of Antarctica was constituted in the public consciousness in Argentina and Chile before the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. This history enables us to understand better the current attitudes of both countries in the face of diverse questions regarding Antarctica, while also illuminating how strategic communications were employed at the time.

This article is organised in six parts. Part One describes the development of early Argentine and Chilean relations with the white continent and how these were presented. Part Two describes their moving from relatively cautious involvement with the Antarctic regions in the mid-1920s to their assumption of a more assertive role at the dawn of the Second World War. Part Three emphasises the development of the concept of an American Antarctica and its intended and unintended consequences, particularly in the context of the Cold War. Part Four analyses Argentina and Chile's increased involvement in Antarctica and their use of a nationalist discourse in the face of a rising conflict with the UK over the Antarctic Peninsula. Part Five reflects on changes introduced into the international situation in Antarctica by the International Geophysical Year project in 1957–58 and the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, and the reactions these events elicited in Argentina and Chile. The Sixth and final part presents our conclusions, including theoretical reflections arising from these case studies.

## 1. Early South American involvement in Antarctica

The territorial constitutions of Argentina and Chile are intrinsically linked with the history of their colonisation, independence, decolonisation, and regional disputes.<sup>8</sup> Having inherited the legal and cultural framework of the Spanish metropolis, many of the territorial disputes between Latin American countries

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<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the suspension of the territorial question with the signing of the Antarctic Treaty on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1959 and the evolution of the Antarctic regime, rendered the objectives of such a strategy outdated. Nonetheless, the strategy of communications around Antarctica continued largely unaltered. For example, the Argentine Law 26.651, dated 20 October 2010, established the obligation to use the 'bicontinental map' which replaced the previous map in which the Antarctic sector was represented on a smaller scale. The initiative was justified by the *Instituto Geográfico Nacional* on the following basis: 'The initiative arose due to the fact that the regular maps minimized the extension of our country, undermining our identity and our legitimate rights over Antarctic territories.' (Retrieved 29 July 2019 from: <http://www.ign.gob.ar/node/51>, own translation).

<sup>8</sup> A brief chronology of Latin-American territorial conflicts can be found in: Juan García Pérez, 'Conflictos Territoriales y Luchas Fronterizas En América Latina Durante Los Siglos XIX y XX.', *Norba. Revista de Historia*, 18 (2005), 215–41.



Figure 1. General Map of the Antarctic Region South of the American Continent.

during the 19<sup>th</sup> century adopted the logic of power politics, mirroring what was happening in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Much of how the former Spanish colonies saw and interpreted their territory was framed by several centuries of Spanish colonialism and domination, including a history of ill-defined colonial frontiers. Legalist and traditionalist approaches to colonial rights derived from their Hispanic heritage were mixed with ambitions to expand their influence, power, and prestige. This characterised the attitude with which countries such as Argentina and Chile interpreted their territorial rights and disputes at the time, including their maritime projection.

<sup>9</sup> Robert N. Burr, *By Reason Or Force: Chile and the Balancing of Power in South America, 1830-1905* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1974).

The development of seal hunting in Antarctica in the first half of the 1800s took place at a time when neither country had achieved complete control of its territories and both were involved in civil wars and border disputes.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, by the early 1900s, Argentina and Chile had extended their administrative control over most of their continental and proximate maritime lands and had solved their core territorial disputes.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it was natural that they started to look to further maritime expansion as a projection of their respective growing economies, populations, and relevance in the global community of nations.

In Argentina, the first manifestations of interest in Antarctica appeared in the late 1800s when the *Instituto Geográfico Argentino* [Argentine Geographical Institute], a private scientific institute that included prominent figures from the political and academic circles of Buenos Aires, financed an Antarctic expedition.<sup>12</sup> The exploration of Antarctica was regarded as a national responsibility, and the project contained many elements that would later define the attitude of Argentina—and similarly Chile—about Antarctica.<sup>13</sup> The expedition found weak support in government—something shared by most Antarctic expeditions at the time—and was redesigned as a geographical exploration of southern Patagonia to strengthen Argentina's position in its territorial dispute with Chile over the area.<sup>14</sup> Before the close of the century other proposals appeared but failed to materialise.<sup>15</sup> For its part, Chile's involvement in the Antarctic began in

10 The lack of an effective reaction by the Argentines to the US (in 1831–32) and the British (in 1833, resulting in the takeover of the Islands) ousting its citizens from the Falklands/Malvinas could be considered a sign of such limitation. On the 1831–33 Falklands/Malvinas events, see: Christian J. Maisch, 'The Falkland/Malvinas Islands Clash of 1831–32: US and British Diplomacy in the South Atlantic', *Diplomatic History*, 24.2 (2000): 185–209.

11 By 1902 all major disputes between Argentina and Chile regarding the Andes range boundary had been solved, and only the dispute over delimitation along the Magellan Strait remained. Octavio Errázuriz Guilisasti and Germán Carrasco Domínguez, *Las Relaciones Chileno-Argentinas Durante La Presidencia de Riesco, 1901-1906* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Andres Bello, 1968); Cameron G. Thies, 'International Interactions Territorial Nationalism in Spatial Rivalries: An Institutional Account of the Argentine-Chilean Rivalry', *International Interactions*, 27.4 (2001): 399–431.

12 The *Instituto Geográfico Argentino* [Argentine Geographic Institute], a non-governmental scientific organisation, should not be confused with the *Instituto Geográfico Nacional* [National Geographic Institute], the Argentine government's cartographic institute. Argentina's first expedition was the initiative of the Italian Lieutenant Giacomo Bove (a member of Adolf E. Nordenfjöld's expedition to the North Pole) who presented the idea to the Italian government but did not obtain official support. When the Argentines heard of Bove's intentions, they offered their support. Bove replied by offering that the Argentine government take the entire enterprise under its wing.

13 See Giacomo Bove, *Expedición Austral Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Geográfico Argentino, 1883), and a similar discourse in Francisco Seguí, 'Las Regiones Polares', *Boletín Del Instituto Geográfico Argentino*, XVIII (1897), 30–32.

14 An account of the government attitudes on early Antarctic exploration is present in Ignacio Javier Cardone, *A Continent for Peace and Science : Antarctic Science and International Politics from the 6th International Geographical Congress to the Antarctic Treaty (1895–1959)*, (Ph. D. dissertation, University of São Paulo and King's College London, 2019), Chapter 2.

15 Pablo Fontana, *La Pugna Antártica: El Conflicto Por El Sexto Continente* (Buenos Aires: Guazuvirá Ediciones, 2014), 26–27.

1902 through the issuing of fishing licences.<sup>16</sup> But, as in Argentina, there was no official strategy or position defining its activities on the white continent.

This changed as both countries became increasingly involved with early Antarctic exploration due to their role as gateways for European expeditions to those regions. Their major and southern ports were key to the preparation and passage of ships heading south; this gave both countries a sense of proximity that no other country could claim. Furthermore, from early in the century, a geopolitical perspective of the continent emerged in Argentina and Chile—the popularity of explorers heading south encouraged the governments to offer their assistance and cooperation, which also gave them a loose sense of ownership.

