

THE CONSTRUCTIVE LIMITS OF ANTARCTIC HISTORY, YANKEE IMPERIALISM AND CHILEAN-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS THROUGH 1959

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The contemporary relevancy of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty is subject to interpretation, but it cannot be subject to denial since it remains in effect. Decades of peaceful scientific cooperation have affirmed its reputation for durability, and there are no indications that the twenty-first century is likely to jeopardise its maintenance. As fortunate as this is for the world, it is frustrating for historians who find no evidence that a treaty based on the suspension of sovereignty was likely to succeed, much less that it was signed with pure intentions. If this system had functioned without involving more than the original twelve signatories, it would remain noteworthy. Today it involves over forty states willing to ask the unanswerable question 'to be or not to be' of their sovereign rights.

The treaty system functions so well that those familiar with its origins might regard it as the disappointingly uneventful aftermath of a Shakespearian farce. The vast majority of English-language scholars, on the other hand, permit its success to obscure the complexity and number of factors which bore upon its formation. The dozen nations active in the far south during the 1957-1958 International Geophysical Year shared no overarching agenda, common ideology or security concerns. In fact their agendas blurred scientific and military objectives given the inadequacy of civilian equipment and transportation in the polar environment². Their ideologies ranged from Soviet communism to North American liberalism. While the smaller powers were of Western orientation, their systems differed greatly and most had a healthy aversion to glorifying the intentions of either superpower³. Accordingly their security concerns diverged to the point of being contradictory, though the remoteness of Antarctica prevented those concerns from eclipsing other factors⁴.

From mid-1958 through late 1959, when the treaty was signed, the twelve powers held countless meetings of diverse nature. The preliminary semiformal meetings and the conference itself involved all parties. Meanwhile clandestine discussions were held between various delegates and ensembles of delegates from Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, New Zealand and the United States - the only non-claimant nation

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² The United States supported the theory of demilitarization promulgated by the Antarctic Treaty, but insisted that in practice the military nature of personnel was unimportant. Instead, it believed, personnel had to be judged by the nature of their activity. Undersecretary of State to American Diplomatic Posts, 10 December 1959, CA-4831, National Archives, College Park, Maryland, RG 59,702.022.

³ For example, Argentina cautioned the United States that its population had no faith in either superpower abiding the demilitarisation protocol of the Antarctic Treaty. US Embassy in Buenos Aires to Department of State, 3 November 1959, no. 693, National Archives, RG 59,399.829

⁴ For example, the Southern Cone nations and Britain actively disputed each other's rights the panhandle, leading to a series of hostile naval displays in the late 1940s and dangerous encounters in the early 1950s. All three governments enjoyed public support for taking an assertive position, but in private officials sought a negotiated settlement. This took the form of an agreement which prevented them from dispatching more vessels than considered 'normal' for their Antarctic programs. While the three powers still would interpret this to their own advantage and remain suspicious of each other, their agreement successfully mitigated the risk of open combat. Finally they and the other claimant nations accepted that they had no ability to reach any agreement without US consent, and North American officials wished to pacify quarrelsome sovereignty. See US Ambassador in London to Secretary of State, 24 November 1948, Foreign Relations of the United States 1948, vol. 1, no. 2 General (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1976): 1013-15; US Department of State, Division of Northern European Affairs, Memorandum of Conversation, 9 September 1949, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014; US Department of State, Office of Inter-American Regional Political Affairs, Memorandum of Conversation, 3 October 1957, National Archives, RG 59, 399.829.

amongst them. These discussions addressed possible responses to a breakdown of the conference due to what US officials viewed as Soviet disruptiveness. Alternatives included establishing two three-power condominiums, between the Commonwealth nations and the United States, consistent with the Anzus Treaty, and between the Southern Cone nations and their former archrival, the United Kingdom. A merged, six-power condominium was contemplated, in addition to a variety of bilateral arrangements which could expand as necessary⁵.

