Abstract:
Argentina and Chile, known in the world of Antarctic politics as the “South American claimants”, have shown themselves since the inception of their interests in the White Continent as standing alone and in opposition to the advances of the colonial powers of the North—especially the United Kingdom. As Shirley Scott has suggested, while the UK was busy staking claims over Antarctica and treating it as *terra nullius*, Argentina and Chile ascertained what they took to be their historical rights to the continent, inherited from the time when they were Spanish colonies.

In this article, I support Argentina’s and Chile’s contention that the attitude and procedure followed by the other claimants to the continent was unequivocally colonial, but I reject their contention that theirs was not. I examine four sites where their colonial spirit is revealed: their use of the geographic doctrines of continuity and contiguity, and of the sector principle; the appeal to historic rights inherited from the time when they were Spanish colonies; their expansion to Antarctica through the establishment of military settlements, and their underlying economic and strategic interests, no different from their “Northern” counterparts. I then point to some specific and general implications of reinterpreting their story in this light.