Early examples of Argentina's involvement with the Antarctic include the establishment of a first class magnetic and meteorological observatory in the Isla de los Estados [Staten Island] to collaborate with the 'great international Antarctic campaign'; the participation of Sub-lieutenant José María Sobral in the Swedish Otto Nordenskjöld expedition of 1901–03 (Sobral was one of the shipwrecked crew that was finally rescued by the Argentine navy after having to spend a second winter isolated on Antarctica); and the transfer of the administration of Scottish explorer W.S. Bruce's observatory on Laurie Island in the South Orkney group to the Argentine government.<sup>17</sup> In a decision that held important symbolic appeal, one Argentine official sent to the Laurie Island observatory was appointed postmaster general on a temporary basis. The Argentine government notably also provided assistance to the French explorer Jean Baptiste Charcot and attempted to establish two more meteorological stations on South Georgia Island and Booth [Wandell] Island to work in concert with the one on Laurie Island.<sup>18</sup> The Argentine government appointed two

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16 Carlos de Toro Alvarez, 'Vinculación Histórica Del Territorio Continental y La Antártica', in *Política Antártica de Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria – Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Chile, 1984), p. 56; Guiliastri and Domínguez, *Relaciones Chileno-Argentinas*, pp. 93–94; Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, 'Chile y Argentina En La Antártida: Algunas Reflexiones', *Boletín Antártico Chileno*, 20.1 (2001): 4.

17 It was common in Latin America to describe the first waves of Antarctic scientific expeditions (between 1897 and 1905) as 'international'. See: Ricardo Capdevila and Santiago M. Comerci, *Historia Antártica Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Dirección Nacional del Antártico, 1986), p. 47; Otto Nordenskjöld, 'The New Era in South-Polar Exploration', *The North American Review*, 183.601 (1906: 759; Rudmose Brown, Robert Neal, R. C. Mossman, and J. H. Harvey Pirie, *The Voyage of the 'Scotia': Being the Record of a Voyage of Exploration in Antarctic Seas* (William Blackwood and Sons, 1906), p. ix. On the transference of Bruce's station to Argentina, see: Geoffrey N. Swinney, 'Some new perspectives on the life of William Spiers Bruce (1867–1921), with a preliminary catalogue of the Bruce collection of manuscripts in the University of Edinburgh', *Archives of Natural History*, 28.3 (2001): 285–311; and 'The Scottish National Antarctic expedition (1902–04) and the founding of Base Orcadas', *Scottish Geographical Journal* 123.1 (2007): 48–67.

18 The Argentine government planned to establish a network of three meteorological stations: on Laurie Island; on South Georgia, and on Booth [Wandell] Island, west of the Antarctic peninsula. However, the last-named of these could not be established (Capdevila and Comerci, *Historia*, p. 65–66).



commissioners to act as authorities on Laurie and Booth islands, although the commissioner assigned to Booth never assumed his position there as the planned station was never established.<sup>19</sup>

These events coincided with the early development of whaling in Antarctica through the establishment of the *Compañía Argentina de Pesca S.A.* in Grytviken, South Georgia.<sup>20</sup> Drawing on Argentine capital, the rapid success of the company attracted new competition, which raised the question of ownership of the region.<sup>21</sup> The requirement by the British Government in the Islas Malvinas [the Falkland Islands] that the company request a licence for operating on the island led to a series of negotiations, which were concluded in an amicable settlement. The *Compañía* and the British government stopped short of resorting to an official diplomatic exchange, thus avoiding political conflict with the Argentines.<sup>22</sup>

At that time, neither Argentina nor Chile had any strategic designs on Antarctica. This changed in 1906 when the Chileans began studying the Antarctic question, having realised the economic potential of whaling; the Chileans based their claims on a need for 'territorial integrity'.<sup>23</sup> In 1906, the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs considered sending an Antarctic expedition to establish a meteorological station and requested that the Chilean government extend its sovereignty '...over the vast southern islands and the southern continent...'. He appointed an 'Antarctic Commission',<sup>24</sup> which led to the first conversations between Argentina and Chile regarding Antarctica, with a view to agreeing on mutually recognised borders. However, the commission was dissolved soon after the discussions were initiated—a treaty was never signed and the plan for the expedition never implemented. Political disagreements between the Argentine President, José Figueroa Alcorta, and his negotiator, Minister of Foreign Affairs

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19 Capdevila and Comerci, *Historia*, p. 66.

20 For the history of the *Compañía Argentina de Pesca S.A.* and its role on the development of Antarctic whaling see: Ian B. Hart, *Pesca: The History of Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima of Buenos Aires* (Aidan Ellis Publishing, 2001).

21 See: David Day, *Antarctica: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Fontana, *La Pugna*.

22 The participation of an Argentine government official on the board of the *Compañía* was considered enough recognition of British sovereignty, while any official communication could have embarrassed the Argentine government and forced it to protest. See: Gorst to Hartford, 31 March 1906. FO371/4. TNA/UK.

23 In a letter from the Foreign Relations Minister, Antonio Huneeus, to the Chilean Minister of Marine, on 2 July 1906, the former expresses that 'The commercial or agricultural value of the territories to which I refer [Antarctica] holds a secondary importance to the Government. The primary considerations that move it are the obligation to consolidate its sovereignty rights over the integrity of the National Territory...' Antonio Huneeus, *Antártida* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Chile, 1948) p. 43 [author's translation].

24 See: Huneeus, *Antártida*, Annex I, II, & III [author's translation of cited paragraph section]. Also: de Toro Alvarez, *Vinculación Histórica*; Guilisasti and Domínguez, *Relaciones Chileno-Argentinas*; and Pinochet de la Barra, *Chile y Argentina*.

Estanislao Zeballos, led to Zeballos's resignation and the suspension of the negotiations.<sup>25</sup> These were the first diplomatic exchanges over the conflicting positions of Argentina, Chile, and the United Kingdom.<sup>26</sup> Antarctica's relatively minor importance—despite the growing economic value of whaling—meant that all three countries opted for a strategy of avoidance to protect their other reciprocal and more prominent commercial interests.

As Antarctic exploration progressed during the 'heroic age' and whaling developed, the United Kingdom adopted a more proactive attitude, issuing, in 1908, Letters Patent that defined what the government described as the Falkland Islands Dependencies (FID).<sup>27</sup> The region encompassed a territory defined as lying between 20° and 80° west longitude and south of 50° south latitude; that is, located directly to the south of the South American continent.<sup>28</sup> For the British, this unilateral declaration of rights was considered sufficient to assert their ownership. However, the declaration passed mostly unnoticed, probably considered an internal British administrative act of no significance.

A lack of reaction on the part of Chile and Argentina was coupled with an absence of any defined policy towards Antarctica within and between the two neighbours—an absence that could be attributed to domestic political instability, residual distrust from earlier territorial disputes, and remaining tensions over the Beagle Channel (a bitter dispute about the possession of the Picton, Lennox, and Nueva islands, located South of Tierra del Fuego).<sup>29</sup> Argentine and Chilean efforts directed at Antarctica, like those of many European countries, were sporadic and fragmented. With the exception of the Laurie Island observatory, which maintained Argentina's continuous presence in the region, and the multi-

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25 See: Carolina Bugueño and Pablo Mancilla, 'Una Aproximación a Las Controversias Diplomáticas Entre Chile, Argentina y Gran Bretaña En El Continente Antártico, 1906–1961', *Revista de Historia de América*, 136 (2005): 10–11; Miryam Colacrai, *Reflexiones En Torno Al Régimen Antártico y Las Relaciones Argentino-Chilenas, Cuadernos de Política Exterior Argentina* (Rosario: Centro de Estudios en Relaciones Internacionales de Rosario (CERIR), 2003) p. 17; Fontana, *La Pugna*, p. 45; and Pinochet de la Barra, *Chile y Argentina*, p. 5–6. Zeballos was the founder and first President of the *Instituto Geográfico Argentino*, the same institution that proposed the first Argentine Antarctic expedition.

26 Bugueño and Mancilla, *Una Aproximación*, p. 10.

27 They would be amended in 1917.

28 Ben Saul and Tim Stephens (eds), *Antarctica in International Law* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2015): 831–32.

