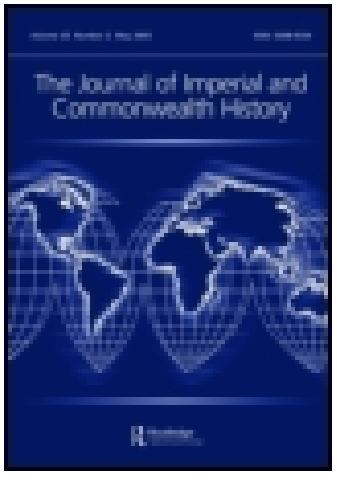

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Falling off the Map: South Africa, Antarctica and Empire, *c.* 1919–59

Lize-Marié van der Watt and Sandra Swart

During the first half of the twentieth century, despatches about the coldest corner of the British Empire were circulated to three, sometimes four, of its southern neighbours under the British crown: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Falklands. Of these four, South Africa seemed the least interested in Antarctica, despite the keen interest of some influential individuals and a strategy of bringing Antarctica into the imperial fold through British dominions that were proximate to Antarctica. In this context, we ask how South Africa viewed itself in relation to the Antarctic to the south and the British metropole to the north. We discuss the key activities that connected South Africa to Antarctica—whaling and weather forecasting. Moreover, we consider some of the enterprising plans for a South African National Antarctic expedition, and what these plans reveal of South Africa's perception of itself as a southern country. This article interlinks with a growing scholarship that is critical of treating Antarctic history as politically and culturally isolated, including showing how the relatively simple natural and political ecology of the Antarctic can throw into relief multiple national and international concerns.

Introduction

Some of the British Empire's most famous sons watched Table Mountain recede on the horizon as they sailed south to Antarctica in the first decades of the twentieth century: Captain Robert Falcon Scott, Sir Ernest Shackleton and Sir Douglas Mawson.[1] Other 'Antarctic gateways', such as Punta Arenas (Chile), Ushuaia (Argentina), Christchurch (New Zealand) and Hobart (Australia), featured prominently in the narratives of these explorers.[2] In these cities the presence of the explorers became part of larger national narratives. Culture brokers and politicians used these narratives to bolster claims of sovereignty—through geographical and historical contiguity with the Antarctic continent and frequent 'activity' indicating effective occupation. Although Cape Town was the last inhabited port-of-call pencilled in on the charts of several Antarctic journeys at the turn of the nineteenth century, it seemed to have fallen off the map otherwise,

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culturally and politically. This is despite the efforts of a few entrepreneurial men, who urged the South African government and the white public—and their whiteness was taken as self-evident—to invest in similar polar expeditions. Their reasoning, as expressed by one particularly passionate proponent, was to see to it that South Africa could 'assume its National status and contribute something towards helping the international recognition of a South African Nation'.[3] Indeed, Antarctica, to their minds, was one of the noblest places to enact nationalism.

In the last two decades, there has been growing scholarship exploring how complex national and international concerns can be viewed through the prism of the relatively simple natural and political ecology of Antarctica.[4] Antarctica has been used as a tool to invigorate imperial and national prestige of countries far from the continent. It has been part of the geopolitical imaginations of major and minor powers.[5] On a more physical level, the dense populations of cetaceans, pinnipeds, krill and fish in the Southern Ocean have added to the complexities of what is known today as 'resource management'.[6] The peripherality of Antarctica has not rendered it irrelevant to the inhabited world. This article engages with recently emerging historiography of Antarctica that is sceptical towards the treatment of Antarctica as automatically politically and culturally isolated.

We focus on the involvement of South Africa in Antarctica during the interwar years and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, within the context of the British Antarctic empire. We ask why, in spite of the efforts of well-connected individuals, and a period of intense nation-building among the (white) populations of South Africa, interest in the icy continent never really took root. (Black South Africans, it should be noted, were simply not seen as part of the 'nation' that needed to be built and, where black South Africans were involved in Antarctic-related activities, it was as anonymous labourers). In spite of Britain's strategic use of its dominions to consolidate its Antarctic territory and some lukewarm South African attempts to voice its political, economic and scientific interests, South Africa effectively remained an Antarctic non-entity. Pretoria was merely informed by Whitewall rather than consulted, unlike the two other southern dominions, New Zealand and the Australian Commonwealth who were directly addressed, both before and after they claimed sovereignty to Antarctic territory in the name of his majesty's government [7] In South Africa, influential politicians and scientists called for more polar activity, often linking it to nationalist goals. The attitude of the government nevertheless remained one of indifference. This attitude changed only at the end of the Second World War and in the mid-1950s, when South Africa ultimately legitimised its interest through what then became the currency of the Antarctic continent: scientific presence.[8]

Very few scholarly articles have been published on South Africa's Antarctic history.[9] In an early article, Klaus Dodds explained a dog that did not bark: assessing the reasons why South Africa never laid formal claim to Antarctica.[10] Our focus instead is on how successive South African governments positioned themselves with regard to the South Pole and the Southern Ocean, while simultaneously remaining bound to the northern British metropole. We first discuss the strategic visualisation of Antarctica and broadly sketch British imperial policy in Antarctica relevant to the Union of South Africa.

Next, we consider the role of meteorology and whaling as the main activities linking South Africa to Antarctica.[11] We discuss various intermittent initiatives put forward for South African expeditions. These proposals often referred specifically to weather forecasting, whaling and—more nebulously—'science' as reasons for Antarctic expeditions. Finally, we turn our attention towards the period just after the Second World War, asking what changed in the socio-political milieu to mobilise the South African government to make its presence felt in the Antarctic and the sub-Antarctic. We ask what the broader reasons were behind this changing perception of South Africa's role as a player in the high politics of the South.

The Mapping of 'British Antarctica'

Twentieth-century British policy in Antarctica was first articulated during the first decade of that century,[12] and consolidated at the Imperial Conference of 1926. At this conference, a Polar Committee was established, with members from a variety of offices in Whitehall, as well as representatives from the four dominions, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. The committee masterminded a policy which clearly intended to gradually establish British control over the Antarctic continent.[13] Indeed, as a British official remarked to his Norwegian colleague in 1928, it was 'the preference of the British Government and even more of the Dominions that the Empire should have no neighbours at all in the Antarctic or in its adjacent islands'.[14]

It is important to understand the literal lie of the land, sea and ice in this history and then how this was depicted on the maps upon which the boundaries were drawn. Maps were used by decision-makers to orientate nation-states spatially with regard to Antarctica. In terms of world maps, Antarctica and the islands occupy an idiosyncratic position. Unlike the classic Mercator projection, which often leaves Antarctica out, Antarctic maps were usually drawn using azimuthal equal area projections, with Antarctica in the middle and the southern continents arranged around the continent. This also helped in the presentation of claims: the British claims were based chiefly on the principle of sectors, radiating from the pole towards British lands. In this way, the much disputed Falkland Islands Dependencies (1917), the Ross Dependency (New Zealand, 1924) and Australian Antarctic Territory (1933) were claimed for Britain.[15] The 'South African' sector—on which South Africa first officially set foot only in 1960—was sometimes used as a descriptor in interdepartmental South African correspondence (see Figure 1). There were also indications that the Union was assigned this territory during the early discussions leading to the report of 1926, but apparently it was not recorded in the official record at the time, perhaps because it was not seen as being sufficiently important—or official.[16] In January 1939, Norway formally annexed the sector, leading one South Africa official to lament 'the opportunity offering to the Union government to acquire this territory therefore no longer exists'.[17] That South Africa should have had, or coveted, this 'opportunity' at all was neither automatic nor inevitable, as we will show.