As any outcome had been possible before the twelve-power negotiations, any outcome remained possible as they unfolded. The participants either had claims or did not. They either had expressed their reservation of rights or had not. They either had sought arbitration at the Hague or had refused to jeopardise their rights in any fashion⁶. The majority might have derived amusement from the brinkmanship, vanity and deceit of the two superpowers⁷. The conference nearly did collapse, less because of the Soviets, as US officials had feared, than because they themselves had judged their Cold War adversary by their own questionable intentions⁸. Arduous deliberation and the inescapable need for US compromise managed to produce a treaty satisfactory to all parties⁹. Nonetheless the conference held to promote international cooperation had revealed only that certain ideals could be achieved under the least promising of circumstances.

The roles of Chile and Australia during the Washington conference were significant though not publicised. Indeed the latter possibility was infeasible as the host country imposed a press blackout to shield delegates from domestic pressures. Even behind closed doors, the magnitude of Chile's role might have been under-appreciated since a decade had passed between its circulation of the Escudero Plan and the US incorporation of that plan into the second internationalization proposal, which served as the basis for the Antarctic Treaty. Indeed the treaty would have been unlikely to impossible without the political moratorium crafted by Escudero and later ratified as Article IV. Only the Soviet Union threatened to oppose the moratorium, and documents suggest that the Australian external affairs minister was responsible for persuading it to reconsider¹⁰. In this context he assured that Chile's legacy would be upheld, and the two countries forged an essential partnership, however chronologically disjointed it happened to be¹¹.

⁵ British Foreign Office to Embassy in Washington, 12 September 1958, no. 6454, A 15228/9; British Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office to Embassies in Canberra and Wellington, 13 September 1958, A 15228/10; British Foreign Office, Embassy in Buenos Aires to American Department, 16 November 1956, A 15213/16, Public Record Office, London, England, FO 371; US Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs to Office of Deputy Undersecretary of State, 21 April 1959, National Archives, RG 59, 399.829. See also H. Robert Hall, *The origins of the Antarctic Treaty*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia, 1995.

⁶ When the Antarctic Treaty was signed, only Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, France, New Zealand and Norway had asserted their rights over sectors of the continent, and they are still the only so-called claimant nations. The United States and the Soviet Union announced their reservation of all rights, whereas this was not so of all of the original signatories. Chile and Argentina rejected British overtures to seek a ruling from the International Court of Justice at The Hague as regards their dispute in the peninsular region. See US Ambassador in Santiago to Secretary of State, 25 February 1948, no. 140, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014; British Colonial Office to Foreign Office, American Department, 17 May 1950, no. 88442/1/50, A 15225/3, Public Record Office, FO 371.

⁷ The brinkmanship of the superpowers took the form of not advancing claims, lest the other be provoked into doing so, while being prepared to advance them in that case. This approach was linked closely to their deceptive insistence that science and international cooperation were their only objectives, consistent with the stated purpose of the International Geophysical Year. Finally they competed for recognition of the excellence of their Antarctic programs, as this was considered to enhance their political flexibility. At one point Chile unsuccessfully encouraged the United States to make a limited territorial claim to curtail Soviet advances. US Embassy in Wellington to Department of State, 10 March 1958, no. 480, National Archives, RG 59, 399.829; US Ambassador Paul C. Daniels, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 November 1957, National Archives, RG 59, 702.022.

⁸ US officials seemed to believe that their plan to use Antarctica as a nuclear testing ground might be embraced by the other nations as a means of counteracting the Soviet presence there. The treaty negotiations not only proved the opposite; they proved that Dwight D. Eisenhower's public declarations had been intentionally misleading. The US president had claimed that rumours of US nuclear plans were no more than communist propaganda. See William M. Blair, 'President Warns of Nuclear Race', *The New York Times*, 3 March 1955. Some British officials suspected, as had been reported and denied by their colleagues, that their government sought to participate in US-led nuclear tests. British Foreign Office Minute, 28 October 1954, A 15214/24; British Foreign Office Minute, 12 November 1954, A 15214/30E; British Embassy in Paris to Foreign Office, 23 November 1959, A 15214/360, Public Record Office, FO 371.