29 See: Fontana, *La Pugna*, p. 40–42; The islands held importance because their possession would change the extension to the South of the border between the two countries. The dispute led the two countries to the brink of war in 1978, but war was avoided after a papal mediation and the call for a referendum in Argentina that resulted in general approval of the concession of the islands to Chile. For more about the Beagle Channel dispute, see: Pablo Lacoste, 'La Disputa por El Beagle y el papel de los actores no estatales argentinos', *Universum (Tula)*, 19.1 (2004): 86–109; Mark Laudy, 'The Vatican Mediation of the Beagle Channel Dispute: Crisis Intervention and Forum Building', in Greenberg, Barton, and McGuinness, *Words Over War: Mediation and Arbitration to Prevent Deadly Conflict*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) p. 293–320; M. Mirow, 'International Law and Religion in Latin America: The Beagle Channel Dispute', *Suffolk Transnational Law Review*, 28 (2004): 1–29.

national character of the whaling companies, neither Argentina nor Chile had any other activities in Antarctica.

Although limited, the involvement of both countries was far from being insignificant. Chile's rescue, in 1917, of crew members from Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition that had been stranded on Elephant Island using the small cargo vessel *Yelcho* constituted a key moment in Chile's Antarctic story. The Chilean government represented this as a significant event; it engaged the popular imagination and would have important repercussions for the future Chilean position. Of particular importance is the fact that the expedition was, in practical terms, 'neglected' by the British government.<sup>30</sup> With limited resources, but great determination, the Chilean government acceded to the British call to assist the expedition and rescued the shipwrecked party, laying the groundwork for a future Chilean conceptualisation of Antarctic involvement. As had happened with Sub-lieutenant Sobral in Argentina, Luis Alberto Pardo Villalón, or Piloto Pardo, captain of the *Yelcho*, would be installed as an icon of Chile's Antarctic national commitment.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Antarctica as part of Chilean and Argentine national identity

By 1920, the British were planning the complete inclusion of the Antarctic within their Empire.<sup>32</sup> The Colonial Office elaborated a detailed report concluding that only France held some right to Antarctic land, downgrading any Argentine claim within the 'miscellaneous' section and neglecting any Chilean interest.<sup>33</sup> This stemmed from a fundamental difference between the British and the South American perspectives about the source of rights. For the British, territorial rights derived mainly from discovery and formal acts of taking possession, while for the South Americans emphasis was on inherited Hispanic legal titles and the geographical connection between the southern tip of South America and the

30 Due to the British involvement in the war in Europe it was considered that no resources could be spared to assist the expeditioners. In 1914, Churchill, being first lord of the Admiralty, had already characterised Shackleton's enterprise as a 'sterile quest' (Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-15: ADM 1/8368/29. TNA/UK). Later, while in Flanders in 1916, Churchill wrote to his wife expressing annoyance about the need to assist that expedition. (Winston to Clementine, 28 March 1916. CSCT 2/9. CAC/UK).

31 On Sobral's participation in Nordenfjöld's Antarctic expedition 1901-03 and the Argentine rescue of its crew see: Tamara Sandra Culleton, 'Argentina y El Rescate a La Expedición Antártica de Otto Nodenskjöld (1901-1903): Una Mirada Desde La Prensa de La Época', *Revista Estudios Hemisféricos y Polares*, 6.4 (2015): 1-15. On the Chilean rescue of Shackleton's expedition see: Consuelo León Wöppke and Mauricio Jara Fernández (eds), *El Piloto Luis Pardo Villalón: Visiones Desde La Prensa, 1916* (Santiago de Chile: LW Editorial, 2015).

32 Lambert to the Under Secretary of State of the Foreign Office, 5 December 1919. ADM1/8565/226. TNA/UK.

33 Territorial Claims in the Antarctic. ADM1/8565/226. TNA/UK.

Antarctic peninsula.<sup>34</sup> Deriving legitimacy from the geographical and geological connection between the two landmasses, the Antarctic peninsula was seen as a natural projection of the South American continent to uninhabited proximal lands.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the origin of British neglect of South American claims, it would not last long. In February 1925, the Argentines decided to install a permanent wireless station on Laurie Island.<sup>36</sup> Not only was such a station a natural development of Argentina's ongoing investment in the Island, it also held symbolic importance, linking the Antarctic region and the Argentine mainland. It was presented as an expression of effective administration through the development of communication and infrastructure, a subtle authoritative claim over the group of islands and, indirectly, over a largely still undefined region.

By June of the same year, the British delegation in Buenos Aires complained about the absence of a licence request to the British government, proposing that it would be granted, nonetheless. Argentina responded saying that regarding '...wireless stations constructed in Argentine territory, the republic would act in accordance with the provisions of the International Radiotelegraphic Conventions...'.<sup>37</sup> The British responded that the Argentines were 'unclear', as they were unwilling to consider claims of Argentine sovereignty over islands they perceived as undisputedly British. With neither party willing to acknowledge the other's position, the two countries avoided a potential clash through diplomatic wording. By extending a 'golden bridge', the British expected to obtain some recognition from the Argentine government without creating a major conflict that would damage important British commercial and financial dealings with Argentina.

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34 Scott differentiates three waves of Antarctic Imperialism: i) Spanish and Portuguese expansion, which divided the globe based on the Papal Bulls of 3 and 4 May 1493; ii) British expansion, developed through the 19th century up to World War I, during which time the 'uncivilized' lands were considered *terra nullius* over which acquisition by discovery and 'effective occupation' was possible; and iii) US expansion, which exerted hegemony making use of international institutions. Shirley V. Scott, 'Three Waves of Antarctic Imperialism', in Klaus Dodds, Alan D Hemmings, and Peder Roberts (eds), *Handbook on the Politics of Antarctica*, (Cheltenham – Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), p. 37–49.

35 This question was linked to the discussions about the extension of national maritime rights to adjacent waters that had been taking place since beginning of the 20th century. Eventually, those discussions led to a conference called by the League of Nations in 1930 in The Hague. The conference was unsuccessful. A definition of the extension of continental shelf was eventually agreed upon in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Art 76). This discussion is complex and exceeds the objectives of the present work.

36 Argentine Claims, Territorial Claims in the Antarctic, 1 May 1945. A4311/365/8. NAA/Aus.  
37 *Ibid*.

In 1926, the British Imperial Conference made explicit its imperialist intentions in Antarctica. Argentina and Chile were once more neglected in these deliberations.<sup>38</sup> However, in March 1927 the Argentine station on Laurie Island became operational. Once the British became aware of the situation, they consulted the International Telegraph Bureau, which informed them that Argentina had sent notification of their station two years previous in such a way that assumed sovereignty over the Islands. This triggered another series of diplomatic exchanges, which included a proposal to open negotiations for the transfer of the South Orkney Islands from British to Argentine rule, requiring the Argentines to recognise prior British sovereignty.<sup>39</sup>

The situation became even more critical when Britain learned that the Argentine government had informed the International Post Office in Switzerland that the postal jurisdiction of Argentina extended to the South Orkneys and South Georgia. Further protests to the Argentine government came to nothing, and eventually the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires recommended the Foreign Office avoid conflict over this issue and prioritise good relations with Argentina.

In keeping with this official attitude, other Argentine initiatives also aimed at strengthening the country's sense of possessing these southern regions. In 1927, José Manuel Moneta, at that time head of the Argentine meteorological station on Laurie Island, shot a documentary film entitled *Entre los hielos de las islas Orcadas* [Within the Frozen Lands of the South Orkneys]. Using a style that differed completely from that of previous films about the expeditions of the 'heroic age of Antarctic exploration', Moneta's film stressed the permanent character of the Argentine settlement and the continuity of the activities developed there.<sup>40</sup>

Until just before the Second World War, little consideration was given to Antarctic questions in Argentina and Chile. For Argentina, their operations on Laurie Island represented an undeniable title to the archipelago, while the presence of the *Compañía Argentina de Pesca S.A.* in South Georgia and the operation of a meteorological station on that island by Argentine personnel established an

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38 See: Imperial Conference, 1926. ADM116/2494. TNA/UK.