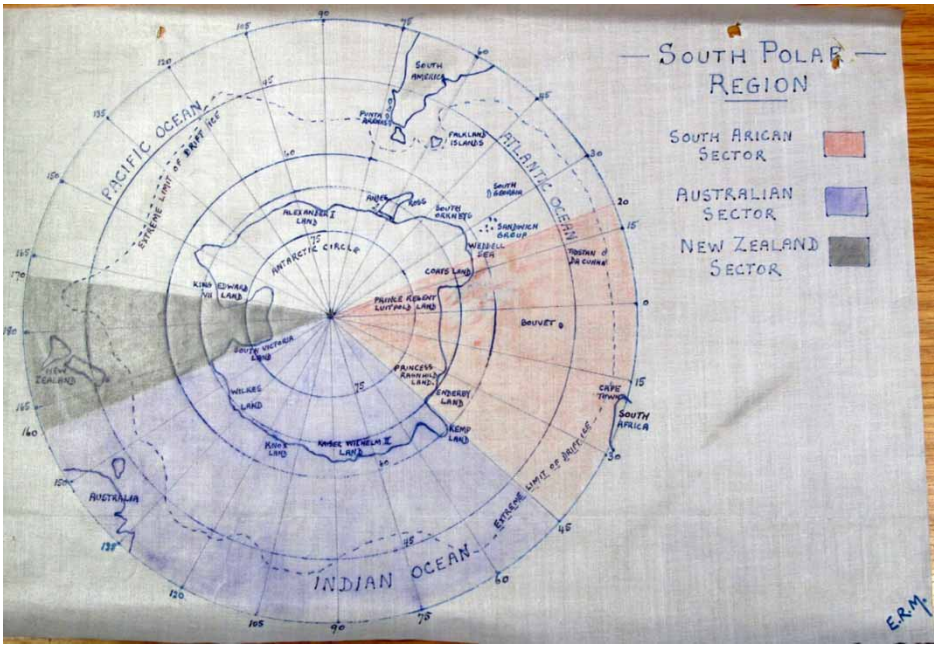

Figure 1 A 1939 sketch drawing of the South Polar Region showing the part considered to be the 'South African sector'. *SANA, HEN 2491/455 vol. 1*.

South Africa and the Weather Factory of the World

From the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, sealing was the main activity run by companies based in the areas that came to be British colonies, the Cape of Good Hope and Natal, or using labour based in these colonies.[18] While sealing remained an important activity, especially on the sub-Antarctic Islands, it was weather and whaling that brought the Antarctic and South Africa closer after the First World War.[19]

Observing the weather was one the most crucial scientific and political activities in Antarctic exploration for much of the first half of the twentieth century. Not only was it important for safe navigation, whether by air or sea, it was also a useful way in which to demonstrate effective occupation.[20] In the course of the twentieth century, synoptic meteorology became an essential part of weather forecasting and climate modelling.[21] As a science, synoptic meteorology was dependent on analysing data taken near simultaneously from different geographical locations. It was a science that could be practised effectively only with international cooperation and, as such, it was a science eminently suited to Antarctic geopolitics and the discourse of international government. By the turn of the century, advances in radio communication and wireless telegraphy systems afforded the efficient coordination and correlation of these observational weather data.[22] It was unlikely that it would have been possible for 'scientists, by means of an Antarctic weather station, to inform South Africa and the rest of the world of the weather they may expect in a week, or a month, or even three months' time',[23] as the Norwegian whaling captain J. Gunnar Isachsen predicted

in 1931, nevertheless, the better and more complete the data, the better the forecasts. Before the development of automatic weather stations, it was necessary to set up a manned weather station—a significantly more difficult task in the ocean-dominated southern hemisphere.[24]

The mapping of the polar front by the Bergen School of meteorology in the 1920s and 1930s established the importance of the (northern) polar areas in shaping weather patterns that were relatively predictable.[25] Meteorologists began to seek similar patterns in the south. Weather forecasting was important to South Africa for several reasons. One was its role in agriculture.[26] A large segment of the population (both African and white) was involved in rural activities, and the white farming community formed an especially dominant cultural and political entity.[27] Weather forecasting—particularly drought predictions—had economic and political value attached to it.[28] Meteorologists, agriculturalists and policy-makers hoped that long-term forecasting, facilitated by weather stations in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic would go some way to help farmers plan accordingly and thus reduce associated risks to agriculture.[29] Weather forecasts were also important in terms of aviation, the strategic importance of which was demonstrated during the First World War.[30]

The paucity of weather data to South Africa's south was explicitly linked to the country's droughts in the influential Drought Commission Report, commissioned in 1919.[31] The commission consulted widely, including with George Simpson, an Antarctic veteran and director of the Meteorological Office in London. His suggestion was to improve weather forecasting by establishing weather stations on Antarctica itself. Simpson stressed the importance of a southern hemispheric approach by deploying martial metaphors:

> The most helpful method of attack . . . will be the formation of a strong meteorological service to gather data of satisfactory reliability from Africa itself; and probably in connection with other countries from the Southern Hemisphere, from the Antarctic continent. There should be international cooperation of the countries interested . . . the aim should be to establish . . . observatories, or [following a] well-planned programme for an indefinite time.[32]

The idea of a chain of meteorological stations in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic was a recent, but not isolated, one.[33] In 1922, the Australian aviator and geographer Sir George Hubert Wilkins also presented plans appealing for a series of high southern latitude weather stations to be run by South Africa, Australia and New Zealand to the Royal Meteorological Society.[34] Moreover, whether or not meteorological stations and expeditions had an explicit prior political mandate, they were often used as the polar dots along which imperial lines could be connected.[35]

The idea strongly appealed to General Jan Smuts, who actually quoted Simpson in his presidential address to the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (S2A3) in 1925.[36] In the speech, Smuts called for the proper correlation of data from Antarctic stations as well as South American, Australian, Indian and Malagasy stations. He contended that this could yield results of great practical as well as scientific value. He ended this part of his speech with an impassioned rallying call:

'The round table of meteorology should become the meeting place and reunion of the scattered members of the ancient mother continent of Gondwanaland.'[37]

Smuts' philosophy of holism, which started taking shape during his Cambridge years, was fundamental to this *cri du coeur*.[38] Smuts was fascinated by ideological ideas about the ecological interconnectivity of the world. To him, the local and the particular was also part of the transcendental and the universal, the Whole, and the whole was greater than the sum of its parts.[39] Earlier in the speech, Smuts pointed towards South Africa's particular position on the sub-continent (the most 'civilised' country) and in the southern hemisphere generally (its centrality).[40] This emphasis on a 'round table' and the reference to Gondwanaland, fitted into the discourse of that which Saul Dubow has dubbed 'a commonwealth of science'.[41] It was an essential part of Smuts' internationalist view of science and his faith in its ability to draw nations together.

An article in *The South African Nation*, a South Africanist publication, also called for a chain of weather stations to the south, using less philosophical language: 'our government should ... not be content with the one island but should ask for them all'.[42] Apart from weather forecasting, the author foresaw other uses as well, notably as sites for sealing. He argued extensively that South Africa should claim the islands and then declare 'seal refuges' in order to stabilise the seal populations for maximum exploitation. This echoed similar debates on the management of Antarctic whaling, debates which proved particularly important to South Africa's Antarctic history during the 1920s.[43]

The first weather station in the southern oceans specifically supplying data to South Africa was eventually established in 1942, on Tristan da Cunha. Its establishment was strongly driven by the Second World War, and not by the needs of southern African agriculturalists.

Whaling

The history of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic islands cannot be detached from the history of the encircling oceans. The scarcity of life ashore is inversely proportional to the abundance of life in its surrounding seas. Concomitantly, commercial, shore-based Antarctic whaling started in the early twentieth century, mostly focusing on the south-western islands. The whaling industry was not important in Antarctic politics only because of its economic potential, but also because whaling vessels were the most frequent visitors to the high southern latitudes. In Britain and Norway, the few 'heroic' men who visited the actual continent may have captured the public imagination, but the whalers' presence was more continuous and economically useful. Exactly because of the inaccessibility of Antarctica and the islands, the ocean was arguably more important than *terra firma* in making territorial claims to the lands it lapped.[44]

Although by no means the only reason for their presence in the region, a combination of nationalism and whaling was the key driver of British and Norwegian Antarctic involvement and the first Norwegian whaling activities in the Antarctic began in 1904.[45] Whaling was an important industry and, especially for Norway, a major

economic activity. By the 1920s, whale oil was used in the manufacturing of produce such as candles, cosmetics, margarine and explosives.[46] The whaling industry's locus moved south as northern hemisphere stock fell and the potential for further expansion was exhausted.[47]

South African companies joined the whaling trade in the south Atlantic when the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company started using a floating factory at South Georgia.[48] By 1928, South African firms had joined the pelagic trade as well.[49] Cape Town and Durban were staging posts for Norwegian whaling activities in the Antarctic, sometimes using South African labour.[50] Whaling companies were mostly run by Norwegians or were British-owned and directly influenced by events in the industries of these two countries. Moreover, the South African industry's role in Antarctic whaling was about more than South African whalers venturing south, but also about certain species of Antarctic whales migrating north to breed. Whaling companies hunting in the vicinity of the South African coast were thought to influence the population patterns by hunting breeding females, leading to an unsustainable decline in stock.[51]

Most of the whaling activities that involved South African companies or South African-based labour did not necessarily take place in the 'South African' sector (South Georgia, for example, lies in the disputed British/Argentinian sector). There was, however, a more critical reason why the Anglo-Norwegian whaling industry played a key role in South African Antarctic history during this era. Whereas Britain actively encouraged the dominions of New Zealand and Australia to claim sectors in Antarctica, they did not spend nearly the same energy on trying to convince South Africa to claim to its south. South Africa, not being actively interested in any case, was a far less important consideration to Britain than safeguarding British claims to the other sectors, as was the broader politics of whaling.

