

**Forum:** The Fourth General Assembly

**Issue:** The Question Of The Territorial Claims in Antarctica

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## Introduction

The international community has been debating the complex and contentious issue of territorial claims in Antarctica for decades. The continent has no native population and is covered in ice and snow, making it difficult to inhabit or exploit. However, Antarctica is also home to a wealth of natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and fishing stocks. As a result, several countries have laid claim to parts of the continent.

The current legal framework for Antarctica is the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), which was signed in 1959 and came into force in 1961. The ATS is a set of treaties and agreements that govern international relations in Antarctica. The treaty system prohibits military activity and nuclear testing on the continent, and it establishes the principle of freedom of scientific research. However, the ATS does not resolve the issue of territorial sovereignty.

There are currently seven countries that have made territorial claims in Antarctica: Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom. These claims are based on a variety of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. However, not all nations accept these claims.

The issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica is likely to become increasingly important in the years to come as the continent becomes more accessible and as its resources become more valuable. Climate change is also melting the Antarctic ice sheet, which could make new areas of the continent accessible for exploitation.

Antarctica is a continent with a wealth of natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and fishing stocks. As the continent becomes more accessible and its resources become more valuable, it is likely that there will be increased competition for control over these resources. Antarctica is a unique and fragile ecosystem. It is home to a variety of plants and animals that are found nowhere else on Earth. The continent also plays an important role in regulating the global climate. Any activity that takes place in Antarctica has the potential to impact the environment, both locally and globally. Antarctica is a place for scientific research. Scientists from all over the world come to Antarctica to study the continent's unique environment and learn more about its impact on the global climate. The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) has undergone significant changes over the years to adapt to new challenges and address emerging issues. Notably, the system has strengthened its environmental protection measures, with the adoption of the Madrid Protocol in 1991, the creation of the Environmental Domains Annex in 2002, and the establishment of the Committee for Environmental Protection in 2009. Additionally, the ATS has facilitated international scientific collaboration through the establishment of SCAR and COMNAP, and addressed the decline of seabird populations through the ACAP agreement. In terms of governance, the ATS has adopted a consensus-based decision-making approach and established the CTNGA committee to address the growing impact of tourism and NGOs. These changes demonstrate the ATS's ability to adapt to new realities and ensure the continued protection of Antarctica for future generations. Territorial claims in Antarctica could have a negative impact on scientific research, as countries may restrict access to certain areas or give priority to their own scientific programs.

The international community has long grappled with the complex issue of territorial claims in Antarctica. Despite its harsh environment and lack of native population, the continent holds potential for valuable resources like oil, gas, and minerals. Seven countries have laid claim to various parts of Antarctica, citing historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research as justifications. However, these claims remain

unrecognized by many other nations. As climate change melts the Antarctic ice sheet and resources become more desirable, competition for control is likely to intensify. While scientific research is essential for understanding Antarctica's unique environment and its impact on the global climate, territorial disputes could potentially hinder such endeavors. Ultimately, the future of Antarctica hinges on a delicate balance between scientific exploration, resource utilization, environmental protection, and international cooperation.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

#### **Antarctic Treaty System (ATS):**

A treaty that was registered in Washington D.C. in 1961 to ensure the safeguarding of the Antarctic region.

#### **Territorial sovereignty:**

The exclusive right of a state to exercise its powers within the boundaries of its territory

#### **Natural resources:**

Resources that occur naturally in the environment and can be used for economic purposes

#### **Scientific research:**

The systematic study of the natural world through observation and experiment.

#### **Military activity:**

The use of force by a state against another state or against a non-state.

#### **Nuclear testing:**

The detonation of a nuclear device for the purpose of testing its capabilities.

**Competition for resources:**

The rivalry between two or more parties to obtain control of a limited resource.

**Conflict and tension:**

A state of disagreement or hostility between two or more parties.

**Cooperation and coordination:**

The working together of two or more parties to achieve a common goal.

**Ice sheet:**

A thick layer of ice that covers a large land area.

**Global commons:**

Areas of the Earth that are not under the sovereignty of any one nation.

**Sustainable development:**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Ice Breaker Ship:**

A ship which is made to travel through the ice by breaking through any ice it crosses making itself a path through the ice for itself and any other ships behind it.

**International Polar Year:**

The International Polar Years are the years in which there is extensive

international collaboration in order to explore the Antarctic Region.

### **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):**

A coastal area of water and seabed which a country claims exclusive rights for fishing, drilling, and selling.