39 The negotiations failed. Previously, between 1911 and 1914, both countries had maintained negotiations to exchange the South Orkneys for a parcel of land in Buenos Aires city to install the British Legation. (See: Lowes to Bart, 20 March 1914. CO78/132. TNA/UK. There are several other documents in that file as well as in CO78/128 and CO78/129).

40 Pablo Fontana, 'Between the ice of the Orkney Islands: filming the beginnings of the Antarctic overwintering tradition', *The Polar Journal* 9.2 (2019), 340–57.

Argentine presence that was ill defined internationally.<sup>41</sup> But as the international economic crisis derived from the market crash of 1929 intensified the processes of industrialisation and the subsequent urbanisation of the world periphery, nationalist movements began to arise inspired by the apparent successes of fascist movements in Italy, Spain, and Germany.

With tensions rising in Europe, suggesting an imminent war of global proportions, the international order was destabilised, and new opportunities arose for emerging nations. Germany openly defied the established political hegemony; this inspired several countries to openly defy British dominance in a chain reaction. An invitation issued by Norway in 1938 to participate in its upcoming International Exhibition of Polar Exploration to be held in Bergen in 1940 triggered a reaction in Argentina and Chile. They saw the exhibition as an opportunity to raise the issue of sovereignty in Antarctica. The South American countries feared that the event would result in the division of the white continent between the central European powers. To avoid being outmanoeuvred, both countries took steps to set the foundations for specific national Antarctic policies.

In June 1939, Argentine President Ortiz formed a provisional National Antarctic Commission so that his government might assess issues related to the Bergen exhibition. It was formed by three members: Dr Isidoro Ruiz Moreno, an International Relations specialist; Alfredo Galmarini, an engineer who worked at the Ministry of Agriculture; and Captain Francisco Clariza of the Argentine Navy. The Chilean commission would be formed just a few months later in September,<sup>42</sup> created under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and composed of International Legalist Julio Escudero Guzmán and Commander Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, a retired Naval Captain and director of the Hydrographic Service of Chile. Just a few months later, with war already ravaging Europe, the Bergen exhibition was postponed indefinitely, but its effect on Argentina and Chile would endure.

At the close of April 1940, Argentina's National Antarctic Commission was constituted as a permanent body by decree. It aimed to '...centralise and be responsible for the consideration and handling of all matters connected with

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41 The British position was otherwise. A licence for the Meteorological station was conceded as part of a leasing agreement with the company.

42 There was a previous Chilean Antarctic Commission in 1906 (Huneeus, *Antartida*). However, it was short-lived and ended after a change in the Presidency.

the defence and development of Argentine interests in the Antarctic...'.<sup>43</sup> The following month, the Commission delivered a detailed report in which they advanced several recommendations, including the immediate resumption of talks with Chile, the development of a permanent programme of Antarctic exploration, and the study of the economic potential of its natural resources.<sup>44</sup> Domestically, the report recommended staging a permanent Antarctic exhibition in the Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences as a way to promote public interest, and to disseminate information about Antarctica in the educational system. In addition, externally, it was recommended to call an international conference in Buenos Aires to debate the political aspects of Antarctic sovereignty and the establishment of a legal framework for activities in the region. This strategy aimed to increase domestic awareness about Antarctica and raise the international profile of Argentina as an Antarctic actor in support of activities in the Orkney Islands and the planned Antarctic exploration programme.

The news from Argentina caused some concern in Britain but was minimised due to the more urgent question of war in Europe. However, in mid-July, the British Embassy in Buenos Aires delivered a note enclosing a map of Antarctica and a descriptive booklet issued by the Government of Australia, which included all of Britain's claims. The publication drew a response from the Argentine government stating that it had never recognised the sovereignty of any other State to any portion of Antarctica. Moreover, it stated that Argentina asserted '... dominion over a zone to which occupation, geographical proximity and the sector formed by prolongation of the American Continent afford it just title...', and called for an international conference of states with claimed to '...determine a juridico-political status of that region...'. In closing, the letter reasserted the Argentine position that the Falkland/Malvinas Islands were an inalienable piece of territory in which Britain was an illegitimate *de facto* occupier.<sup>45</sup>

While the diplomatic exchange did not result in any significant outcome, it set out the main Argentine strategy for dealing with the Antarctic question. First, it established three principles on which the Argentine position would be constructed: permanent occupation, based on the operation of the Laurie

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43 Argentine Decree No. 61,852.M.97. Enclosure to Cranbourne to the Prime Minister of Australia, 15 October 1940. A981/ANT45. NAA/Aus; and Expediente N° 45. AH/0009/21. AHC/Arg.

44 Informe General - Comisión Nacional del Antartico, May 1940. Exp. 13. AH/0003/12. AHC/Arg.

45 Translation of an enclosure to Buenos Aires dispatch No. 251, dated 13 September 1940. A981/ANT45. NAA/Aus. The link between the Falklands/Malvinas question and the Antarctic would be permanent until the signature of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959; this topic lies outside the scope of the present paper.

Island station since 1904; geographical proximity, Argentina being the closest country to the continent other than Chile; and geological connection, according to the hypothesis of the continuance of the American Andes in the Antarctic Peninsula. Furthermore, by denying the legitimacy of the British occupation of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and asserting its continuing protest, Argentina expected that the idea of 'colonial dependencies' would also be delegitimised. Seeking wider regional support, Argentina also expressed its position at the Pan-American Conference on cooperation and trade taking place in Havana that year; both South American countries stated their reservations based on the view that rights over Antarctica were rooted in the projection of geographical influence and not—as was the British argument—from geographical discovery.

Following the recommendation of the Antarctic Commission, the Argentine government published its own map of Antarctica demarcating an Argentine sector between 25° and 74° west longitude.<sup>46</sup> That publication brought protests from Chile. On 6 November 1940, President Pedro Aguirre Cerda issued a decree declaring all territories lying between 53° and 90° west longitude to be under Chilean sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> The Chilean decree was worded so as to indicate it was not establishing a claim to discovered territory, but defining the boundaries of parts of its territory, to which geographical, historical, legal and diplomatic foundations provided a precedent right. Referring to the studies conducted in 1906 and in 1939 but without making explicit the content of the alleged basis, the decree stated the limits of the Chilean territory on the '...part that extends through the polar region denominated as American Antarctica.'<sup>48</sup> The Chilean decree was a bold strategic move based on a communicative action, intended to install Chile within Antarctic international relations in the face of a relatively precarious situation due to its lack of activity or presence in the Antarctic regions.<sup>49</sup>

The Chilean decree was received with contempt in Argentina and elsewhere, particularly because until that time Chile had had little involvement of note with Antarctica. Nonetheless, the action was effective in placing Chile on the map. With severe budgetary limitations and little to show in terms of historical involvement, Chile was able to secure, in a single formal act, the impact that

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<sup>46</sup> Fontana, *La Pugna*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> Decree N° 1747 of 6 November 1940.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Although the decree was merely a domestic legal document, it was meant to be a declaration to the international community rather than an instrument of domestic administrative jurisdiction.



others had struggled so hard to obtain. Moreover, on 11 December, Manuel Bianchi, the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs, suggested to the Minister of Defence that this territorial claim be included in any map or publication made by the Ministry.<sup>50</sup>

The extent of the territory claimed by Chile was carefully designed to give them some bargaining power in case of any eventual international negotiation, particularly with regard to the claims of Argentina and the United Kingdom, while at the same time avoiding territory potentially to be included in a US claim. The Chileans declared to the Argentines that the decree was made with an open mind in relation to possibly establishing an agreed border between the two countries in Antarctica.<sup>51</sup> Despite the fact that the US expressed disgust and surprise at the Chilean attitude and repeated its historic position of not recognising any claim in Antarctica,<sup>52</sup> the strategy was successful; at least in the sense that it located Chile among the international Antarctic actors. For its part, Argentina had to overcome the first shock of distrust with regard to Chile's overlapping claim before its intention to establish a common position with Chile could regain momentum. While the distrust did not disappear, Argentina and Chile made arrangements to establish preliminary talks over their respective Antarctic territories over the following months.