Until technological improvements made pelagic whaling feasible, Norwegian whaling companies that operated in the Falkland Islands and the surrounding islands like South Georgia were dependent on British concessions and were heavily taxed. This was a way for Britain to make its south-Atlantic colonies profitable as well as to administer the colonies—administration becoming an increasingly important way of legitimising territorial claims.[52] In order to try to manage the numbers of cetaceans, a scientific committee was established to investigate whales, as well as pursuing related research in oceanography and hydrography. Another important purpose of the committee was—again—to administer. The committee, under the colonial secretary in Britain, was subject to internal conflict and tensions but succeeded in amassing a wealth of data by sending out expeditions.[53] The committee's vessels, the *Discovery* and *Discovery II*, were the physical embodiment of British imperial presence in the Antarctic during the interwar years.[54] These vessels also frequently visited South African ports.

Partly in response to the *Discovery* expeditions, an officially sanctioned but privately funded series of Norwegian expeditions was embarked upon in the southern waters between 1927 and 1931.[55] They had permission from the Norwegian king to occupy territory.[56] The first *Norvegia* expedition landed on Bouvet Island on 1 December

1927 and claimed it for Norway. Lars Christensen, the whaling magnet who drove the expeditions, was not prepared to apply to Great Britain or any other country for concessions to operate in waters he considered essentially unexplored territory.[57] They demonstrated effective occupation, by now a stronger prerequisite for Antarctic claims, by building a small depot.[58] The island was 'potentially' British, but a British claim would have been difficult to buttress. Whitehall reacted with alarm:

> [a]lthough it is ostensibly a private venture, it looks as if the Norwegians are entering into the Antarctic with the same object as the British, namely domination .... [T]he Norwegians may be discovering territory of greater extent than that of the British sphere, and seriously challenge the British attempt to obtain domination in the Antarctic.[59]

In the resulting diplomatic mini-crisis, however, it became clear that Norwegian diplomats were adamant that they would not 'haul down that flag again'.[60] Moreover, the spurious British claim would not hold when challenged in international court.[61] The events also presented an opportunity for Britain to negotiate a covert agreement with Norway with regard to whaling as well as territorial claims. A tacit understanding was negotiated that Norway would not encroach on the Antarctic territories over which Britain wished to establish hegemony. Further, it was agreed that the Norwegians and the British would negotiate convention as to the conservation (exploitation management) of whales, especially so that 'industries cannot proceed to whale under other countries' flags not part of the Anglo-Norwegian convention'.[62] Britain waived its claim to the island, thereby consolidating its policy of diverting the attention of foreign powers away from British territory towards other parts of the Antarctic.[63]

This policy was tested between 1929 and 1931 when both the *Norvegia* and the *Discovery*, this time under the flag of the British-Australian-New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) expedition, went 'exploring' in the Antarctic. The idea for an empire-wide expedition was first mooted by Douglas Mawson, the Australian Antarctic explorer and a strong supporter of empire. To him, 'scientific investigations in the Antarctic sector, ... is the heritage and concern of New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa ... for the benefit of the world at large'.[64]

Mawson, a keen proponent of the commonwealth, also insisted that the expedition depart from South Africa, and Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog insisted on paying for overhauling the ship.[65] South African fisheries companies provided logistical support.[66] Britain was initially reluctant to support the venture, but, in light of Norwegian activity, soon changed position.[67] In addition, the United States too was beginning to flex its muscles in Antarctica, in the persons of Richard Byrd and his Little America base.[68] The *Norvegia*, with royal authorisation to take possession of new or unexplored land in hand, was indeed exploring 'the sector in which the Union [of South Africa] might take an interest'.[69]

Whitehall thought it prudent to decide on their reaction before this should happen, and concluded that they had no legal grounds on which to object. They felt that the Union might be interested because of its geographical proximity and enquired

whether it concurred with their view. In the reply, sent on 5 December 1929, the South African Department of External Affairs concurred that there were 'no grounds on which an objection could be raised'.[70] This telegram came to be seen as an official statement of the Union's lack of interest in Antarctica.[71]

With hindsight, it is doubtful that it was seen as a policy decision *per se* by the South Africans at the time. There was no articulated Antarctic policy in South Africa and decisions took place on an *ad hoc*, idiosyncratic basis. Indeed, extemporised decisions were often made by the bureaucrat dealing with the correspondence, with no regard to an over-arching national strategy. Although the correspondence was usually forwarded to the minister of external affairs, the Department of Commerce and Industries, and the Treasury and the Department of Defence, there was no interdepartmental committee nor any coordinated response. A few months earlier, in an exchange of letters on United States' activity in Antarctica, a bureaucrat scribbled simply in the margin 'For whom to inform? They don't seem, to have discovered anything much except(ing) snow! [*sic*]'.[72]

Expeditions and Expectations

Until the mid-1930s, serious attempts at a *South African* Antarctic expedition were initiated by men of empire who emphasised the (pro-empire) nationalist character of these expeditions as well as the way in which, through Antarctica, South Africa could fulfil its place in the broader British Empire.[73]

The first such proposal was made by Ernest James Goddard, a professor at Stellenbosch University. He entertained a great personal fascination with Antarctic exploration and praised his native Australia which, 'as a young and vigorous nation ... despatched one of the finest expeditions ever sent to the Antarctic'.[74] He urged the South African public to support an expedition to win 'international recognition of the South African Nation'.[75] This recognition was, however to be useful within the broader edifice of empire, through Antarctic science:

> It has become increasingly patent to workers in a great number of branches of science in the Southern Hemisphere, during recent years, that a deeper and more scientific knowledge of the Antarctic Continent is not only intimately concerned with the elucidation of the larger scientific problems of the Southern Hemisphere, but is really necessary if we are to arrive at those broad and guiding generalisations which it is the aim of scientists to attain and which are so essential to the full development of economic potentialities of the Southern Continents.[76]

Goddard returned to Australia three years after tabling his plan for a South African national expedition. His enthusiasm for the Antarctic, possibly driven by Australian cultural roots where Mawson formed part of the national cultural mythology, was highly personal, yet there was a measure of enthusiasm among the South African scientific community. Nevertheless, economic circumstances and a lack of political willpower meant that the expedition remained in the realm of paper only.

