

**Forum:** General Assembly

**Issue:** Reviewing the Antarctic Treaty

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**Position:** Chair of General Assembly

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## Introduction

Prior to the Antarctic Treaty, seven countries around the world (Australia, Chile, Argentina, France, United Kingdom, Norway and New Zealand) had established territorial claims on the continent, which were recognized by few. Signed on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1958 and entered into force in 1961, the Antarctic Treaty was signed by 12 countries who agreed that there would not be any military activity on the continent and that it would mainly be used for scientific research and other peaceful acts. The treaty also notes that it does not renounce any previous territorial claims made by any nations but does forbid future claims. The treaty was essentially passed to ensure that Antarctica would not be subject to diplomatic strife and potential conflict and to allow all countries to “share” it. Although nobody lives permanently on the continent, there are many research stations from countries around the world where scientists reside for a temporary amount of time. 46 countries have bases in Antarctica at this time. Every year, Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings between the 12 original signatories and 16 other countries which have displayed scientific interest in the continent and they make major decision through discussions. The treaty is set to expire in the year 2041, 80 years after the treaty became effective.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Reviewing

Evaluating a writing or piece of legislation with the intent to revise it if necessary.

### Antarctic Treaty

A treaty proposed by the United States that aimed to regulate international relations with respect to Antarctica.

### Territorial Claim

Land which has been claimed by various countries to be an overseas territory and under their sovereignty.

## General Overview

### Legal conflicts

Since most countries, such as the United States, have mandated that their national laws do apply to their citizens in Antarctica and in or near their national bases, there are often conflicts with other nations when a law is broken. In a recent case, New Zealand enforcement was unable to write up warrants for American witnesses because of issues over jurisdiction.

### Exploitation of Antarctica

Many are noting that Antarctica is slowly being exploited, intentionally and unintentionally due to recent discoveries of the resources in Antarctica.

#### *Tourism*

For example, the increasing number of tourists to the continent has slowly shifted the scientific purpose of Antarctica and may instead encourage countries to start fighting for them and creating permanent structures if they pose a economic benefit. Tourists also pose the risk of increasing the environmental damage to the ice and nearby waters. The treaty does not limit and specify and issues that deal with tourists or visitors, as countries at the time did not envision it would become an issue.

#### *Illegal activities*

In addition, illegal fishing in the waters near the continent has been reported as they offer an untapped resource. The fishing has not been limited to commercial fishing but has also included whaling which itself is banned. Since no one single country or international organization owns jurisdiction over Antarctica, it is often complicated and difficult to persecute those found guilty of such crimes or to set punishments to deter would be criminals in the future.

## Timeline of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
January 26 <sup>th</sup> , 1853	First landing in Antarctica by Mercator Cooper
July 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1957, to December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 1958	The International Geophysical Year: An international conference that was a key indicator of the end of the scientific paralysis in the Cold War and renewed cooperation in science
December 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1958	Antarctic Treaty signed
1964	Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora
1980	Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

1991

## Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has in the past passed many resolutions to do with worldwide marine and territorial issues that also apply to Antarctica with the most prominent and relevant one being the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas. The Convention outlined what rights and responsibilities the member states of the United Nations had when it came to using international waters and managing marine natural resources. However, the Antarctica Treaty Secretariat had been established in 2004 as the permanent institution of the Antarctica Treaty which presides over an annual meeting between the signatories of the Antarctica Treaty to discuss any issues or future plans.

## Bibliography

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