### 3. An American Antarctica: the unpredictable consequences of a strategic concept

The origin of the concept 'American Antarctica' is probably attributable to the Chilean geographer Luis Riso Patrón, member of the Chilean Antarctic Commission of 1906 and who, in 1908, defined the region as 'part of the Antarctic lands located within the external meridians of the American continent, that is from the South Sandwich Group, on latitude 55°, up to the Peter 1<sup>st</sup> Islands (70° S)'.<sup>53</sup> With no political implication—at least explicitly—the definition was motivated by the geographical conception of the Antarctic peninsula as constituting a geological continuation of the South American

50 Bianchi to Minister of National Defence, 11 December 1940. Fondo Histórico/Vol. 1875. AGH/Chl.

51 Adrian Howkins, 'Icy Relations: The Emergence of South American Antarctica during the Second World War', *Polar Record*, 42.2 (2006), p. 153–65.

52 Felipe A Espil, [Argentine Ambassador in Washington] to Dr. Julio Argentino Roca (Hijo) [Minister of Foreign Affairs], 9 November 1940. Expediente N° 14. AH/0003/2. AHC/Arg.

53 Luis Riso Patrón, 'La Antártida Americana', *Anales de La Universidad de Chile*, 122 (1908), p. 250.

Mention of an 'American Antarctic region' was recorded in the memorandum of the first meeting of the Chilean Antarctic Commission in 1906 (Huneeus, *Antartida*, 45). However, the first formal definition of the concept can be found in Riso Patrón's work of 1908.

continent. However, in 1941, after the Chilean decree and the resumption of Argentine-Chilean negotiations, the concept acquired political significance.

The idea of an American sector of Antarctica had also been put forward by the US when, in 1939, it had stated to both South American countries that it would pursue an 'open door policy' with the 21 American republics for any economic resource found in the Antarctic sector lying south of the American continent.<sup>54</sup> The communication also signalled the subtle idea of a condominium of the American Antarctic sector to all those 21 republics—an idea considered 'absurd' by the Chileans.<sup>55</sup> What Chile understood 'American Antarctica' to mean was the idea of a portion of Antarctica being 'connected' to the American mainland, not that it should be the shared property of all the American republics. A similar attitude was adopted in Argentina, particularly because it favoured a common enterprise against British imperialism. Thus, an American Antarctica was less a shared space than the constitution of a common front against a foreign power—something also present in the US communication.<sup>56</sup>

This concept was addressed in the negotiations between Argentina and Chile in 1941. The two countries failed to reach an agreement but their talks led to a mutual recognition of their exclusive rights to the American sector of Antarctica, concluding that: 'There is an American Antarctica that is an integral part of the Western Hemisphere.'<sup>57</sup> They resolved to continue talks the following year, but that was not to be. Nevertheless, the declaration was important, presenting a common front that not only refuted British claims to the so-called Falkland Island Dependencies but also blocked potential US claims or an advancement of the idea of a continental condominium.<sup>58</sup> However, the concept contained

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54 History and Current Status of Claims in Antarctica, March 1948, p. 23. RG 330. NARA/MD/USA; and Memorandum Confidential, 12 January 1940. Expediente n°11. AH/0003/10. AHC/Arg.

55 Bianchi to the Chilean Ambassador in Washington, 19 December 1940. Fondo Histórico/Vol. 1823. AGH/Chl.

56 While Genest states that the alliance between Argentina and Chile was a consequence of common interests, Howkins contends that the idea of an American Antarctica arose as a consequence of the differences between Argentina and Chile (Eugenio A Genest, *Antártida Sudamericana: aportes para su comprensión* (Buenos Aires: Dirección Nacional del Antártico - Instituto Antártico Argentino, 2001); and Howkins, *Icy Relations*). However, at least the Argentine initiative to resume negotiations was inspired by a sincere sentiment of brotherhood and solidarity. See: Comisión Nacional del Antártico - Informe General - Mayo 1940. Expediente N° 13. AH/0003/12. AHC/Arg.

57 For the acts of the meetings see: Copias de las Actas Firmadas en Santiago de Chile..., 4 June 1941. Expediente N° 16. AH/0003/4. AHC/Arg. (author's translation)

58 The Chilean representative rejected the idea of extending the west limit of the 'American Antarctica' to the sector explored by US expeditions. The idea was to discourage any potential claim by the US to the 'unclaimed sector' in a declaration in which they had not participated. See: Informe del Delegado Argentino Dr. Moreno, 2 April 1941. Expediente N° 16. AH/0003/4. AHC/Arg.

an essential contradiction—while designed to facilitate unity against extra-continental actors, it was also meant to exclude other actors on the continent.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, as far as no other continental actor besides the US was expressing any active interest in Antarctica, the concept was allowed to stand, and was further legitimised in Pan-American fora.<sup>60</sup> The end of the Second World War did little to diminish the appeal of the concept. In 1945, one of the original members of the Chilean Antarctic Commission, Captain Enrique Cordovez, who had participated in 1943 as an observer on the Argentine Antarctic expedition, published a book entitled *La Antártida Sudamericana*.<sup>61</sup> The book offered a geographical, biological, and physical account of Antarctica, and also advanced the Chilean position regarding Antarctica, framed by the idea of an Argentine-Chilean sector of the continent. Despite the mistrust and jealousy that characterised Chilean sentiment toward Argentine activities in Antarctica, Cordovez praised Argentine-Chilean cooperation and defended the existence of a sector of Antarctica that belonged exclusively to these two countries.<sup>62</sup>

The concept was further interpreted as a corollary of the Monroe Doctrine in the context of the Cold War—not in its original unilateral interpretation regarding limits on European colonisation, but with a view to revised continental solidarity. After the war, re-invigorated in its leading role on the continent, the US established a clear hegemony by reframing the Monroe Doctrine along the lines of the anti-communist struggle. This neo-Monroviaism may well have emboldened both Latin American countries in their attitudes toward the British.<sup>63</sup> Argentina and Chile further advanced the idea of Antarctica as an extension of the American continent in the 1947 American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance—usually known as the Rio Pact or TIAR according to the Spanish acronym. Even with US objections to its inclusion, the Treaty defined the zone

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59 There was a concern in Ruiz Moreno's view about the possibility of a Brazilian claim to Antarctica. See: *Ibid.*, p.3.

60 There were doubts about the convenience of referring to the concept of 'American Antarctica', 'South American Antarctica' or referring to an 'American Sector of Antarctica'. See: *Ibid.* and Dictamen de los Miembros Técnicos, 7 May 1941. Expediente N° 16. AH/0003/4. AHC/Arg.

61 Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, *La Antártida Sudamericana* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Nascimento, 1945).

62 For more on the Chilean reactions to Argentine activities during the 1943 campaign see: Enclosed Report presented by Captain (E) Enrique Cordovez in Naval Attaché to Director of Naval Intelligence, 23 August 1943, ADM116/4931, TNA/UK; on Cordovez's views on the book, see: Mauricio Jara Fernández, 'Enrique Cordovez Madariaga y Su Visión de La Antártida Sudamericana a Medios de La Década de 1940', *Revista de Historia*, 11–12 (2002), 23–26; Howkins, *Icy Relations*.