The second serious initiative came from a British explorer in 1930. Ernest Mills Joyce was seeking a means to return to Antarctica, preferably as a leader of his own

expedition.[77] Unlike Goddard, Joyce emphasised the economic rather than scientific benefits.[78] He also, however, sought to emphasise that such an expedition would be a way for South Africa to join its partners in the southern commonwealth and expressed the hope that by making the expedition a 'purely South African one ... the South African flag will one day be unfurled over those lands lying immediately south of her continent'.[79] Joyce pointed out that Norway was 'displaying marked activity' in the 'sector of the Antarctic lands south of South Africa', which, according to him, added urgency to the matter.[80] Joyce first sought the patronage of Mary Bailey, aviator and wife of Abe Bailey. Joyce's choice of patron was calculated. The Baileys were immensely wealthy landlords, publicly and vocally loyal to South Africa and the crown. Mary Bailey was an adventurer in her own right and she and her husband moved in the upper echelons of South Africa's political and economic society.[81] Bailey promptly wrote to Charles te Water, South Africa's high commissioner in London, with Joyce following suit. Te Water was enthusiastic about the idea but Collie, the Polar Committee representative, was cautious. In Collie's opinion, there were two reasons why South Africa should consider a claim (a claim being Joyce's bait with which he sought to entice South African support for an expedition): to have an influence in whaling management and future air routes. He qualified this by strongly suggesting that advice be sought from the Polar Committee. The Polar Committee's main aim remained to further Britain's Antarctic policy. Recent events in the Antarctic, including the spat over Bouvet Island and concerns about the whale stock, precipitated a shift in the British attitude towards the relationship with Norway in the far south:

> [t]he friendly cooperation of the Norwegian Government in the Antarctic was of great and increasing importance ... particularly in the sphere of whaling administration, and ... any action which might lend colour to the view that Norway had not been treated fairly, and that it was the aim of the British Commonwealth to shut her out of the Antarctic continent, was strongly to be deprecated.[82]

In order to stay on a good footing with Norway, the Polar Committee advised the South African government against lending support to Joyce, a view Te Water unceremoniously communicated to Joyce early in 1931.[83]

As a vehicle of high politics, Antarctica clearly had little traction in white South Africa, as the Australian Goddard and the Englishman Joyce realised. The local South African press, however, started to report on the 'scramble' for Antarctic territory.[84] *The Outspan,* an English-language weekly, published a detailed account by the Norwegian J. Gunnar Isachsen, who accompanied several *Norvegia* trips, on the motives for Norwegian Antarctic exploration as well the potential of Antarctica. By now, the idea of a polar front had become public currency.[85]

Other articles concentrated on South Africa's inaction as a littoral Antarctic state. An article in the *Cape Times* directed readers' attention to the sector south of South Africa, emphasising the rich marine life in the ocean between.[86] The republican Afrikaans newspaper *Die Vaderland* emphasised that the Norwegians already realised the importance of a polar front in the Arctic and that, in the editor's estimate, the masses of water between Antarctica and South Africa would mean that these fronts would be more stable

in the southern hemisphere. *Die Vaderland* also noted that the weather predictions were useful in terms of 'those fearsome droughts' as well as warning systems to promote safety and security for naval vessels.[87] The article in *Die Vaderland* drew on an article published a few days earlier, in *The Automobile*, and which was subsequently reprinted in a number of newspapers, to question South African inaction in the light of the Norwegian flag-dropping activities in a sector that was 'of value to South Africa' in terms of whaling and meteorology: 'These Norwegian annexations, it seems', the author wrote, 'should not be allowed to go by default without an appeal to the League [of Nations]'.[88] An editor's note at the end of article read: 'whilst going to press we hear that certain developments have taken place, and that the Government have taken steps with the League of Nations to claim territory on behalf of the Union'.[89] Following up on this note, a journalist from *The Star* approached the secretary for foreign affairs, Eric Bodenstein, asking him whether Minister Hertzog[90] was indeed taking such steps. He supposedly answered that 'it would be ridiculous' to assume that Hertzog would lodge such a protest.[91] The editor of *Die Vaderland*, clearly incensed at the idea that Bodenstein would think it 'laughable', noted that:

> our Prime Minister would be more attentive today about South Africa's interests than Cecil Rhodes and President Kruger was in the early 1880's, when the land-wolves of Europe were busy partitioning central Africa. Would it not be rather more ridiculous to assume that the authorities would remain as idle when a country such as Sweden [*sic*] is busy claiming for themselves a section of Antarctica that geographically and rightly belongs to South Africa?[92]

The editorial then challenged Bodenstein to clarify his reasons for deeming such an action 'ridiculous'. The mere technicalities, such as the claim being made by Norway, not Sweden, did not matter.[93] For the author of this editorial in *Die Vaderland*, a mouthpiece of the Transvaal nationalists, the nerve that was struck was not necessarily the fact that the Union had not yet ventured into Antarctica, but the implicit criticism of Hertzog that he read in Bodenstein's answer. The outré aside about Rhodes's lack of imperial ambition should be read in the context of South Africa's fresh orientation towards its northern borders. At this stage, South African politicians still thought it likely that the British protectorates and South-West Africa[94] would be incorporated into South Africa. It was important to some sectors of South African society to be a geopolitically dominant power in southern Africa—a southern Africa that now extended southwards from Cape Point as well.

The first South African initiatives to send out 'national expeditions' came from intellectuals and politicians who had more narrow and exclusive conceptions of nationalism and imperialism.[95] Security and strategy played a larger role in their envisioning of a station for South Africa in the high southern latitudes. Their primary concern was establishing a weather station on Tristan da Cunha (in light of the battle of the South Atlantic), but Antarctica was not merely an afterthought, as stations on both were preferred.[96] T. E. W Schumann, director of the Weather Bureau, was keen to expand the bureau's forecasting as well as research capabilities and repeatedly sought to expand the geographical scope of South African meteorology.[97] Oswald

Pirow, the pro-fascist minister of defence, was especially interested in the potential for aviation. He founded the South African Airways as part of an expansionist strategy into Africa.[98] He was busy consolidating the company's presence in South Africa while discussing the possibility of a South African expedition with E. R. G. R. Evans, Antarctic veteran and British navy commander at Simon's Town (Africa Station). In fact, Pirow and Schumann's motivations for making enquiries and seeking support from Smuts overlapped: weather forecasting for purposes of agriculture and aviation.[99]

The emphasis on the geographical contiguity of South Africa and Antarctica arguably made Antarctica more relevant and legible to policy-makers. Given the early acceptance of continental drift theory in South Africa, decades before it was generally accepted in the northern hemisphere, it is possible that in South Africa geographical contiguity implied more than the fact that there was nothing but ocean separating South Africa from Antarctica. According to a widely circulated policy memorandum of 1935, its contiguity with Antarctica could give the Union access to the 'South African Sector' of Antarctica, with its rumoured riches in 'minerals, guano, phosphates etc., its possibilities of revenue from whaling and sealing industries, and the opportunities for scientific research'.[100] As for the prior Norwegian activity, they thought that the Union could perhaps come to some 'arrangement' with Britain and Norway, based on their 'friendly' agreements with one another.[101] The memorandum was drawn up by the Department of Trade and Industry which focused on economic benefits within an assumed sphere of influence. Interestingly, it did not refer to South Africa's utilising the whaling factory ship *Tafelberg* during the Second International Polar Year in 1932, as if the connection between this and demonstration of *political* interest in Antarctica was not drawn at the time. Initially, they did not seek advice from Collie. It was only at a subsequent meeting of an interdepartmental committee that he underlined the need for demonstrated effective occupation and suggested sending a couple of men with a whaler for the summer.[102] Whaling remained the main concern for representatives from Trade and Industry with aviation a close second. The possibilities of settlement were cast in expansionist terms, with one official remarking that scientific discovery made the 'settlement of the tropical regions possible' and that the same could be true of Antarctica in the future.[103]

The committee concluded that the Union should indeed take steps to establish itself in the Antarctic and made enquiries as to whether it were possible to use a whaling boat for the purpose.[104] The matter was subsequently taken up with C. T. F von Bonde of the state-administered Fisheries Survey.[105] He was particularly concerned with the impact Japanese activity might have on the whaling industry and couched this in terms of Japanese encroachment on territory formed part of the white south:

> South Africa is directly interested in the Antarctic quadrant so close to the southward of the Cape and the Government does not feel inclined to allow the Japanese to work thereabouts whilst withholding South Africa from establishing say a meteorological or a biological station on the Antarctic continent. . . . It seems as if the time has arrived for South Africa to establish herself, as the Falkland Islands, Australia and New Zealand have done.[106]

He was, however, careful to note that the Norwegians should be informed at the highest possible level of the South African intentions, as 'something in the nature of placation may be necessary owning to the advantageous commercial activities of [Norwegian] whalers in South African ports'.[107] One of the ways in which he suggested that might be done was to emphasise the increasing Japanese interest in Antarctic whaling; as a memorandum put it, 'the eager eyes in the East are also being cast on the South African Sector'.[108] Concerns about Japanese competition in Southern Ocean whaling was growing among western powers, among whom South Africa counted itself.[109] The Japanese ship also made use of Cape Town harbour although this was probably less economically advantageous than the activities of Norwegian vessels. Suggestions to utilise the *Discovery II* were followed up to no avail. At the next meeting of the External Trade Relations Committee the topic of 'South Africa in the Arctic [*sic*]' was postponed due to the urgency of another item on the agenda, and there are no traces of subsequent discussions by the External Trade Relations Committee on the item. The Discovery Committee twice invited the Union to send a scientist or at least a representative on one of the voyages. This was discussed at a high level and with continued emphasis on marine biology and the collection of meteorological data. By 1937, after months of discussion, compounded by the impending war, the matter was shelved.[110] The following year, South Africa managed to send a junior officer from Fisheries on a short *Discovery II* voyage which reached the ice-pack.[111] Soon after, however, the Discovery Committee had to suspend its activities and lay up the *Discovery II* due to a lack of funds and the evident imminence of war.[112] In the austral summer of 1938–39, Nazi Germany sent an expedition to the sector south of South Africa.[113] This precipitated Norway's final and official annexation of a sector of Antarctica in January 1939, a sector with no defined northern or southern boundaries.[114]