⁹ US officials opposed the nuclear test ban until it became evident that they had to yield to avoid a complete breakdown of the twelve-power negotiations. See British Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office, 7 November 1959, A 15214/292, Public Record Office, FO 371; US Delegation to Antarctic Conference, Memorandum for Deputy Undersecretary of State, 17 November 1959; US Department of State, Office of Deputy Undersecretary of State, Notes for National Security Council Briefing, 9 December 1959, National Archives, RG 59, 702.022.

¹⁰ Robert Hall, 'Casey and the Negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty', in Julia Jabour-Green and Marcus Haward, eds., *The Antarctic: Past, Present and Future* (Hobart, Australia: Cooperative Research Centre for Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies, 2002).

¹¹ The United States considered Chile and Australia two of the most difficult nations to persuade of internationalisation since they were both firmly committed to defend their sovereign rights. US Department of State, Division of Northern European Affairs, Memorandum of Conversation, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014; US Deputy Undersecretary of State, Memorandum of Conversation 10 October 1955; US Ambassador Paul C. Daniels, Memorandum of Conversation, 28 January 1958, National Archives, 702.022; Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs to US Charge d'Affairs in Santiago, 14 May 1958, no. 7756, A 15214/129, Public Record Office, FO 371.

This essay provides an interpretive overview of three issues: US dominance in Antarctic exploration and the negotiations which shaped the region's future; the historical context of the Chilean and Australian territorial claims; and the nature of Chilean-Australian cooperation, as stated and as pertaining to the defeat of US plans to use the continent as a nuclear testing ground. These issues all might be judged 'constructive', as H. Robert Hall observes of the Australian role, with the qualification that it was also rather limited¹². Given his emphasis on bureaucratic procedure, his assertion is less fervent than historians of Antarctic diplomacy might prefer. Article IV was the catalyst for getting the delegates, notwithstanding the Soviet delegates, to the negotiating table, to borrow his terminology. Since the article's rejection would have overturned that effect, the Australian role was less limited and more constructive than Hall chooses to recognise. It is unfortunate but comprehensible that he fails to extrapolate any parallels with the Chilean role.

The single non-negotiable limit on the roles of Chile, Australia or any of the other powers was US dominance or Yankee imperialism, as its most disgruntled subjects preferred to call it. During the US Navy's 1946-1947 Antarctic expedition, Operation High Jump, a Peruvian magazine employed that term to denounce the polar onslaught of four thousand North American sailors, one dozen warships and an aircraft carrier¹³.

The State Department resented that kind of vitriol and indeed there was no shortage of it: journalists of many origins charged the leader of the Free World with seeking to militarise the planet's last frontier¹⁴. In Chile they jested, none too light-heartedly, that High Jump was either carrying nuclear warheads or searching for the uranium to make them¹⁵. The treaty negotiations would substantiate the basis for assuming the worst of their Good Neighbour, but by that time US naval power had affirmed something equally important. However frequently North American officials reiterated their non-claimant, non-recognition policy¹⁶, their armed forces clearly were able to enforce any reversal thereof.

Yankee imperialism as regards the Antarctic was a perception based on incontrovertible realities. The seven claimant nations were unable to deter the extension of US power to the far south or to augment their diplomatic leverage with the threat or use of comparable force. Yankee imperialism, at its most benign, was a trite allegation reflecting malcontent over the post-war balance of power. It was merely a synonym for US ascendancy over the world which it had liberated from National Socialism. From a certain perspective it could be used interchangeably with phrases like 'beacon of hope'. Interestingly there is no evidence that such a perspective gained currency as regards US Antarctic policy and exploration. The navy banned foreign observers from accompanying High jump, and unnamed officers conceded that the operation was military in nature. Meanwhile headlines broadcast that a uranium race had commenced¹⁷. If the beacon of hope was shining, it was shining only brightly enough to reveal armour and munitions.