63 It is important to note that, in 1946, the US undertook the greatest military operation ever attempted in Antarctica, *Operation Highjump*, which demonstrated its superior polar capabilities.

of inter-continental defence to include the Antarctic sector between 24° and 90° west longitude.<sup>64</sup>

Eventually, the concept backfired to the detriment of the original intentions of Argentina and Chile. Some actors in other Latin American countries promoted a wider distribution of American Antarctica between the South American countries, echoed by the position of geographer Terezinha de Castro in Brazil in the 1950s.<sup>65</sup> Castro emphasised many principles defended by the promoters of an American Antarctica in Argentina and Chile—inherited colonial and historical rights, continental contiguity, and hemispherical defence.

#### 4. Popular appeal and the trap of nationalist discourse

Following the 1940 plan, Argentina had already strengthened its position in Antarctica by sending exploratory expeditions in 1941 and 1943, performing several symbolic acts of taking possession and installing markers and navigation signals that could be displayed as a demonstration of effective presence.<sup>66</sup> Unable to conduct its own expeditions due to limited resources, Chile had to content itself with sending three observers on the 1943 Argentine expedition. This action served to cement an image of partnership, even when suspicion and jealousy continued to characterise the relations between the two countries.<sup>67</sup>

At this time, both governments were headed by presidents who employed a nationalist discourse. Perón in Argentina and González Videla in Chile used Antarctica as a significant symbol of nationalism against Britain's declining imperialism.<sup>68</sup> The end of the Second World War did not diminish the force of nationalist discourse and popular appeal of South America's governments. After the war, both countries were able to send national expeditions to Antarctica. Chile finally fulfilled its promise to take Argentine observers on a national

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64 [Article 4 of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance](#) (Retrieved 30 July 2019).

65 'Boletim Geográfico', *Boletim Geográfico*, XVII.150 (1959); Delgado de Carvalho and Terezinha de Castro, 'A Questão Antártica', *Boletim Geográfico*, XIV.135 (1956), 502–6; Terezinha de Castro, *Rumo à Antártica* (Rio de Janeiro: Freitas Bastos, 1976).

66 For a chronology of activities see: Fontana, *La Pugna*.

67 See: Enclosed Report presented by Captain Enrique Cordovez, 23 Aug 1943: ADM116/4931. TNA/UK and Territorial Claims in the Antarctic by Research Department, Foreign Office, 1 May 1945: A4311/365/8. NAA/Aus.

68 Howkins, *Icy Relations*; Adrian Howkins, 'Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939–1959' (The University of Texas at Austin, 2008); Adrian Howkins, 'A Formal End to Informal Imperialism: Environmental Nationalism, Sovereignty Disputes, and the Decline of British Interests in Argentina, 1933–1955', *British Scholar*, III.2 (2010): 235–62.

expedition of its own, and Argentina resumed its previous activities. However, both countries had to face the strong British position in Antarctica established by *Operation Tabarin* during the war.<sup>69</sup>

In 1946 Perón reinvigorated the Antarctic Commission by restructuring its membership and made mandatory the publication of the Antarctic sector on any map of Argentine territory.<sup>70</sup> The renewed Commission elaborated a plan of action for the effective occupation and administration of the 'Argentine sector' and considered alternatives for an international agreement.<sup>71</sup> Emphasis was given to geographical exploration, meteorology, tidal research, and the potential for human, animal, and vegetal adaptability. Several actions, including acquiring polar equipment and establishing permanent stations, were suggested to fulfil those objectives.

In Chile, the inclusion of the Antarctic territory on all maps was also made mandatory, and the acquisition of a polar vessel enabled the planning of its first national Antarctic expedition in 1947. That same year, the two governments began negotiations related to the common boundary, which, in July 1947, resulted in a declaration in defence of a 'South-American Antarctica' and, in March 1948, the signature of the Donoso-La Rosa declaration in which both governments agreed to act in coordinated defence of their respective rights to the American sector of Antarctica.<sup>72</sup> The next season, in 1948, Chilean President González Videla visited Antarctica to inaugurate the first permanent Chilean Antarctic base; he was the first President to set foot in Antarctica. The presidential visit was used as an opportunity to promote Chilean public opinion and attribute a sense of importance to the Antarctic question in the international arena. As President Pedro Aguirre Cerda had done with the decree in 1940, González drew on strong symbolism to force a place for Chile on the Antarctic stage.

Meanwhile, in 1948, the US had approached the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand in order to reach a preliminary agreement ahead of negotiations with

<sup>69</sup> *Operation Tabarin* was a secret naval operation allegedly designed to inhibit the activities of Nazi corsairs in the Southern Ocean. In fact, it forestalled Argentine activities in the Antarctic region. Despite its naval character, the operation established permanent Antarctic stations with mainly scientific personnel.

<sup>70</sup> Decree 8.944 of 2 September 1946. The decree made explicit the obligation to include the Antarctic sector and unified a diverse number of regulations that had been issued since 1935. The former Secretary of the Laurie Island Observatory, José Moneta, was designed Secretary of the reconstituted commission and would continue to be an influential figure in Argentine Antarctic matters.

<sup>71</sup> Carlos A Rinaldi, 'Desarrollo Científico Argentino En La Antártida', *Boletín del Centro Naval*, 836 (2013): 148.

<sup>72</sup> Carlos Aramayo Alzérreca, *Historia de La Antártida*, 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Editorial Hemisferio, 1949), p. 357–60; Colacrai, *Reflexiones*, 18; Fontana, *La Pugna*, p. 186–87 and 199–200.

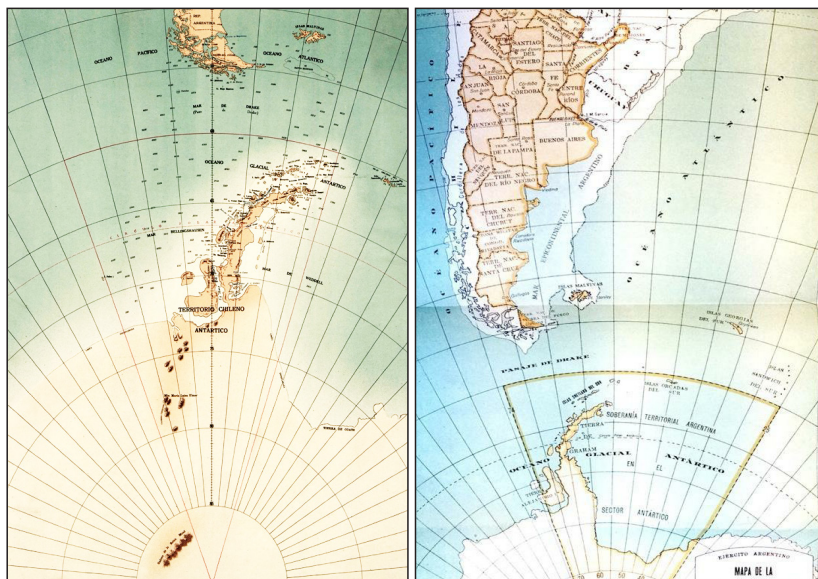


Figure 2. Maps Showing the Claimed Sectors of Argentina (left) and Chile (right). Source: Left: AH0003/20/Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería (Arg.). Right: 350485. Biblioteca Nacional Digital (Chile)

the South American countries.<sup>73</sup> However, when negotiations were made public, both countries immediately rejected the possibility of striking any agreement made without their participation. In August 1948, Professor Escudero of the Chilean National Antarctic Commission elaborated a moratorium proposal sent to the United States which envisioned a ‘standstill’ agreement for a duration of five years to facilitate international cooperation in scientific research.<sup>74</sup> However, the only agreement reached was a tripartite declaration not to send warships south of 60° south latitude other than those that had become customary over the years.<sup>75</sup> The heated nationalist discourse and contentious tone of journalism

73 A first proposal advanced the idea of a United Nations trustee but was abandoned as such a solution would necessarily include the Soviets as permanent members of the UN Security Council. In order to avoid that, the idea of a Trustee was replaced by a condominium between the seven claimant countries (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom) and the US. For more on the roles of Argentina and Chile in establishing an Antarctic regime see Ignacio Javier Cardone and Pablo Gabriel Fontana, ‘Latin-American Contributions to the Creation of the Antarctic Regime’, *The Polar Journal*, 9.2 (2019): 300-323.