Redrawing the Map

It was only when public opinion in favour of imperialist enterprises in South Africa reached a nadir that South Africa expanded its borders south, with two small stepping-stone islands in the Southern Ocean. Marion and Prince Edward are sub-Antarctic islands, on, the edges of the sub-Antarctic convergence as well as the Southern Oceanic Rim countries.[115] Their legal status was precarious, bordering on *terra nullius* but not quite. In the post-Second World War world, European and imperial boundaries were being redrawn and rules with regards to rights of occupation and sovereignty were redrafted. There were, however, a few places in the world that were still without a human sovereign, and these became the new chess pieces in the battle between the East and the West for geopolitical influence. The Prince Edward Islands and the Heard and MacDonald Islands were pawns still untaken by either player. Ownership was, quite literally, manifested simply by raising a flag on the island group.[116] Superficially, the islands were British. In internal correspondence the British recognised that their claim was not formal and based on the fragmentary paper trail left by companies applying for sealing and guano concessions.[117] Other

states had neither annexed nor occupied the island group but certainly did not acknowledge British claims to dominion.[118]

During one of its first post-war meetings, the Polar Committee reconsidered the status of Britain's austral empire, including the Prince Edward Islands, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands. The committee acknowledged that Britain's title to the islands was tentative and recommended two possible remedies. The first was to attach the Prince Edward Islands to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This inhabited island group, however, was some 4,000 miles of ocean removed from the Prince Edward Islands. The second option was to attach the Prince Edward Islands to South Africa, 1,200 miles away.[119] In this way, the islands would still be part of the British Commonwealth for administrative purposes, without being an extra burden on the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Based on its experiences with the meteorological station on Tristan da Cunha, which the South African navy helped establish in 1942 at behest of the British royal navy, the South African military was also considering setting up meteorological observatories on Gough and Marion Islands.[120] These islands could be useful in terms of aviation and patrolling the Southern Ocean. Smuts was, however, not enthusiastic about the islands being attached to South Africa at the time.[121] His reasons were not stated, but it was probably due to the prohibitive cost and lack of an existing maritime exploration infrastructure (which was partly why he did not agree to previous proposals for South African expeditions). He also had political preoccupations on the domestic front (the challenge from the nationalists) as well as on the international front (he was closely involved with the establishment of the United Nations, for instance). Moreover, in 1945, although the tension between the communist and western regimes was already palpable, the Iron Curtain was not yet drawn. So, for the time being, no action was taken with regard to the Prince Edward Islands.

In 1947, the Polar Committee again considered Heard and MacDonald and the Prince Edward Islands. One reason for this, explicitly mentioned in the correspondence, was that events in the Pacific Ocean could influence the shipping and air routes between Britain, South Africa and Australia.[122] Another factor was the enquiry of a British businessman into the legal status of the islands, with a view to commercial exploitation. This request put the Colonial Office in a difficult position, as answering the request would publicise their own indecision.[123] The Polar Committee, to which the question was referred, used the opportunity to push for a rapid resolution on the legal steps needed in order for the islands to be 'transferred (if such it can be called)'.[124] The bracketed clause highlighted the uncertainty about the legal status of the islands.

The second sitting of the 1947 Polar Committee suggested again to South Africa that they annex the islands. The Union representative, Don B. Sole, initially said that he thought it unlikely that his government would be interested in the islands but that 'no doubt they would want to study the meteorology involved'.[125] Subsequent interdepartmental discussions between the Departments of Transport, Defence, External Affairs, and Trade and Industries, led to the conclusion that the Prince Edward Islands *were*—after all— their concern. The South Africans relayed three reasons for

this volte-face. First, they emphasised the potential for a meteorological station. Although Gough Island would be more useful to forecasting weather for South Africa, some of the sporadic but fierce frontal systems occasionally passed the Prince Edward Islands before reaching South Africa's east coast. Second, no direct air route existed between South Africa and Australia. A station on the Prince Edward Islands could provide the necessary dependable radio systems and meteorological data for operating a safe air route between the two countries. Lastly, there were military considerations.[126] This included the perceived threat that an enemy (the Soviet Union) could launch a missile attack on Cape Town or Port Elizabeth from the islands.[127]

The perception of the islands' strategic location was ultimately the motive behind the South Africa's interest in occupying them. They were particularly wary of possible security threats in the Antarctic, especially the perceived exposure to the Soviet whaling fleet and the fact that there was 'nothing to prevent the Russian occupation' of the Islands.[128] For reasons of policy, however, the South African government thought it best that the occupation should appear 'a purely civil matter, i.e. for meteorological purposes', while privately acknowledging that 'it was actually and essentially a defence measure that was carried out for strategic purposes'.[129] They also agreed that, if South Africa decided to annex the islands, they would inform parliament only afterwards when the acquisition of territory had to be approved. In parliament, the emphasis was to fall only on the meteorological aspects.[130]

The reasons behind the high level of secrecy were not divulged in the documents. It seemed to have been taken for granted. This is not surprising considering the military nature of the operation and the general atmosphere of secrecy that prevailed. Probably, they also wanted to avoid pre-emption by the Soviets. It is arguable the ministers and generals responsible did not want to inform parliament about the real motivation in order to avoid the issue being mired in domestic political affairs. Specifically, they wanted to avert the accusation of imperialism because a large segment of the (predominantly Afrikaans) voters carried anti-imperialist sentiments.

The eventual discussion between General Smuts and British prime minister, Clement Attlee, as well as their respective ministers of defence, was more candid with regard to the strategic considerations. Smuts told Attlee that South Africa wanted to take over the Prince Edward Islands as they could be useful as an air station and because 'if they were in other hands, they [were] in dangerous proximity to South Africa'.[131] Attlee was advised by the British defence minister that (although an air station on Marion would be a risky undertaking) these islands would be of little strategic value to Britain if they did not have South Africa's cooperation. Moreover, as the islands were in the vicinity of the ocean trade routes between South Africa and Australia, they did not wish 'these Islands to fall into the hands of a potentially hostile power'.[132] To Britain, the hostile power referred to here could have been the Soviets or perhaps the thorn in their south Atlantic flesh, Argentina. In light of growing South African fears about communism, they almost certainly referred to hostile communist hands.

On 25 November 1947, the secretary of external affairs in South Africa, D. D. Forsyth, received confirmation that 'the United Kingdom government have

no objection to [the Union's] immediate occupation and effective administration of Prince Edward Islands'.[133] Following one last interdepartmental meeting, the director of the South African naval forces ordered Lieutenant Commander John Fairbairn to take the whaler SAS *Transvaal* south.[134] After taking two years to mull over the question of South Africa's occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, the eventual operation, code-named 'SNOEKTOWN' was organised within two days.[135]

Four episodes led the formalisation of South Africa's position as an active Antarctic actor: the country's involvement in the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1955–56) and International Geophysical Year (1957–58), its participation in the negotiation of Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 and ratified in 1961, and, in lieu of the treaty, the permanent loan of a Norwegian over-wintering base on Dronning Maudland. As Roberts, Dodds and Van der Watt have shown, this formal engagement with the Antarctic continent was not driven by a merely nationalistic conquering of the geographical space itself. It formed part of the imperial narrative of establishing British dominance over the Antarctic.