The appearance of a US conspiracy entailed no meticulous strategy to advance US self-interest. Officials throughout the Truman and Eisenhower administrations failed to reach any consensus over the means and ends of their Antarctic policy. None denied that the continent's potential was great, but none could predict when the exploitation of its resources might be possible or cost-efficient. None could measure the likelihood of the worst case that if the Soviet Union were to establish a presence in the peninsular region, it somehow would use that to penetrate South America¹⁸. The only agreement to emerge was over the need to prevent the United Nations from becoming too closely involved and diluting US influence. While the Antarctic Treaty did not permit UN jurisdiction, its linkage with the organisation's specialised agencies went further in that direction than many officials would have preferred, and its unrestrictive accession clause had a similar effect.

¹² Hall, 'Casey and the Negotiation'.

¹³ US Embassy in Peru to Department of State, 21 November 1946, no. 722, National Archives, RG 59,800.014.

¹⁴ For example, US Embassy in Paris to Department of State, 12 February 1949, no. 7582, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014.

¹⁵ US Ambassador in Santiago to Secretary of State, 8 August 1946, no. 14302; US Department of State, Division of North and West Coast Affairs to Office of American Republic Affairs, Office Memorandum, 29 November 1946, National Archives, RG 59,800.014.

¹⁶ For example, US Acting Secretary of State to All Diplomatic Officers in the American Republics, 3 August 1939; US Department of State, Division of North and West Coast Affairs to Division of Special Inter-American Affairs, 9 June 1947, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014; US Secretary of State to Embassy in Santiago, 1 July 1955; US Department of State to Chilean Embassy, 14 September 1956; US Embassy in Montevideo to Department of State, 23 March 1959, no. 720, National Archives, RG 59,702.022.

¹⁷ US Embassy in London to Secretary of State, 7 November 1946, no. 2465; US Ambassador in USSR to Secretary of State, 21 November 1946, no. 4188; US Department of State, Division of North and West Coast Affairs, Memorandum of Conversation, 22 November 1946, National Archives, RG 59,800.014.

¹⁸ The US National Security Council was concerned that Antarctica might fall prey to 'Moscow-trained wrecking crews', in the words of The New York Times. US National Security Council, NSC 5528: Antarctica, 12 December 1955, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, 'Uneasy Penguin Islands', The New York Times, 8 March 1948.

Unlike Shakespeare had intended, the question 'to be or not to be' was applied to territorial rights, which the US government sacrificed in its misguided quest for international prestige¹⁹.

This scenario brought to fruition what had been warned of by admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd. As commander of the largest US expeditions of his era, most notably Operation High jump, he had encouraged policymakers to dwell on tangible benefits rather than the euphoria associated with internationalism. He contended that the acquisition of mineral-rich territory and strategic outposts was far more valuable than prestige²⁰, for that attribute was destined to rely on self-perceptions rather than global consensus. Confidentially he acknowledged that his proclamations extolling science and international cooperation were false²¹. He also knew that his government had failed to convince the world of its devotion to refrain from basing territorial claims on exploration and discovery. Further to his disappointment, he observed that his government lacked the wherewithal to reverse its policy.

How Byrd might have responded to using the Antarctic as a nuclear testing ground is a matter of conjecture. It seems dubious that he would have favoured the destruction of Little America or the risk that it would be subject to radioactive fallout. Chileans and Australians dreaded that risk as it pertained to their own territorial claims. Byrd's death in early 1957 robbed humanity of one voice calling for the smaller powers to exert greater influence over the continent to which they were nearest²². One reasonable extrapolation from that position is that he would have supported the nuclear test ban which the US delegation to the Antarctic Conference strenuously opposed. From the broadest perspective, his country's stance only legitimated the most reactionary criticism directed against it using terms like Yankee imperialism. Ironically the United States had perturbed many of the claimant nations by inviting the Soviet Union to join the treaty and then, through its own behaviour, led them to embrace the communist-sponsored nuclear test ban²³.

