

1991

## Strategy in the Southern Oceans: A South American View

Jorge Swett

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Swett, Jorge (1991) "Strategy in the Southern Oceans: A South American View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 44 : No. 3 , Article 25.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol44/iss3/25>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

tendencies. Cecil is too good a historian to fall prey to circumstantial evidence such as court gossip and innuendo.

For the serious student of German military and naval history, however, Cecil's biography is rather disappointing. To be sure, the author recounts in rich detail Wilhelm's well-known foibles with regard to uniforms and maneuvers, and his cherished personal command authority, but the deeper issues of military reform are glossed over. This is especially the case with regard to the critical issue of the role of the military in a modern, industrial state. In 1890, War Minister Verdy du Vernois asked if the Prussian Army was to remain a "corps royal" or whether the concept of the "nation in arms" (*Volk in Waffen*) was to be put into practice. While the issue bedeviled successive war ministers until 1914, Cecil offers no analysis.

Likewise, the Kaiser's love of all things nautical in general and of A.T. Mahan's work in particular is well documented—as is Wilhelm's testy (and at times, tempestuous) relationship with that "Bismarckian character," Alfred von Tirpitz. Cecil rightly credits Wilhelm's "personal regiment" with creating the necessary support for "navalism," while making the concomitant case that Tirpitz was the real architect of the High Sea Fleet. Yet, one misses the central argument: was the fleet built primarily as a tool of empire (*Weltpolitik*), or as an integrating factor of social imperialism? Study of its role in the origins of both the Anglo-German

naval race and the First World War will have to await Cecil's second volume.

HOLGER H. HERWIG  
University of Calgary

---

Gamba-Stonehouse, Virginia. *Strategy in the Southern Oceans, A South American View*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. 155pp.

*Strategy in the Southern Oceans, A South American View* is about geopolitics and includes most of the major themes that are current in the writings on this topic in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru. These themes are the Falklands/Malvinas war and its aftermath, the Beagle Channel dispute, the strategic value of the South Atlantic, the still-festering sequels of the War of the Pacific (1879-1881) and current territorial claims in Antarctica.

Gamba-Stonehouse concentrates on two case studies. Her first deals with the potential conflict arising today from Bolivia's ambition to obtain part of the coast of northern Chile in order to build a port for its own use. She reviews the border changes of Peru, Bolivia and Chile from the colonial period through the War of the Pacific, the war itself, and its settlement by treaties. She describes Bolivia's many efforts to revise the peace treaty signed with Chile, and has some things to say about the global implications of this issue.

Her second case centers on the conditions in the South Atlantic after

the Falklands-Malvinas war. She makes interesting analysis of the decision process that prompted the Argentinean leaders to invade the islands in 1982; her discussion suggests the influence of geopolitical thinkers in that decision. She also discusses its connection with the Beagle Channel dispute between Chile and Argentina that was being mediated by the Pope at the time. The case illustrates the changing attitudes of some geopolitical writers about the best way to achieve a nation's potential, for they are shifting from nationalistic and confrontational approaches to strategies of cooperation. Gamba-Stonehouse develops this theme by stressing the current level of collaboration between Argentina and Brazil in various fields, such as nuclear power research, joint ventures in military hardware, and joint development of a Western South Atlantic strategy against the common perceived threat—made plain by the British militarization of the Falklands-Malvinas islands.

The author's sources are mainly Argentinean and Peruvian for the first case study and Argentinean for the second. She uses American, British, Brazilian and Chilean materials sparsely. The authority of the sources she does use is, in some cases, questionable. The lack of a balanced view is evident in both case studies analyzed. Both Chilean and British points of view are omitted or heavily burdened with conjectures.

Anybody writing today about the future of world politics stands a good

chance of erring. *Strategy in the Southern Oceans, A South American View* does not escape this hazard. Some basic premises underpinning the arguments of the book are changing rapidly. One is the desire of the countries of the southern cone, especially Argentina and Brazil, to remove this part of the world from the East-West confrontation. It turns out that today the East-West confrontation is dissolving. The other is the isolation of both Great Britain and Chile—the former for its policies during and after the war of 1982, the latter for its military regime. Again events have changed dramatically. Argentina and Great Britain have established diplomatic relations and are cooperating to solve their differences. In Chile a democratically elected government is now in power, thus ending its purported isolation. And finally the revolutionary conditions in Central America that threatened the future use of the Panama Canal, increasing the strategic value of the Drake passage, have also changed. The recent events in Panama and Nicaragua have stabilized this region.

The book points out correctly some of the differences between the countries in this region that belie the common perception in the U.S. that Latin America constitutes a homogenous group of countries with both a common past and united aims for the future. Conflicts such as those Gamba-Stonehouse describes are real and have in some instances developed into full-grown wars. It is unfortunate that in these controversies, geopolitical

thinkers have helped generate an atmosphere in which intentions have often replaced capabilities, in which potential riches have been counted before being discovered, and perceptions have overshadowed realities, thus breeding suspicion and animosity between bordering countries. This book does not reverse that condition.

JORGE SWETT  
 Captain, Chilean Navy  
 Valparaiso, Chile

---

Karnow, Stanley. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. New York: Random House, 1989. 494pp. \$24.95

Given the political and economic uncertainty besetting Manila and the current state of U.S.-Philippine relations, this book could not be more timely. If one has a limited amount of time in which to become familiar with the long and complex history shared by the two countries, this may well be the best single volume available.

Stanley Karnow will be known to most *Review* readers for his earlier prodigious work on the Vietnam war. Like that book, *In Our Image* is a skillful and eminently readable blend of history, journalism, and occasional gossip. Also like his previous work, this book has a companion video history which was aired on the Public Broadcasting System. While they are not marketed as a package, the video series is a rich pictorial retrospective and a must-see for those interested in Philippine affairs.

Stanley Karnow addresses his book to three questions: what propelled the Americans into the Philippines; what they did there; and what has been the legacy of their role. In writing the book he has faithfully answered those questions, and the reader will be struck throughout that this is not so much Philippine history as it is American history. Mr. Karnow's journalistic roots (*Time*, *Life*, *The Washington Post* . . .) enable him to bring historical figures to life and thus imbue dusty history with freshness and vitality.

Much of the book is directed towards explaining the policies, ambitions, and emotions that led to the Philippines becoming an American colony and to the subsequent "special relationship" that has linked the two countries for nearly a century. In examining these issues the author is careful to become neither apologist nor revisionist, but rather to balance both countries' faults and virtues fairly and conscientiously. Students of more recent foreign policy decisions will certainly recognize the strategy and policy mismatches that occurred during the so-called Philippine Insurrection of 1898. The notable absence of leadership on the part of President McKinley is brought into sharp focus, as are the later actions (and inactions) of Douglas MacArthur.

It must be said that Stanley Karnow has definite personal views on certain issues and personalities—MacArthur being only one of many. But once recognized, this personalizing becomes one of the book's strongest