The principle motivation behind the South African government's actions was that of military-strategic defence against communist 'encirclement'.[136] Moreover, participation in Antarctic research gave South Africa a means to engage in an international, multi-lateral forum at a time when the country was increasingly isolated internationally for its apartheid policies.[137]

Conclusion

Antarctica, literally, falls off the map in most Mercatorian representations of the world. South Africa would seem to have done the same when it came to the mapping of Antarctica in the interwar years. In considering the interwar history of South Africa and Antarctica, one should be careful not to read too much into the country's tenuous engagement with the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. In large part, it was a merely a recipient of despatches from Britain, Australia and occasionally New Zealand. South Africa failed what had become understood as the key test of proving its Antarctic mettle: dispatching a major expedition to the continent.

Until 1926 territorial contiguity remained one of the key appeals used by Britain to justify its Antarctic empire, recurring sporadically in its attempts to protest against, for example, Norwegian competition for Antarctic territory.[138] While Smuts took a philosophical interest in Antarctica, the first attempts to deploy South Africa's southern projection as a *raison d'être* for Antarctic expeditions gravid with nationalist potential failed to convince political decision-makers. When the (republican) press started pointing out that the Norwegians were planting flags in the South African sector, South Africa's right to flex its muscles on the world stage was as much an issue as the rumoured riches in that part of Antarctica.

Attempts actually to engage with Antarctic matters came from men with narrower geopolitical and utilitarian views, who saw in South African Antarctic presence a way to influence whaling or to better forecast the weather, to plan air-routes or safeguard against drought.

Even if it was not the sole or even main driver, the kind of potent nationalism that undergirded the actions in Antarctica of Australia, Norway or the claimants jockeying for the Antarctic peninsula did not carry the same weight in South African politics. South Africa's Antarctic strategy was consolidated only in the aftermath of the Second World War and triggered by an anxiety that it might be excluded from the geopolitical stage that had Antarctica and the Southern Ocean as a backdrop and Cold War tensions hovering in the wings.

Notes

[1] Cooper and Headland, 'A History of South African Involvement', 77–91.
[2] Elzinga, 'Punta Arenas and Ushuaia' (online version).
[3] Goddard, 'South African National Antarctic Expedition'. A more amateur proposal was made in 1911, to reach the South Pole with motorised transport, to D. H. Mill, then secretary of the Royal Geographic Society in Britain. Koelitz to Mill, 2 Feb. 1911, Antarctic Legacy Project (hereafter ALP), Stellenbosch, Sydney Cullis collection.
[4] This point was explicitly made by Adrian Howkins. Howkins, 'Frozen Empires'. Also see, for example, Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*; Collis and Stevens, 'Cold Colonies', 232–54; and Roberts, *European Antarctic*.
[5] See, for example, Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*; Dodds, *Pink Ice*; Howkins, 'Reluctant Collaborators', 596–617; and Roberts, *The European Antarctic*.
[6] Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*; Roberts, *European Antarctic*, esp. chs 1, 2 and 3.
[7] See correspondence in Pretoria, Department of External Affairs (hereafter BTS) 102/2/1, vol. 1, Territorial claims in the Antarctic (1 Sept. 1926 to 22 Oct. 1945), South African National Archives (hereafter SANA).
[8] The South African government occupied the Prince Edward Islands in 1947/1948, with support and encouragement from the United Kingdom.
[9] Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic', 25–42; Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*, ch. 5; Dodds, 'South Africa, the South Atlantic', 60–80; Dodds, 'South Africa Implementing the Protocol'; and Roberts, Dodds and Van der Watt, '"But Why Do You Go There?".
[10] Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic'. Some of his points will be revisited in this article.
[11] Voyages of exploration starting from South Africa were also activities, but not actively driven by South African companies or institutions.
[12] A key turning point was the 1908 claim to the Falkland Islands Dependencies.
[13] For more on this policy, see Beck, 'Securing the Dominant "Place"'; and Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, ch. 2.
[14] Memorandum respecting territorial claims in the Antarctic from 1908 to 1930. Annex I to Imperial conference, 1930, Policy in the Antarctic: Memorandum Prepared by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, Sept. 1930, Pretoria, South Africa House (hereafter BLO) 284, PS 16/2, SANA.
[15] Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, 1986.
[16] Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic', 27.
[17] Handwritten comment dated 3 May 1939 on undated minute 'Norwegian claims in the Antarctic', Department of Trade and Industry (hereafter HEN) 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.
[18] 'South Africa' is used retroactively here. Most of these activities took place from the Cape Colony before modern-day South African boundaries were drawn in 1910.
[19] On sealing, see Cooper, 'Human History'; and Rousset, '"Might is Right"'.
[20] Howkins, 'Political Meteorology', 28.
[21] On the history of data modelling and weather forecasting, see Edwards, *A Vast Machine*, esp. chs 2–4.

[22] Friedman, *Appropriating the Weather*, 113.
[23] Isachsen, 'My Friends in South Africa Ask Me', 11.
[24] The southern hemisphere has significantly less land that the northern hemisphere—including the Antarctic continent which has been continuously and extremely sparsely inhabited by migrant groups of humans only since the 1930s.
[25] The idea that the Antarctic had an influence on world weather is ascribed to M. F .Maury. Maury, *Physical Geography*, 389, first published in 1855. On the Bergen School of meteorology, see Friedman, 'Constituting the Polar Front', 343–62; and Friedman, *Appropriating the Weather*, esp. chs 9–11.
[26] The Meteorological Office of the Union of South Africa was established in 1912 as a branch of the Department of Irrigation. Jackson, 'Meteorology and Climatology', 397. Its location at the Department of Irrigation is indicative of the purpose the state attached to a meteorological office. After the war, it was under the Department of Transport.
[27] Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, chs 2, 5; De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa*; and Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, 306–64.
[28] Beinart, *Rise of Conservation in South Africa*, ch. 7; and De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa.*
[29] [Wilkins] 'The Economic Value of Antarctic Meteorology to Agriculturalists of Australasia', undated, 1920, George H. Wilkins Collection, 127/14/3, Byrd Polar Research Center (hereafter BPRC), Columbus, OH; 'New Territory for the Union?' *The Automobile*, May 1931, 72; 'S.A.'s Droughts Come from the South Pole', *Libertas,* July 1944, 18–27.
[30] Friedman, *Appropriating the Weather*, 103–14. Although there was no combat in the Union of South Africa, as in other British dominions and colonies, South African troops were sent to other fronts. South African troops were mainly involved in conflict in German South West Africa, German East Africa, France and Flanders. See Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme.*
[31] Union of South Africa, 'Finale Rapport Van Die Droogte Ondersoek Kommissie', Oct. 1923, [U.G 49–23].
[32] Ibid.
[33] It probably originated with R. D. Mossmann, a well-known Scottish meteorologist of the *Scotia* expedition (1902–04), who argued that a meteorological station at Bouvet Island was highly desirable, and strongly recommended that a meteorological station should be erected on the island in close cooperation with the governments of Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Amery, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Britain, to Hertzog, Minister of External Affairs in South Africa, translation of a Norwegian Memorandum on Bouvet and meteorology, 6 Nov. 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[34] Wilkins to Editor, *The Mercury*, 29 April 1939, BPRC 127/12/29. From 1928, Wilkins redoubled his efforts to raise international interest in a plan to establish, with the support of the governments of countries in the southern hemisphere, meteorological stations around the Antarctic continent and stations on the sub-Antarctic islands. The 1945 British Foreign Office handbook on *Territorial Claims in the Antarctic* noted that Wilkins' plans seemed to have had received more support in the United States than in the British Commonwealth. Brian J. Roberts, 'Territorial Claims in the Antarctic', Copy 51 [AS 3748/453/G], 1 May 1945, 22. Report in BTS 103/14 AJ 1945, SANA.
[35] See, for instance, the scuffle over Laurie Island which was handed over to the Argentinians by the *Scotia* expedition after the British seemed uninterested in maintaining a weather station there. It became a contentious point in British-Argentine scuffles in the Antarctic. Howkins, 'Frozen Empires', 23.
[36] See Anker on the relationship between Smuts' scientific and political ideas. Anker, *Imperial Ecology.*
[37] Smuts, 'Presidential Address'. For more on how the concept of 'Gondwanaland' has been used in South Africa in relation to Antarctica, see Van der Watt, 'Return to Gondwanaland'.
[38] Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 43. Smuts, *Holism and Evolution* was published in 1926.