Over the century before Antarctica emerged as a political issue, the United States had surpassed Chilean naval might in the Pacific. Also it had reaped benefits from economic development which the smaller republic could not emulate for reasons of population and territory. US perceptions of Latin American backwardness extended to Chile by default, yet Chile had many reasons to think itself dissimilar from most of its neighbours. While Argentina shared its European influences, the Southern Cone nations also shared one of the world's longest borders. The attendant disputes and suspicions prevented the neighbours from forging a regional alliance capable of ending the British occupation of the Falkland Dependencies. State Department officials appreciated that Washington's refusal to censure Britain had unleashed a tide of anti-Yankee sentiment throughout Latin America²⁴. Circumstantial evidence suggests that they attempted to heighten jealousies between the Southern Cone nations. By doing so they hoped to forestall any coordinated pressure to uphold the hemispheric defence provisions of the 1947 Rio Treaty, which extended to the South Pole and thus to the Falkland Dependencies²⁵.

In the years preceding the Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty, signed in Rio, Chile and the United States encountered several real and perceptual difficulties achieving optimum bilateral relations. Chile declared its rights over the sector from 53° to 90° West in November 1940 while Byrd's third Antarctic expedition was in the near vicinity. The White House had announced that the expedition's purpose was to extend the Monroe Doctrine to the southernmost extreme²⁶. This foreshadowed the dispute over the Rio Treaty which, unlike the Monroe Doctrine, had been ratified multilaterally. The timing of Chile's decision to announce rights also foreshadowed increasing challenges to US leadership. Some journalists contrasted the ease of Santiago's declaration with the courage of US explorers in the field. State Department officials maintained a similar, dis-

¹⁹ Jason Kendall Moore, 'A "Sort" of Self-Denial: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1950-1959', *Polar Record* 37 (2001): 13-26.

²⁰ Richard E. Byrd to Louis E. Denfeld, 7 August 1948, Byrd Polar Research Centre, Columbus, Ohio, folder 7328.

²¹ Richard E. Byrd to Chester W. Nimitz, 15 April 1947, Byrd Polar Research Centre, folder 7295.

²² US Department of State, Embassy in Santiago to Office of European Affairs and Office of American Republic Affairs, 19 July 1948, no. 477, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014.

²³ See US Delegation to Antarctic Conference, Memorandum for Deputy Undersecretary of State, 17 November 1959, National Archives, RG 59, 702.022.

²⁴ For example, US Department of State, Division of North and West Coast Affairs to Assistant Secretary of State, 10 February 1947, National Archives, RG 59, 800.014.

²⁵ Jason Kendall Moore, 'Tethered to an Iceberg: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1939-1949', *Polar Record* 35 (1999): 124-35.

²⁶ 'Claims to Antarctica', *The New York Times*, 12 January 1939; 'President Directs Speed on Byrd Trip', *The New York Times*, 8 July 1939; John White, 'Argentina Claims Antarctic Land', *The New York Times*, 25 July 1939.

missive attitude after World War Two when Axis sympathies persisted in the country. By that time, unfortunately, Operation High Jump might have caused some pro-Allied Chileans to empathise with the defeated Germans and Japanese²⁷.

The Australian role in overcoming Soviet objections to the Chilean-sponsored political moratorium was essential for the general negotiations. When the preliminary meetings stalled due to Moscow's intransigence, External Affairs Minister Richard G. Casey returned to his country for an economics conference in Queensland. Meanwhile he held secret discussions with the Soviet deputy foreign minister, convincing him to accept the moratorium, as the eleven other nations already had. Australia had broken diplomatic relations with the USSR years earlier due to the discovery that its embassy had been coordinating domestic espionage. Presumably the Soviet minister was eager to demonstrate goodwill and Casey likewise since, during the International Geophysics Year (IGY), the Soviets had established three outposts in the Australian Antarctic. According to Hall, Moscow's line on Article IV was redrawn by no more than backroom persuasions²⁸.