## **Key Issues**

### **1. The legal status of Antarctica**

There is no single treaty or agreement that resolves the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica. The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), which was signed in 1959 and came into force in 1961, is the primary legal framework for governing international relations in Antarctica. The ATS prohibits military activity and nuclear testing on the continent, and it establishes the principle of freedom of scientific research. However, the ATS does not resolve the issue of territorial sovereignty. The ATS remains a vital instrument for international cooperation in Antarctica. While it has limitations, its achievements in promoting peace, scientific research, and environmental protection are undeniable. To ensure the continued success of the ATS and the future of Antarctica, ongoing collaboration, adaptation, and a commitment to shared responsibility are essential.

There are currently seven countries that have made territorial claims in Antarctica: Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom. These claims are based on a variety of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. However, not all nations accept these claims.

The legal status of Antarctica is likely to become increasingly important in the years to come as the continent becomes more accessible and as its resources become more valuable. Climate change is also melting the Antarctic ice sheet, which could make new areas of the continent accessible for exploitation.

## 2. The potential for conflict and tension

The overlapping territorial claims in Antarctica could lead to conflict and tension among claimant states. This is especially true if the continent becomes more accessible and as its resources become more valuable.

The history of territorial claims in Antarctica is riddled with disputes and rivalries. Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom have all laid claim to various portions of the continent, citing historical discovery, exploration, and scientific activity. These claims have been met with varying degrees of recognition and often overlap, creating a complex and volatile environment. Another instance is in 1982 when Argentina and the United Kingdom fought a war over the Falkland Islands, which are located just off the coast of Antarctica.

The potential for conflict and tension in Antarctica is a major concern for the international community. Climate change is rapidly altering the landscape of Antarctica, melting the ice sheet and revealing resources previously inaccessible. This newfound accessibility, coupled with the increasing value of resources like oil, gas, and minerals, creates a potent cocktail for competition and potential conflict. Claimant states may be

tempted to exploit these resources, potentially disregarding the environmental consequences and the delicate balance maintained by the ATS. The ATS has been successful in preventing military activity and nuclear testing on the continent, but it is not clear whether it would be able to prevent conflict if the territorial claims were to be disputed. While the potential for conflict is real, the ATS remains a crucial force for peace and stability. Its provisions prohibiting military activity and weapons testing, promoting scientific cooperation, and advocating for environmental protection offer a framework for resolving disputes and managing resources responsibly.

### **3. The impact on scientific research**

Territorial claims in Antarctica could have a negative impact on scientific research. Claimant states may restrict access to certain areas or may give priority to their own scientific programs. This could make it more difficult for scientists from other countries to conduct research in Antarctica.

Claimant states might restrict access to certain areas for research, particularly those deemed strategically important or rich in resources. This would limit the scope of research and impede scientists' ability to conduct comprehensive studies. Bureaucratic hurdles and permit delays imposed by individual states could create logistical nightmares for researchers, hindering the timely execution of research projects. Claimant states might prioritize their own research programs, allocating more resources and granting easier access to their researchers. This would create an uneven playing field, disadvantaging scientists from other countries and hindering international collaboration. Collaborative research initiatives and data sharing could suffer as states prioritize their

own interests and potentially view scientific findings as national assets. Territorial claims in Antarctica pose a real threat to the future of scientific research on the continent. By restricting access, prioritizing national agendas, and potentially harming the environment, these claims could hinder our understanding of this crucial region and its impact on the global climate. International collaboration, strengthened environmental regulations, and a commitment to scientific freedom are essential to ensure that Antarctica remains a cradle of knowledge and discovery, not a battleground for national interests.

Scientific research is essential to our understanding of Antarctica and its impact on the global climate. Any activity that takes place in Antarctica has the potential to impact the environment, both locally and globally. It is therefore important to ensure that scientific research in Antarctica is conducted in a responsible and sustainable manner.

#### **4. The protection of the environment**

Antarctica is a unique and fragile ecosystem. It is home to a variety of plants and animals that are found nowhere else on Earth. The continent also plays an important role in regulating the global climate.

Territorial claims in Antarctica could have a negative impact on the environment. Claimant states may exploit the continent's resources in a way that damages the environment. They may also restrict access to certain areas, making it more difficult for scientists to monitor and protect the environment.