[39] Dubow, 'A Commonwealth of Science', 80.
[40] Smuts, 'Presidential Address.' Smuts's view of South Africa and Africa as having a central position in the southern hemisphere, as well as being an important biological and geographical watershed, drew on the continental drift theories of Wegner. Wegner, *Die Entstehung der Kontinente und Ozeane.*
[41] Dubow, 'A Commonwealth of Science'.
[42] H. Luhis, 'Our Outlying Islands', *The South African Nation*, 21 March 1925, 7. The author also wrote a children's book set partly on Marion Island. Luhis, *Home of the Wandering Albatross.*
[43] Roberts, *European Antarctic*, ch. 3.
[44] On whaling, science, strategy and Antarctica, see Roberts' monograph *European Antarctic.*
[45] Tønnessen and Johnsen, *History of Modern Whaling*, 159.
[46] Ommanney, *Lost Leviathan*, 56. Whale-oil is a source of nitro-glycerine. Peter Beck linked the increasing official management of the industry to its rise in strategic value. Beck, 'Securing the Dominant "Place"', 454.
[47] Roberts, 'Territorial Claims in the Antarctic'; and Tønnessen and Johnsen, *History of Modern Whaling*, 162.
[48] This was in 1911. A shore station was built at Prince Olav Harbour in 1916–17. The company later became a subsidiary of the South African fishing giant, Irvin and Johnson. Best and Ross, 'Whales and Whaling', 321; and Basberg, *The Shore Whaling Stations*, 45.
[49] Best and Ross, 'Whales and Whaling', 326.
[50] Ommanney, *Lost Leviathan*, 30.
[51] Best and Ross, 'Whales and Whaling', 332; and Savours, *Voyages of the Discovery*, 210.
[52] Dodds, *Pink Ice,* ch. 1. Rival claims by Argentina also had a strong proximity argument, including that the Antarctic Peninsula and the Islas Malvinas were geographical extensions of the South American country, illegally occupied by Britain.
[53] Marsden, 'Expedition to Investigation', 69.
[54] Roberts, *European Antarctic,* ch. 2.
[55] Ibid., 55–76.
[56] The Norwegians informed the British of this. Lindley, British Minister, Oslo, to Bull, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 13 Feb. 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[57] Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers*, 144.
[58] They planned to set up a small meteorological station, but it was immediately clear that the hostile environment made this impossible. Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers*, 144. Interestingly, in defending their title to Bouvet Island, the British blamed the weather for preventing the *Discovery* from landing during its 1925–28 voyages and so demonstrating British control. Villiers, for Secretary of State, United Kingdom, to Vogt, Norwegian Ambassador to United Kingdom, 15 Feb. 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[59] Department of External Affairs to Secretary of Defence, Union of South Africa, 19 March 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[60] Campbell to Gascoigne, 18 Oct. 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[61] Lindley to Chamberlain, 12 March 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[62] Campbell to Gascoigne, 18 Oct. 1928, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA. At this time, concerns were raised about Japan entering Antarctic whaling.
[63] Roberts, 'Territorial Claims in the Antarctic'.
[64] '"Whales or science?" Mawson's special cable to "Daily News" Norwegian aims in Antarctic', *Daily News*, 10 Oct. 1929. Quoted in Roberts, *European Antarctic*. Due to the sensitive nature of the discussions between Norway and Britain on Antarctica and whaling, Whitehall distanced itself from Mawson's statements on Norwegian motives in the Antarctic.
[65] On Mawson and the commonwealth, see Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, esp. part 1.
[66] Grenfell Price, *The Winning of Australian Antarctica*, 74.
[67] Savours, *Voyages of the Discovery,* 223.

[68] During this expedition Byrd became the first person to fly to the South Pole. His was not an official United States expedition, but Byrd was a public advocate for increasing US presence in Antarctica and later also for laying US territorial claims. Howkins, 'Frozen Empires', 52–53.
[69] A summary of this correspondence is contained in Memorandum respecting territorial claims in the Antarctic from 1908 to 1930. Annex I to Imperial conference, 1930. Policy in the Antarctic: Memorandum Prepared by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, Sept. 1930, BLO 284, PS 16/2, SANA.
[70] Quoted in Steyn, Memorandum on Norwegian Claims in the Antarctic', 9 May 1939, BTS 102/2/1, vol. 1, SANA.
[71] Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic', 33; and Laverde, 'Development, Pursuit and Maintenance'.
[72] Marginalia on note of Passfield to Minister of External Affairs, 6 Aug. 1929, BTS 102/2, vol. 1, SANA. The letter informed the Dominions that the United Kingdom reminded the United States of their territorial claims following Byrd's expedition and flights over the Ross Dependency.
[73] Empire is understood here in terms of Roger and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonization', 462–511.
[74] Goddard, 'South African National Antarctic Expedition'.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ernest Mills Joyce had served with both Scott and Shackleton. See Mills Joyce, *The South Polar Trial*. After the South African government turned him down, Mills Joyce continued unsuccessfully to try for an Antarctic expedition of his own. Minutes on Captain E. Mills Joyce's proposed air expedition to the Antarctic, 6 Jan. 1934, Dominions Office (hereafter DO) 35/171/10, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA).
[78] He stated, for example, 'the scientific programme of my Expedition is not without its economic application', mentioning meteorology and its relation to agriculture as example. Joyce to Te Water, 23 June 1930, BLO 284 PS 16/2, vol. 1, SANA.
[79] Joyce, 'The Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition, 1930–1932 Prospectus', DO 35/171/10 (36), TNA.
[80] Joyce to Te Water, 6 June 1930, BLO 284 PS 16/2, vol. 1 ,SANA; Collie, 'Policy in the Antarctic', 21 Oct. 1930, BLO 284 PS 16/2, vol. 1, SANA. This was probably the first Union policy document on the Antarctic.
[81] Joyce to Te Water, 23 June 1930, BLO 284 PS 16/2, vol. 1, SANA.
[82] Memorandum on Captain E. E. Mills Joyce's scheme for a South African Antarctic Expedition, 1930–32, Nov. 1930, DO 35/171/10 (14), TNA.
[83] H. Andrews, Political Secretary, South Africa House to Under-Secretary of State, Dominions Office, 26 Feb. 1931, DO 35/171/10 (2), TNA.
[84] The expression, 'the scramble for Antarctica' was used in reference to the famous 'scramble for Africa' in the late nineteenth century. It was, however, a flawed parallel, as the geographical and historical contexts were incommensurable. Most obviously, Antarctica, unlike Africa, was completely unpopulated by humans.
[85] Howkins, 'Political Meteorology', 32; and Friedman, 'Constituting the Polar Front', 343.
[86] Quoted by Collie, 'Policy in the Antarctic', 21 Oct. 1930, BLO 284 PS 16/2, vol. 1, SANA. It was published 11 June 1930.
[87] Editorial, 'Antarctica [*sic*] en Ons', *Ons Vaderland*, 8 May 1931, 4.
[88] Editorial, 'New Territory for the Union?', *The Automobile*, May 1931, 71. The question about Norwegian activities was also repeated in syndicated press form in the *Star* and *Cape Times*, among others.
[89] Editorial, 'New Territory for the Union?', *The Automobile*, May 1931, 71.
[90] Until 1948 the prime minister also served as minister of external affairs.