The Queensland discussions were consistent with the lower-profile tack Australians followed relative to the Chileans, which highlights their different national experiences and cultural affinities. If the Escudero Plan had been Australian, it might have been presented to the United States for revisions before being distributed to the seven claimant powers. Because the Escudero Plan was Chilean, and the South American nation tended to distrust the North American giant, it was presented first to the claimant nations in an attempt to force US acquiescence²⁹. In 1933 Australia had been delegated its Antarctic sector by the British monarchy, whereas seven years later Chile unilaterally declared its own sector in defiance of London and with reticence toward Washington. Pan-American ideals never congealed for a variety of reasons including latent prejudice and an unpopular Manifest Destiny³⁰. Australians, on the other hand, felt a great allegiance to Britain and increasingly to the United States after it came to their defence in the Second World War³¹.

The Chilean and Australian contributions to the Antarctic Treaty underscored two dissimilar notions of Yankee imperialism. The first inveighed against it through multilateral activism, while the second sought accommodation behind-the-scenes. Both contributions might be judged constructive. At an abstract level their incentives were the same, as an effective agreement benefited all parties. At a diplomatic level their approaches were markedly different, the Chileans being far less inhibited than Hall suggests of the Australians. Chilean-Australian Antarctic relations, whether or not they transpired in any bureaucratic sense, were essential in their proxy configuration, summarised as follows: the Chilean Escudero Plan, tacitly accepted by Washington in 1949, redefined the political debate over Antarctica; the Queensland discussions overcame the Soviet rejection of Article IV, as based on the Escudero Plan; and opposition to the US nuclear agenda, first led by Chile and Australia, redeemed the continent from a destiny even worse than British occupation—a destiny opposed by all Southern Hemisphere nations, regardless of their attitude toward the Falkland Dependencies.

In final analysis the Escudero Plan and Article IV were imperative to stem competing ambitions to exploit Antarctica's untapped resources. For the treaty signatories these resources were both tangible, such as minerals, strategic outposts and testing grounds, and intangible, such as nationalism and general prestige. The plan and the article effectively guaranteed that these resources would remain untapped, as well as unexplored. Their success involved many intercultural perceptions and secret motivations, granting historians untapped resources of conceptual nature. The Chilean-Australian dynamic is one of many new topics to be explored if Antarctic history is to gain the broader humanities audience which it deserves, and which it can acquire given the richness and diversity of its facets. In the eighteenth century the French philosophes re-conceptualised knowledge as the fusion of memory, reason and imaginations³². Scholars today must re-conceptualise Antarctic history likewise, placing greatest emphasis on the imaginative component.

²⁷ Jason Kendall Moore, 'Maritime Rivalry, Political Intervention, and the Race to Antarctica: US-Chilean Relations, 1939-1949', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33 (2001): 713-38.

²⁸ Hall, 'Casey and the Negotiation'.

²⁹ Moore, 'Tethered to an Iceberg'.

³⁰ Jason Kendall Moore, 'Perceptual Trends and Frontier Mentalities in United States-Chilean Antarctic Relations through 1959', *Estudios Norteamericanos* 3 (2003): 69-80.

³¹ Far more than Chile, Australia shared political ideals and colonial experiences akin to those of the United States. See Haig Patapan, 'Melancholia and Amnesia: Tocqueville's Influence on Australian Democratic Theory', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 49 (2003): 1-16; Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics, or Thoughts on the Principles of Natural Selection and Inheritance* (London: Henry S. Ying & Company, 1872), 36, 207.

³² P.N. Furbank, Diderot: *A Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 77.

