



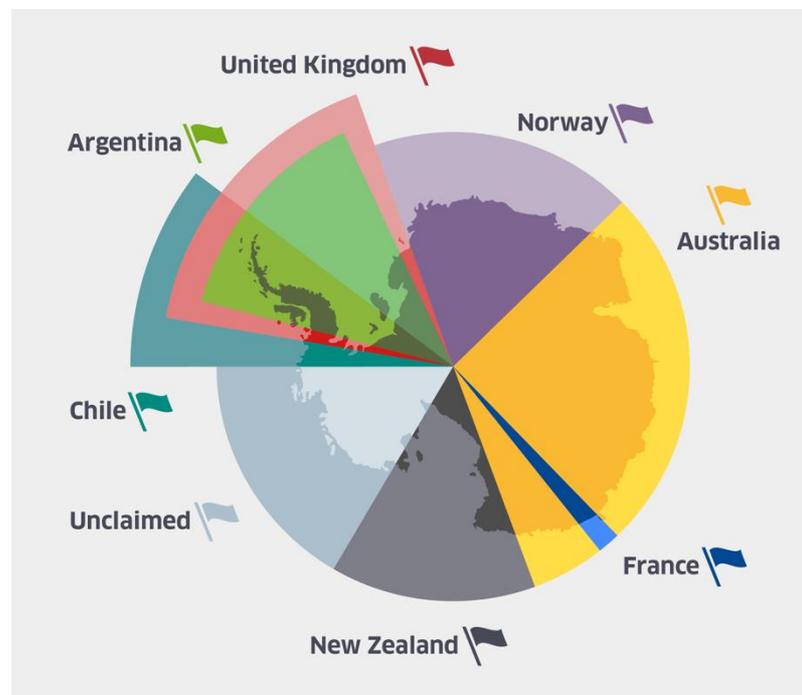
The Question of Antarctic Territorial Claims'

Introduction

Since the Antarctic was been deemed accessible following a flurry of attempts to reach the South Pole, the question of to whom the Antarctic should belong has been a pressing and contentious one. The Antarctic has no native peoples and bares little life or pastoral potential yet, rather ironically, lays ownership to 90% of the World's fresh water resources, and with a growing population and increasing desertification around in equatorial nations, freshwater is becoming of greater value.

Status quo

Currently the Antarctic is held under "The Antarctic Treaty" of 1961 as a 'scientific preserve' and relies on the mutual respect of its signatories to uphold its values. No military activity is permitted and prospecting for minerals is also prohibited. This



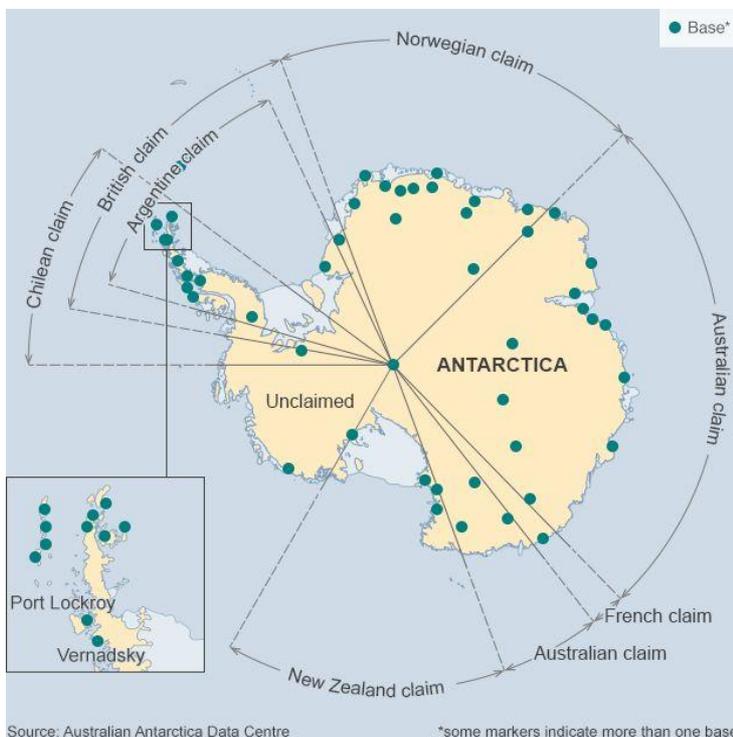
agreement has been ratified by 50 nations and will expire in 2048, however, actions must be made now in order prevent an escalatory period in the lead up to this date and to similarly take measure against



the question of its ownership developing into a conflict. Already there are 68 military bases positioned around the Antarctic, with China having recently built their fifth, Russia having responsibility of seven and USA having control of the largest and most strategically placed of the setups, it is clear that the Antarctic claims will extend far beyond merely the interests of the current competitors.

It is clear from this that there is a tacit agreement to territorial pushes and that the member nations of the pact have failed to uphold

its policies, and so too the UN in its responsibility to ensure peaceful co-operation. Geologists from various nations have provided predictions that there is a quantity of over 200 million barrels of oil beneath the surface of the land and so the interests of nations are often tied to a resource based desire rather than territorial itself.



The case for a renewal of the treaty

- It is clear that there are conflicting desires being made by a variety of nations, all with dubious claims to their respective land-sects and so any decision made by the UN is going to displease some proportion of claimants. Therefore, it seems that the UN must develop a neutral stance and protect the peaceful interests of all nations.
- The Treaty as of now has no military backing and so there is little to deter nations acting with wanton aggression, however



with a renewal of the treaty backed by the support of the UN and its enforcement power, there is far greater hope for the limitation of armed impositions.

- The scientific prospects of the UN need to be defended and a neutral area allows scientists from all nations to have equal access to points of interest and development. This will also stimulate greater scientific progress as the collaboration of nations academics will be greater facilitated through a borderless land mass.

The case for Territorial division

- It is clear that tensions have been and are going to continue to rise for the foreseeable future, especially as the renewal date draws ever closer and so the most pragmatic way to sort out the situation is to deal with the claims now rather than kicking the can down the road for later people to deal with the inevitable pressure
- The treaty relies on trust and is delicate to other international disputes. It will only take one superpower to walk away from the treaty to trigger a collapse of reliance and thus the potential for aggressive territorial policies.
- As global warming produces a greater effect on the solidity of the ice in Antarctica, the natural resources of oil and fresh water will become continually more accessible and therefore desirable. This will continue to develop and thus a decision made now will provide less potential for conflict than at a later stage when the rewards for invasion are more lucrative.

Questions to Consider:

- Is the current Treaty fit to serve a developing world with more potent arms and military forces?



- Is a peaceful division of land areas genuinely realistic?
- How can we police and enforce the current Treaty to further stop military bases being formed?
- Can we foreseeably return to a base-free Antarctica or is our only option to act now and settle the dispute?