[91] Editorial, 'Wat is Radikuul?', *Ons Vaderland*, 12 May 1931.
[92] Ibid.
[93] It was Norway, not Sweden, of course. Norway gained full independence from Sweden in 1905.
[94] Now known as Namibia and mandated to South Africa after the First World War.
[95] T. E. W. Schumann, the polymath director of the Weather Bureau, was interned during the war and late in his career published the overtly supremacist *The Abdication of White Man.* He was an efficient technocrat who corresponded regularly with his overseas colleagues, regardless of their politics. See Roberts, Dodds and van der Watt, '"But Why Do You Go There?"'. Oswald Pirow was the South African minister of defence in the pre-war Cabinet, founder of the New Order and strong supporter of the Ossewabrandwag, both fascist groups which supported Nazism.
[96] Simpson, Chief Meteorologist, to Evans, Vice Admiral, 14 May 1935; Simpson to Evans, 13 June 1935; Evans to Simpson, 18 June 1935, Records of the Meteorological Office (BJ) 5/30, TNA. Tristan da Cunha is an island group in the temperate Atlantic. It is the most remote community in the world, with fewer than 300 inhabitants. Although the islands are not strictly sub-Antarctic, they were often discussed in the same breath as sub-Antarctic islands when it came to meteorology and geopolitics.
[97] Simpson to Schumann, Director of the Weather Bureau, 22 May 1935, BJ 5/30, TNA. Over the next 20 years Schumann lobbied for Union weather stations on Gough, Bouvet and Tristan da Cunha as well as Antarctica. See, for example, Schumann, to Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 22 Sept. 1937, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA; Roberts on Schumann in Minutes by Tickell, 26 May 1955, Foreign Office (hereafter FO), 371/114001, TNA; T. E. W. Schumann, 'Wedloop van Volkere na Suidpool', *Die Brandwag*, 24 Feb. 1954; 'S.A. Gaan Verlate Eiland Besoek: Geleerdes kan Baat by Weer-Pos op Bouvet', *Die Burger,* 4 Jan. 1955.
[98] McCormack , 'Man with a Mission', 544.
[99] Evans to Simpson, 28 March 1935; Simpson to Evans, 14 May 1935; Evans to Simpson, 18 June 1935, BJ 5/30, TNA.
[100] S. H., Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on Union and the Antarctic, 30 Jan. 1935, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.
[101] S. H., Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on Union and the Antarctic, 30 Jan. 1935, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.
[102] Minutes of the Meeting of the External Trade Relations Committee, 29 June 1935, HEN 2491/455, SANA.
[103] This remark came from the representative of the Treasury, Holloway. Minutes of the Meeting of the External Trade Relations Committee, 29 June 1935, HEN 2491/455, SANA.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Von Bonde was known for being a technocrat rather than an academic. Van Sittert, 'The Handmaiden of Industry', 545.
[106] Von Bonde, Director of Fisheries, to Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 14 Aug. 1935, HEN 2491/455, SANA.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Memorandum, The South African Sector in the Antarctic, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA. This copy of the memorandum was slightly updated.
[109] 'New Japanese Whale Ship: To be Ready for Next Season', *Cape Times*, 26 Feb. 1936; 'Japanese Whaling in Antarctic: Australia Demands Licences', *Cape Argus*, 20 March 1936 in HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA. As Klaus Dodds pointed out, the concerns were compounded by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, which was regarded with antipathy in the West. Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic', 31.
[110] Correspondence in HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA, especially Stals, Board of Trade and Industries, to Secretary, Department of Commerce and Industries, 20 Sept. 1937; Schumann, to Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 22 Sept.1937; Von Bonde to Secretary for

Commerce and Industries, 30 Sept. 1937; Smith, Memorandum: Invitation from the Commander of Royal Research Ship Discovery II, 16 Sept. 1938. South African whaling companies did not think the data gathered by the *Discovery* expeditions useful. Their viewpoint could have been clouded by the fact that they were implicated in some of the studies. Trade and Industry was aware of this, which influenced how far they were willing to push for a scientist to join the expeditions. The Union Whaling Company to Smith, Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 14 Dec. 1938; Parker, Acting Secretary for Irvin and Johnson, to Smith, Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 19 Dec. 1938; McMullen, Secretary for Commerce and Industries, to Secretary for External Affairs, 24 Dec. 1938; HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.

[111] Charter. Report on visit to the Antarctic on the R.R.S Discovery II received 18 Nov.1938, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.

[112] Parmiter, South Africa House, to Secretary for External Affairs, 4 April 1939, HEN 2491/455, vol. 1, SANA.

[113] When approached, South Africa offered logistical assistance to the research programme of the German expedition, Bodenstein, Secretary for External Affairs, to Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the German Reich, 8 Feb. 1939, BTS 102/2, vol. 1, SANA.

[114] Roberts, *European Antarctic*, 75.

[115] The term 'Southern Oceanic Rim' was coined by Klaus Dodds. It includes Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, India and South Africa. Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica.*

[116] As W. B. Newton, who was granted a concession in 1906, 'apparently never hoisted the British flag' or '[made] any use of his concession', the Foreign Office felt doubt could be cast on Britain's claim to the islands. In 1926, part of the lease agreement with Kerguelen Sealing and Whaling Company was that they should display the British flag. Roberts, 'Territorial Claims in the Antarctic'.

[117] Ibid.

[118] 'Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands', March 1947, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1, SANA. The French *Bougainville* expedition of 1929, for example, did not apply specifically for permission to include the Prince Edward Islands in their scientific survey. The *Bougainville* organising committee was, however, aware that there could be issues and directed the expedition not to leave any traces behind should they succeed in landing. Extract from 'Au Seuil de l'Antartique Croisiérs du "Bougainville"' by Dr. René Jeannel, Paris: Editions du Museum rue 57 Cavier (ve), 1941, BLO 287 PS 16/4, vol. 1, SANA.

[119] Heard Island would then be attached to Australia, which was 4,200 miles closer to that island than the Falklands. Chadwick, Secretary of the Polar Committee, Note by the Secretary to Minutes of Polar Committee, 15 March 1947, BLO 287 PS 16/4, vol. 1, SANA.

[120] P. van Ryneveld, Chief of General Staff, to D. D. Forsyth, Secretary for External Affairs, 22 Aug. 1945, BTS 102/2/6, vol. 1, SANA.

[121] D. D . Forsyth, Secretary for External Affairs, to P. van Ryneveld, Chief of General Staff, 12 Sept. 1945, BTS 102/2/6, vol. 1, SANA.

[122] It was felt that, if the main empire route to the East was broken 'by enemy occupation or domination of India', a route with staging points at some of the sub-Antarctic islands and on the Antarctic continent would be considered of 'first rate importance'. In 1945, when the Air Ministry of Britain first considered the Antarctic from the point of view of air transport, this was considered a remote contingency. Events on the Indian subcontinent, eventually culminating in its partition and independence, turned it into 'a contingency which must now be studied with much more serious attention'. 'Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands', March 1947, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1. SANA.

[123] L. H. Clare-Burt to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 July 1947, BLO 287 PS16/4, vol. 1, SANA. Lindsay Clare-Burt applied for a five-year concession for sealing on the Prince Edward Islands, in view of the 'world shortage of fats and oils'. Clare-Burt took pains to

emphasise that he was 'born of British parents [in] Auckland, New Zealand' and living in Cape Town. He was evidently under the impression that his being a British subject, who repaired South African and royal navy vessels during the Second World War, would count in his favour.

[124] Colonial Office to E .E. Crowe, Commonwealth Relations Office, 'Prince Edward Islands', 15 Sept. 1947, BLO 287 PS16/4, vol. 1, SANA; 'Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands', March 1947, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1, SANA.

[125] Minutes of the Meeting of the Polar Committee, 13 March 1947, , BTS 102/2, vol. 3, SANA.

[126] D. B. Sole to the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, 13 Aug. 1947, BLO 287 PS16/4, vol. 1, SANA.

[127] Polar Committee Minutes of Meeting, 14 Nov. 1945 and 13 March 1947, BTS 102/2, vol. 3, SANA. G. Hewitson, South Africa House, to Chadwick, CRO, 22 Aug. 1947; Aide Memoire, November 1947, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1, SANA. Although the reality of intercontinental ballistic missiles was still a decade away, the islands were not so far removed from South Africa that the threat of a long-range missile, such as those used by the Nazis during the war, was thought improbable. MIRVs (multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles) especially caused panic.

[128] 'Control of Marion Island: Historical Appreciation of Marion Island', Aug. 1951, South African National Defence Force Archives (SANDFA) AG (3) 276/1.

[129] Ibid. The South African Press was not fooled.

[130] Ibid.

[131] South Africa 1947, Personal Minute, Prime Minister of United Kingdom to United Kingdom Minister of Defence, 19 Nov. 1947, PREM 8/666, TNA.

[132] South Africa 1947 Joint Planning Staff, 'Prince Edward Islands—Strategic Importance', 24 Nov. 1947, (Prime Minister) PREM 8/666, TNA.

[133] South Africa House to D. D. Forsyth, 25 Nov. 1947, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1, SANA.

[134] 'Operation "SNOEKTOWN" Confirmation of Verbal Orders Dated 19 December 1947',, BTS 1/96/1, vol. 1, SANA.

[135] 'Snoektown' was the name of a popular humorous radio feature. Marsh, *No Pathway Here.*

[136] Roberts, Dodds and Van der Watt, '"But Why Do You Go There?"', 79–110.

[137] Van der Watt, 'Return to Gondwanaland', 77–92.

[138] Dodds, 'South Africa and the Antarctic', 29.

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