By no means was the Antarctic Treaty an inevitable outcome of the IGY. Many alternative scenarios were possible and actually under consideration while the formal negotiations proceeded. As previously mentioned, if the conference had dissolved officials favoured establishing two three-power arrangements between the Southern Cone nations and Britain, and between the United States and the Commonwealth nations. Neither arrangement nor any of the others under consideration appeared to reach the stage of a detailed blueprint. Given the Southern Hemisphere's adamant support for the Soviet version of the nuclear test ban, a more geographically oriented condominium might have resulted if the US delegation had refused to yield as regards nuclear testing. In that case an arrangement involving the Southern Hemisphere nations might have emerged in response to their concerns about both US and Soviet intentions. Chile and Australia seemed likely candidates to have led such a bloc or proceeded with their own, more limited scheme. Why this never transpired is a question for scholars who regard history not simply as the record of what did transpire, but as a vibrant continuum including analysis of what might have transpired.

In 1949 historian Karl Löwith observed that few human events could be explained in terms of reason and order. Rather he maintained that history was little more than a series of random occurrences³³. That was one year after the seven claimant powers rejected the first US internationalisation proposal which called for renouncing of their sovereignty. As North Americans had no cause to have expected a different outcome, but had proceeded anyway, their role in the subsequent negotiations provided further evidence of Löwith's viewpoint. US policy was indecisive to haphazard, only exacerbating the capriciousness of how the powers might respond, whether to the United States or to each other³⁴. For example, volatile episodes between the Southern Cone nations and Britain might have been averted if Washington had chosen to meet its hemispheric defence obligations stipulated by the Rio Treaty³⁵.

Thereafter US policy continued to lack resoluteness, producing equal amounts of despair within the government and abroad. The claimant powers dreaded that Washington might upset the status quo by announcing its rights beyond the unclaimed sector from 90° to 150° West or by involving the Soviet Union, as it finally did while at the same time offering no assurances as regards its formalisation of rights³⁶. The creation of the Antarctic Treaty not only lacked the wisdom frequently asserted or implied of US officials, who failed to agree on their priorities; it lacked the grandiose idealism showcased by the IGY. Instead it provided a case study of Löwith's hypothesis that events tend to unfold without much human premeditation or, in this case, without US foresight³⁷. The roles of Chile and Australia were most outstanding in their attempt to mitigate North America's political unwisdom - the successful culmination of which, in the form of the Antarctic Treaty, defied traditional logic³⁸.

³³ See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

³⁴ See Moore, 'Tethered to an Iceberg'; Moore, 'A "Sort" of Self-Denial'.

³⁵ In early 1952 Argentine soldiers directed machinegun fire over the heads of British sailors attempting to disembark at Hope Bay. The following year the Royal Navy retaliated by destroying Chilean and Argentine outposts on Deception Island. The British Admiralty expressed reservations about that course since it involved deporting Argentine personnel to the Falkland Islands and thereby appeared to constitute hostage-taking. See British Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 5 February 1952, A 15211/18; British Foreign Office, Record of Meeting with Admiralty, 2 February 1953, A 15121, Public Record Office. FO 371.

³⁶ The US Department of State hesitated to recommend advancing a claim over the unclaimed sector, between the Chilean and New Zealand sectors, as it believed legislators would consider the region inadequate, given the massive scale of North American exploration. By not forwarding any claim the White House made the daring, though finally correct assumption that the senate would ratify the Antarctic Treaty despite US non-claimancy. See US Secretary of State to Embassies in Buenos Aires, Canberra, London, Moscow, Oslo, Paris, Pretoria, Santiago and Wellington, 18 November 1957, no. 4572, National Archives, R 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff.

³⁷ See Bernard Riester, 'Karl Löwith's Anti-Historicism', in Hadyen V. White, ed., *The Uses of History: Essays in Intellectual and Social History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 151-74.

³⁸ The Department of State once informed Chilean officials that the United States was less concerned about appearing to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states, in general and as regards Antarctic sovereignty, than about the need to avoid 'political unwisdom.' This distinction was so complex that it only might have persuaded US officials already convinced of their own wisdom. See US Department of State, Office of United Nations Political and Security Affairs to Office of Interamerican Regional Political Affairs, 5 September 1956, National Archives, RG 59, 702.022.