74 Reunidos en la ciudad de... Undated. FO371/74757. TNA/UK.

75 Howkins, *Frozen Empires*, p. 178-84.

in Argentina, the United Kingdom, and Chile did little to ease tempers, but the tripartite declaration guaranteed at least a basic level of consensus.<sup>76</sup> This declaration was reiterated annually, actively renewing the compromise.

In 1949, a young Colonel of the Argentine Army, Hernán Pujato, presented an ambitious plan that included: i) the effective presence of the Argentine Army on the Antarctic continent; ii) the establishment of a specific scientific institution; iii) the establishment of an Antarctic settlement; iv) the acquisition of an ice-breaker; and v) an expedition to reach the South Pole.<sup>77</sup> After initially ignoring Pujato's proposal, in late 1950 Perón approached the young colonel to assign him the task of organising a scientific expedition to the Antarctic. Pujato encountered several obstacles in the Argentine armed forces but eventually dispatched his first scientific expedition, after which the *Instituto Antártico Argentino 'Coronel Hernán Pujato'* was established. The institute's foundational aims were to guide, control, manage, and execute research and technical studies related to Argentine Antarctic activities in coordination with the National Antarctic Commission. The renewed character of these activities did not neglect the nationalist aims of scientific development in those latitudes. Scientific objectives were intertwined with national symbolism, such as the performance of 'acts of sovereignty' and the establishment of permanent bases covering a great expanse of the sector claimed.

Perón used Pujato's success to bolster his nationalist and anti-imperialist discourse. At every opportunity, Perón mentioned Argentine involvement in Antarctica to highlight its importance to the Argentine nation and to emphasise the heroism of the men who affirmed its sovereignty in those isolated and frozen lands. Many school textbooks published during Perón's presidency included content related to Argentina's claims to the Antarctic, as well as to the Malvinas.<sup>78</sup> Without being as incendiary as their neighbour, Chilean officials also incorporated the idea of national enterprise and heroism into speeches directed at the general public.

In 1952, an incident in Hope Bay on the Antarctic peninsula involved Argentine and British parties. The Argentine military kept the British from disembarking by threat of force. Strategically, Perón made an official apology for the excessive zeal shown by the officer in charge, while domestically he praised

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76 Ibid, 184.

77 Fontana, *La Pugna*, p. 215.

78 Amelia Beatriz García, 'Textos Escolares : Las Malvinas y la Antártida para la " Nueva Argentina " de Perón', *Antíteses*, 2.4 (2009): 1033–58.



the commander's attitude as 'patriotic' and 'heroic' in the press and in public discourse.<sup>79</sup> When, a year later, an incident on Deception Island ended in the British destruction of Argentine and Chilean bases and the forced detention of two Argentine officials, both governments attempted to keep the incident from public view; it was understood that any public acknowledgement could force a reaction against the UK.<sup>80</sup> Eventually the news came out, causing a strong public reaction, but no retaliation by either South American country followed. However, the Hope Bay and Deception Island incidents were a clear indication that the tripartite declaration was an insufficient guarantee of peace in the region and that a political solution would have to be reached if a military clash was to be avoided.<sup>81</sup>

## 5. The Geophysical Year and the Washington Conference of 1959

While Argentina, Chile, and Great Britain were entangled in a strategic competition that acquired a dangerous level of confrontation, the International Geophysical Year of 1957–58 (IGY) was being organised. Once Argentina and Chile agreed to participate, they joined in the preparatory work on the Antarctic programme of the IGY. Their presentations reflected their policies towards Antarctica, explicitly linking the scientific with the political and the diplomatic.<sup>82</sup> Images of national sovereignty, heroism, and undiscovered riches commonly appeared in discussions about the scientific programme and in their communications about national involvement. Besides unveiling the secrets hidden beneath the icy surface of the continent, the scientific work was presented as a contribution affirming national sovereignty, despite the fact that both countries had promised they would not use the IGY as a platform to claim rights to the Antarctic.

At the first IGY Antarctic Conference in 1955, Chile's delegation, supported by Argentina, promoted a declaration that scientific work would not affect territorial rights in Antarctica. They intended to push through a specific resolution that the work of the Conference would not affect the political status quo. However, the resolution was roundly rejected by Georges Laclavère, Secretary of the Commission for the IGY, and the delegations had to be content with a

79 See: Allen to Arg. Foreign Minister, 3 February 1952; Mack to Eden, 9 February 1952; Remorino to Mack, 27 February 1952; Mack to Eden, 3 May 1952; and Mack to Eden, 13 May 1952. FO 463/4. TNA/UK.

80 Howkins *Frozen Empires*.

81 In retrospect, the 1952–53 incidents seem to have necessitated the demilitarisation of the continent in the Antarctic Treaty just six years later.

82 Argentina and Chile joined the IGY efforts only after the general programme of activities had already been decided (Adrian Howkins, 'Reluctant Collaborators: Argentina and Chile in Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year, 1957–58', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34.4 (2008), p. 605).



resolution that approved Laclavère's opening words to the conference affirming its purely scientific character.<sup>83</sup> After the Soviets announced they would join the Antarctic effort, all participants of the Conference made a 'gentlemen's agreement' pledging that any activity undertaken as part of the IGY would not be used to strengthen or deny any pre-existent claims. The idea was taken from Escudero's proposal of a moratorium on the sovereignty dispute in 1948 and would eventually form the basis of the political provision in Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The provision allowed any foreign activity in the disputed sector to be publicly presented as a 'concession' of the country claiming that part of Antarctica as its territory, even if the sovereignty of the latter country had not been recognised.

While the IGY was taking place, the United States approached the other 11 nations participating in the Antarctic scientific programme, requesting them to negotiate an agreement that would preserve Antarctica for peaceful activities and secure the freedom of scientific investigation on the continent. The US was reacting to increasing Soviet involvement in the region, and also to the military conflicts of 1952 and 1953 between the two Latin American countries and the British. After extensive preliminary negotiations in 1958–59, a conference was convened in Washington on 15 October 1959.<sup>84</sup> During the negotiations, Argentina and Chile were adamant in their respective sovereignty claims and adopted a joint game plan to dominate the negotiations. The unspoken alliance between the two countries became apparent, as each usually endorsed the other's position.<sup>85</sup> Frequently, the two countries expressed 'reservations' in order to reassert their sovereignty claims.

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83 Rossetti to Minister of Foreign Affairs. 20 July 1955. Fondo Antártica/Vol. 28. AGH/Chl.

