

**Luis Espinoza Arenas and Victoria Valdivia Cerda (eds.).
*La Ruta Austral Antártica del Ejército de Chile. Santiago de Chile,
Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Militares, 2024, 397 páginas.***

The book *The Austral-Antarctic Route of the Chilean Army* (in Spanish *La Ruta Austral-Antártica del Ejército de Chile*) is an essential work for understanding the historical, geopolitical, and strategic complexity of Chile in its southern and Antarctic regions. This work, published on the 180th anniversary of its institutional presence, addresses, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the multiple dimensions in which the Chilean Army has played a crucial role in affirming sovereignty and national integration in these extreme territories (Espinoza Arenas and Valdivia Cerda, 2024).

The book is divided into two main sections. The first part, entitled «180 Years of the Army in the Austral-Antarctic Region (1843–2023)», offers an in-depth historical overview, highlighting key events such as

the founding of Fort Bulnes, the pioneering leadership of Liberator Captain General Bernardo O'Higgins, and the influential role of General Ramón Cañas Montalva. It also exhaustively examines the contributions of the Chilean Army through the Military Geographic Institute (Instituto Geográfico Militar, IGM) and the Chilean Military Labour Corps (Cuerpo Militar del Trabajo), highlighting its decisive role in the 1978 Magellan crisis (Espinoza Arenas and Valdivia Cerda, 2024).

The second part, «The Future of the Chilean Austral-Antarctic Region», takes a prospective approach, exploring the geopolitical and strategic situation toward the year 2048. This section analyses possible modifications to the Antarctic Treaty System, notably the Protocol on Environmental Protection to

the Antarctic Treaty (also termed as Madrid Protocol, 1991), whose provisions prohibit the exploitation of mineral resources and could be revised in that year. The book also addresses the implications of climate change and the growing international competition for the relevant Antarctic resources. The relevance of strengthening state operational capabilities is particularly highlighted, emphasising the central role of the Chilean Army as a crucial player in these critical areas (Espinoza Arenas and Valdivia Cerda, 2024).

Among the notable contributions of the book *The Austral-Antarctic Route of the Chilean Army* are the historical systematisation of the Chilean Army's role in territorial integration since 1843, as well as its decisive contribution to the development of the national geopolitical concept of the «Austral-Antarctic Region». In geopolitical and strategic terms, it offers a forward-looking view of the challenges related to Antarctic governance and the defence of Chilean territorial sovereignty in a global context characterised by

multipolarity. Within this framework, this book highlights the strategic value of the Chilean Army in sustaining the national presence amidst what is described in the text as a «global hegemonic interregnum» (Estenssoro Saavedra, 2024: 215).

The book also addresses scientific and technological challenges, especially those related to the dual use (civil and military) of emerging technologies and the projection of Chilean Antarctic endeavours (Espinoza Arenas and Valdivia Cerda, 2024). It also highlights the relevance of the Chilean Antarctic Science Programme for national and international research in the region. Another relevant aspect of the book is its explicit recognition of the growing and fundamental role of women in Antarctic expeditions, thus highlighting their contributions and the challenges they face in polar science, and, especially, Antarctic research.

In the context of current trends, Antarctic issues dynamics reflect a complex interaction between science, the environment,

geopolitics, and military strategy. Recent research shows a sustained greening of the Antarctic Peninsula, a result of rising temperatures and the impact of climate change, which carries risks of ecological homogenisation and the potential introduction of invasive species (Roland et al., 2024). A recent work carried out by Ríos-Silva et al. (2025), focusing on analysing the international scientific production, revealed a sustained increase in interdisciplinary collaboration and the consolidation of global research networks. This phenomenon has strengthened the strategic position of South American countries in the field of polar science studies (Baquero Valdés et al., 2024; Ríos-Silva et al., 2025). As reported by Garrido Quiroz (2024), this scientific progress is developing in parallel with a complex geopolitical scenario, characterised by persistent tensions surrounding the sovereignty of the northern Antarctic zone, where overlapping state claims challenge the notion of Antarctica as a Common Heritage of Humanity and highlight the

importance of maintaining effective logistical and deterrence capabilities (Garrido Quiroz, 2024). In this scenario, the South American armed forces play a decisive operational and strategic role, through the deployment of icebreakers, aircraft, and combined patrols, supporting scientific campaigns, search and rescue (SAR) operations, and a compelling presence within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty, while projecting the importance of maintaining active influence in decision-making processes on the white continent by 2048 (Sánchez, 2025).

Based on the text *The Austral-Antarctic Route of the Chilean Army* it is possible to identify relevant future lines of research, such as considerations from International Antarctic Law regarding the role of the Chilean Army as a state operator in the face of possible revisions to the Antarctic Treaty in 2048, the conceptual and practical consolidation of the Austral-Antarctic Region as a Chilean national geopolitical entity, the analysis of the current geopolitical landscape and its

relationship to the development of state capabilities, and the specific role of the Chilean Army in SAR activities in international cooperation, in compliance with the Antarctic Treaty System. Furthermore, based on a detailed study, this text invites to delve into historical and prospective research on the continuity and projection of the Chilean Army in Antarctica, considering its nearly eight decades of uninterrupted presence, in addition to addressing emerging technological challenges and female participation from a historical and current gender perspective.

In summary, the book *The Austral-Antarctic Route of the Chilean Army* is an indispensable text for those interested in the social sciences and other disciplines related to Antarctic issues. This interesting book makes a significant contribution to the historical, geopolitical, and strategic knowledge about Chile, serving as a fundamental reference for academics, researchers, students, military personnel, politicians, decision-makers, and scholars interested in understanding and projecting the presence and challenges in Antarctica.

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