In terms of resource exploitation, Estimates suggest Antarctica holds 5%



of the world's untapped oil and gas reserves, The fishing industry already extracts millions of tons of fish from the Southern Ocean surrounding Antarctica, Mineral deposits, including iron, copper, and nickel, are also present in Antarctica. In terms of biodiversity, 25% of the world's penguins breed in Antarctica, 12% of the world's seabirds feed in Antarctic waters, and there are over 1,000 species of invertebrates found in Antarctica. In terms of Scientific Research and Monitoring, The ATS has established a network of protected areas covering over 5 million square kilometers of Antarctica, International research programs continue to study the Antarctic ecosystem and monitor its response to climate change.

It is important to ensure that Antarctica is protected from environmental damage. The ATS has been successful in protecting the Antarctic environment, but it is important to remain vigilant.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **Argentina**

Argentina's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Argentina first claimed Antarctica in 1904, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Argentina has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

Argentina's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including the United Kingdom and Chile. However, Argentina remains committed to its

claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### Australia

Australia's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Australia first claimed Antarctica in 1933, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Australia has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

Australia's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including Argentina and Chile. However, Australia remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### Chile

Chile's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Chile first claimed Antarctica in 1940, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Chile has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

Chile's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including Argentina and the United Kingdom. However, Chile remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### France

France's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. France first claimed

Antarctica in 1924, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. France has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

France's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including Australia and Norway. However, France remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### New Zealand

New Zealand's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. New Zealand first claimed Antarctica in 1923, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. New Zealand has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

New Zealand's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including Australia and France. However, New Zealand remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### Norway

Norway's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Norway first claimed Antarctica in 1933, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Norway has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

Norway's claim to Antarctica is disputed by a number of countries, including Argentina and France. However, Norway remains committed to its claim, and it

has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's claim to Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. The United Kingdom first claimed Antarctica in 1823, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. The United Kingdom has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.

Argentina and Chile are two nations that dispute the United Kingdom's claim to Antarctica. However, the United Kingdom remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.

### People's Republic of China

Although China did not initially participate in the establishment of the ATS, it ratified the treaty in 1983 and was granted consultative status, which conferred voting rights. Since then, the nation has extended its territorial claims to eastern Antarctica, which is claimed by Australia. China has established four stations in the area and has recently undertaken an expansion of its fishing operations. China and the Russian Federation have collaborated to survey and analyze the natural deposits and resources of the region. China and the Russian Federation have both expressed a distinct willingness to work together in order to conduct additional research in Antarctica. Additionally, China deployed high-frequency radars capable of jamming satellites, which could prove advantageous should China ever engage in a conflict.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
28/01/1820	The first known landing on Antarctica was made by a Russian expedition led by Fabian von Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev.	No territorial claims were made.
08/12/1823	The United Kingdom claims the South Shetland Islands.	<p>The United Kingdom's claim to the South Shetland Islands is based on the discovery of the islands by British explorer William Smith in 1819. Argentina and Chile, who also claim the islands, dispute the claim.</p> <p>The United Kingdom's claim to the South Shetland Islands has not been recognized by all countries. However, the United Kingdom maintains a presence on the islands and operates</p>

		<p>a number of scientific research stations.</p>
<p>02/06/1904</p>	<p>Argentina claims the Antarctic Peninsula and all land south of Tierra del Fuego.</p>	<p>Argentina's claim to the Antarctic Peninsula and all land south of Tierra del Fuego is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Argentina first claimed the Antarctic Peninsula in 1904, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the peninsula ever since. Argentina has several scientific research stations on the Antarctic Peninsula, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the peninsula.</p> <p>Argentina's claim to the Antarctic Peninsula is disputed by the United Kingdom and Chile. However, Argentina remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other</p>

		country's claims to the peninsula.
19/01/1933	Australia and Norway claim sectors of Antarctica.	<p>Australia and Norway's claims to sectors of Antarctica are based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Australia and Norway both first claimed sectors of Antarctica in 1933, and they have maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Australia and Norway have several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and they also operate a number of tourist activities on the continent.</p> <p>Australia's and Norway's claims to sectors of Antarctica are disputed by a number of countries, including Argentina, Chile, France, and the United Kingdom. However, Australia and Norway remain committed to their claims, and they have stated that they will not</p>

		recognize any other country's claims to the continent.
06/07/1940	Chile claims a sector of Antarctica.	<p>Chile's claim to a sector of Antarctica is based on a number of factors, including historical discovery, exploration, and scientific research. Chile first claimed a sector of Antarctica in 1940, and it has maintained a continuous presence on the continent ever since. Chile has several scientific research stations in Antarctica, and it also operates a number of tourist activities on the continent.</p> <p>Chile's claim to a sector of Antarctica is disputed by Argentina and the United Kingdom. However, Chile remains committed to its claim, and it has stated that it will not recognize any other country's claims to the continent.</p>
01/12/1948	The United States announces that it reserves the right to	The United States' announcement that it reserves