84 On the negotiations of the Antarctic treaty see Peter J Beck, 'Preparatory Meetings for the Antarctic Treaty 1958–1959', *Polar Record*, 22.141 (1985): 653–64; Rip Bulkeley, 'The Political Origins of the Antarctic Treaty', *Polar Record*, 46.01 (2010): 9–11; Cardone and Fontana, *Latin-American Contributions*; Klaus Dodds, 'The Great Game in Antarctica: Britain and the 1959 Antarctic Treaty', *Contemporary British History*, 22.1 (2008): 43–66; Robert Hall, 'International Regime Formation and Leadership: The Origins of the Antarctic Treaty' (University of Tasmania, 1994) and 'Casey and the Negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty', in J. Jabour-Green and M. Haward (eds), *The Antarctic: Past, Present and Future: Proceedings of a Conference Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Antarctic Treaty on 23rd June 1961* (2002), p. 27–33; Steve Heavens, 'Brian Roberts and the Origins of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty', *Polar Record*, 2012, 2016, p. 1–13; Howkins, *Frozen Empires*; Ryan A. Musto, 'Cold Calculations: The United States and the Creation of Antarctica's Atom-Free Zone', *Diplomatic History*, 00.0 (2017); M. J. Peterson, *Managing the Frozen South: The Creation and Evolution of the Antarctic Treaty System* (University of California Press, 1988).

85 On the position of the different countries during negotiations, see the memorandums of the meetings of the working group and of the Conference, available in the collection: Program Records 1951–1959 — Conference on Antarctica (Washington DC, 1959). International Conferences, Commissions and Expositions: RG 0043. National Archives and Records Administration. College Park, Maryland, USA.

In the end, the two countries accepted the political arrangement established by article IV of the Antarctic Treaty and joined the other ten parties of the Conference in signing the Antarctic Treaty on 1 December 1959.<sup>86</sup> A formal moratorium on the dispute did not mean a renunciation of sovereignty. Both countries were adamant in rejecting any form of internationalisation or the establishment of a permanent authoritative body regarding Antarctica. They resisted the idea of freedom of access and of each nation's own jurisdiction over its nationals but were unsuccessful.

On the other hand, thanks to an Argentine initiative, also supported by Chile and the other Southern Hemisphere countries, a prohibition on nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste in Antarctica was pushed through, citing geographical proximity to the South American continent.<sup>87</sup> Tying Antarctica to South America allowed both Chile and Argentina to identify with other former British colonies and to legitimise the interests of those countries in closer proximity to the white continent.<sup>88</sup>

The political opposition in both countries chose to interpret the IGY and the Antarctic Treaty as a renunciation of sovereignty claims, so these negotiations encountered strong resistance in their parliaments.<sup>89</sup> However, the proponents successfully framed their arguments by stressing the positive aspects of these agreements, such as the ban on nuclear testing, and by insisting that they were not giving up national sovereignty and that no new claims would be made—particularly by the US.<sup>90</sup> Over time, continuous participation in decision-making regarding the Antarctic became a way of asserting national sovereignty. And so it continues to the present.<sup>91</sup>

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86 The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 was signed by Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Union of South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, The United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

87 Although they differed with regard to the extent of the prohibition, all Southern Hemisphere countries present at the Conference (Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa) supported some form of limitation to nuclear testing and radioactive waste disposal.

88 For a thorough account of the position of Argentina and Chile in the Antarctic Treaty negotiations see Cardone and Fontana, *Latin-American Contributions*.

89 Howkins, *Frozen Empires*.

90 The first two were warranted by Article IV of the Treaty.

91 Although the amount of content related to Antarctica in the educational curriculum has declined (in comparison to the period when Peron was in power), all maps edited in Argentina and Chile are still required to include the Antarctic sector and the insular territories (Natalia Gisele Arce and Tamara Sandra Culleton, 'El Desafío de Crear un Puente Bicontinental: Problemas y Perspectivas en la Enseñanza de la Historia Antártica Argentina', *Revista Estudios Hemisféricos y Polares*, 9.4 (2018): 19–27. Moreover, since 2010, the inclusion of a bi-continental map—a map including the national territory and the claimed Antarctic territory at the same scale—was made mandatory for all school textbooks (Law 26.651 of 15 November 2010).

## 6. Conclusion: Argentine and Chilean Antarctic territoriality—strategic communications and their long-term consequences

As we have seen, Argentina and Chile have constructed their policies regarding Antarctic territoriality through strategic communications—by diplomatic interchanges framed in accordance with national strategic goals; by the use of symbolism in their Antarctic activities; by developing the concept of an American Antarctica; and by introducing a policy of domestic indoctrination in the principles on which they based their claims to Antarctic territory, including a central policy regarding the production and use of maps.

While for Argentina and Chile their material involvement with Antarctica was a way of demonstrating their link with the continent, the communicative aspects of all related policies were addressed in consideration of their strategic importance, both domestically and internationally. At first, Antarctic policy was not developed as the outcome of a planned programme, but later on, when specific institutions were constituted to deal with the Antarctic question, it acquired a more premeditated strategic character. Both countries addressed the issue of Antarctica as a question of territoriality linked to national identity.

Although developments after the Treaty of 1959 exceed the scope of this paper, I will attempt to briefly summarise, as a final note, outcomes for both countries. The permanence of the achievements described above<sup>92</sup> seems to signal the success of strategic communications at the domestic level, at least with regard to the original objectives of the two countries. Creating a ‘national Antarctic consciousness’ was a strategic move in an environment in which territorial competition was at its peak. However, Argentine and Chilean territorial views regarding Antarctica have seldom achieved recognition internationally—and the two countries have granted each other little mutual recognition—but the creation of an Antarctic regime has considerably changed the conditions in which such policies were originally generated.<sup>93</sup>

The success of both countries’ policies in presenting the case of Antarctica as a question of national integrity and identity to their respective populations

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92 Today, the framing of Antarctic issues in Argentina and Chile does not differ much from the years before the signature of the Antarctic Treaty: i) scientific research is usually seen as a means to discover hidden wealth and as a signal for reaffirming national sovereignty; ii) participation in the Antarctic international regime is considered essential to guaranteeing those rights be preserved internationally; iii) all maps published in the country must include the claimed Antarctic sector as national territory; and iv) the educational curriculum includes teaching content related to Antarctica from a general but also a nationalist perspective

93 This is not exclusive to Argentina and Chile. Other claimant countries—and even non-claimant—have eventually portrayed their Antarctic policies in a similar manner.

has created conditions under which the very possibility of changing that interpretation becomes problematic. Effective strategic communications can shape a situation in which the introduction of change is hampered.

The ‘territorial trap’, described by Agnew as the assumption made by International Relations scholars about the essentially territorial character of the nation-state, could also constitute a trap for governments when they define their strategy over their territorial identity, only to experience a considerable change in the general setting.<sup>94</sup> In any situation in which territory is undefined, such as in Antarctica, tying national identity to territorial claims can be flaunted as a sign of strong conviction, but also can limit options in the long run. Resorting to similar arguments in other contexts can produce similar outcomes. Thus, any strategic communications effort should consider what can be expected as a durable outcome and should be open to change as the situation demands.

To be successful, strategic communications programmes need to consider not only the immediate stakeholders—such as, in our case, domestic publics—but also other concerned actors. Particularly in contexts of conflict—when strategic communications is most needed—a good strategy would not restrict the options available if the strategy is effective, but rather try to associate their interests with values acceptable to the other parties involved. While territorial nationalistic values may be effective in generating a consensus domestically and showing a strong position externally, they could limit available options if the situation leads to a non-zero-sum game. In brief, to be successful, a strategic communications effort should be rooted in shared values and principles among all interested parties. The principles of territoriality are domestically unifying but often constitute a field of international contention. Resorting to cosmopolitan values could produce more desirable results for questions requiring international understanding and cooperation. In our case, the values of collaboration, scientific research, and peaceful use offer a better foundation for current communications about Antarctica.

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<sup>94</sup> Agnew, *The Territorial Trap*, pp.56-60.

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