	<p>make a territorial claim in Antarctica.</p>	<p>the right to make a territorial claim in Antarctica is significant because the United States is one of the most powerful countries in the world. If the United States were to make a territorial claim in Antarctica, it would likely be disputed by other countries.</p> <p>However, the United States has not yet made a territorial claim in Antarctica. It is unclear whether the United States ever will make a claim.</p>
<p>01/12/1959</p>	<p>The Antarctic Treaty is signed, deferring the issue of territorial sovereignty and prohibiting military activity and nuclear testing on the continent.</p>	<p>The Antarctic Treaty is a landmark international treaty that has helped to maintain peace and stability in Antarctica. The treaty defers the issue of territorial sovereignty and prohibits military activity and nuclear testing on the continent. The Antarctic Treaty has been successful in preventing conflict and tension in Antarctica. The treaty has</p>

		also helped to protect the environment on the continent.
03/06/1970	The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is established to manage international relations on the continent.	<p>The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is an annual meeting of the parties to the Antarctic Treaty. The ATCM provides a forum for all countries to discuss and resolve issues related to Antarctica.</p> <p>The ATCM has been successful in managing international relations in Antarctica. The ATCM has also played a key role in protecting the environment on the continent.</p>
04/10/1991	The Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty is adopted, establishing a comprehensive framework for environmental protection in Antarctica.	<p>The Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty is a landmark international treaty that provides a comprehensive framework for environmental protection in Antarctica. The protocol prohibits all activities</p>

		<p>that could have a negative impact on the environment of the continent.</p> <p>The Madrid Protocol has been successful in protecting the environment of Antarctica. The protocol has also helped to promote international cooperation on environmental issues in Antarctica.</p>
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## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### Regional and Global treaties and agreements

One of the most notable attempts to solve the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica was the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The Antarctic Treaty defers the issue of territorial sovereignty and prohibits military activity and nuclear testing on the continent. The treaty has been successful in preventing conflict and tension in Antarctica. However, it has not resolved the issue of territorial sovereignty.

Another attempt to solve the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica was the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty of 1991. The Madrid

Protocol provides a comprehensive framework for environmental protection in

Antarctica. However, it does not address the issue of territorial sovereignty.

In addition to the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid Protocol, there have been a number of other attempts to solve the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica. These attempts have included negotiations between the claimant states and proposals for new international agreements. However, none of these attempts have been successful.

The main obstacle to resolving the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica is the competing interests of the claimant states. The claimant states are all interested in the continent's resources and its strategic importance. They are also all reluctant to give up their claims to the continent.

It is possible that the issue of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica will never be fully resolved. However, the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid Protocol have been successful in preventing conflict and tension in Antarctica. These treaties provide a framework for cooperation between the claimant states and for the protection of the continent's environment.

However, some challenges that prevented previous attempts to solve the issue include the competing interests of the claimant states, the reluctance of the claimant states to give up their claims to the continent, the lack of international consensus on how to resolve the issue, the complexity of the issue.

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Establishment of new treaty**

One possible solution is to maintain the status quo. The Antarctic Treaty has been successful in preventing conflict and tension in Antarctica for over 60 years. However, the status quo is not sustainable in the long term. The claimant states are all interested in the continent's resources and its strategic importance. They are also all reluctant to give up their claims to the continent. Another solution is to divide Antarctica into sectors, with one or more claimant states in control of each sector. However, this solution would be difficult to implement and enforce. It would also be likely to lead to conflict and tension between the claimant states. What could happen is an international condominium could be formed in Antarctica. This means that the continent would be governed by an international body made up of representatives from all countries. However, this solution would be complex to implement and manage. The claimant states are also likely to resist it.

### **The creation of a new and permanent treaty**

Peace and stability in the Antarctic region are also gravely endangered due to the potential overturning of the Antarctic Treaty System in 2048. Countries could engage in military conflict in an effort to establish sovereignty over their claimed territories if the ATS is overturned. To prevent this from occurring, a permanent solution must be identified. This may entail the establishment of a novel treaty that additionally designates

Antarctica as a scientific and research-oriented natural reserve. Nevertheless, this treaty would be long-lasting and permanent. This would prevent any nation from expanding into the region through military means, which would be advantageous for both the inhabitants and the environment of Antarctica, as it would avert a conflict.

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