
4. Post-colonial Antarctica

Klaus Dodds and Christy Collis

Shortly after Dodds published an essay in *Polar Record* entitled ‘Post-colonial Antarctica: an emerging engagement’, leading postcolonial theorists posited the ‘The end of post-colonial theory?’ in the journal *PMLA* (Publications of the Modern Language Association). Lambasting postcolonial theory as irrelevant, parochial and Anglo-centric,¹ their piece captured a powerful current of discontent. But for Robert Young, a leading theorist of post-colonialism and author of field-setting introductions to postcolonial theory and practice, such an obituary seemed out of place and time. As Young opined in a lengthy essay titled ‘Postcolonial remains’ published in *New Literary History* in 2012:

The desire to pronounce postcolonial theory dead on both sides of the Atlantic suggests that its presence continues to disturb and provoke anxiety: the real problem lies in the fact that the postcolonial remains. Why does it continue to unsettle people so much? The aspiring morticians of the postcolonial concur in scarcely relating it to the world from which it comes from and for which it claims to speak: that outside Europe and North America.

As this debate suggests, postcolonialism is a wide-ranging and dense academic field, with theoretical and practical but also political agendas – including whether to use either postcolonial (denoting an academic field) or post-colonial, where the latter usually refers to the formal ending of imperial rule. Postcolonial thinking, however, posits that colonialism and colonial imaginaries and practices are as relevant as ever and that scholars need to remain attentive to spatial and temporal variations around the globe.² Antarctica merits attention in that regard.

This chapter explores how postcolonial perspectives have informed and indeed contributed to ‘critical Antarctic studies’, which itself is attendant to the intersection of inter alia colonialism, exploration, race, gender, nationalism, and sexuality. A decade on from that essay on ‘post-colonial Antarctica’, we would select a different word to ‘emerging’ and propose instead ‘an *unsettling* engagement’. Postcolonial engagements are unsettling in large part because they posit challenges to dominant, taken-for-granted systems of power-knowledge, and emphasize historical and continuing violence, domination, and inequality. The dominant and privileged position of the Euro-American world is, as a consequence of postcolonial challenging and questioning, unsettled. When juxtaposed with the colonial experiences of the Arctic, Ireland, Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean appear to be outliers in large part because of an absence of an indigenous human population and an absence of race-based violence. But what postcolonial and other critical scholars have brought to bear in the last decade or so is an insistence that postcolonial ‘unsettlement’ should not exclude apparently remote, empty, and desert-like environments. The Australian historian Tom Griffiths articulates this well with reference to the Australian encounter, building on the earlier scholarship of Christy Collis and Brigid Hains:

For adventurous and scientific Australians of the 20th century, two frontiers beckoned: the white desert and the red heart, the far south and the outback. Adelaide where [the Anglo-Australian explorer Douglas] Mawson gained a lecturing post in his twenties, was sandwiched between these two frontiers; it was a city exposed to the winds of both deserts . . . Mawson thought Antarctica might become an 'Alaska' to Australia's United States, a new frontier for a 'young' nation.³

Mawson's early-twentieth-century musings provide invaluable insights as to how a generation of Australians viewed the geographical and cultural proximity of the polar continent and surrounding Southern Ocean. They also reveal something of the proprietary nature of that geographical imagination. Unlike the 'Alaskan purchase' by the United States from the Russian Empire, however, the acquisition of Antarctica was not facilitated by monetary exchange. Rather it was literally grounded in similarity: regarding Antarctica as if it was a frontier space, albeit without an indigenous human population. The white desert, as Christy Collis noted, proved alluring to Australians already versed in encounters and experiences of the 'red desert'.⁴ As Griffiths perceptively noted, Australians past and present have enjoyed, and even taken comfort in, remarking upon the similarities between the two frontiers. As he opines, 'one claimed by fire and the other by ice – providing vital, formative experiences of the frontier in a settler nation'.⁵ As Adrian Howkins recalled, the US engagement with Antarctica was also informed and inflamed by a frontier imagination, led by explorers such as Richard Byrd who envisaged a colonializing network of 'Little America[s]'.⁶ As Stephen Pyne remarked, 'Byrd envisaged a society in Antarctica and cast himself in the role of colonizer. He was the first man to consider Antarctica as a site for quasi-permanent settlement, not simply as terra incognita awaiting geographical discovery or an arena for individual exploits'.⁷ What a postcolonial perspective offers is reflection on how the frontier is always a project of imaginary and political power. The metaphorical and material power of the 'Antarctic frontier' is not something buried in the past; it continues to underpin contemporary manifestations of polar geopolitics.⁸

We offer three interventions around this term 'postcolonial Antarctic' and one that situates itself within a field of 'critical Antarctic studies'. These interventions signal the analytical productivity of viewing Antarctic geopolitics and discourses through a postcolonial lens. Postcolonial perspectives do not assume the Antarctic to be 'exceptional' or *de novo*. They do not assume that the Antarctic cannot be understood within a broader history and geography of colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonial theorizing co-exists with other forms of critical scholarship on race, sexuality, gender, and nationalism.⁹ This chapter's first intervention addresses settler colonialism(s), which transformed the inhabitation of the polar continent and the exploitation/harvesting of resources, especially in the surrounding oceans and seas. This academic intervention has fundamentally called into question the role of states and associated nationalisms that 'naturalize' Antarctic territory. The second intervention addresses the 1959 Antarctic Treaty and Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) as a form of colonial-scientific governance and questions how it was managed and evaluated in the midst of political decolonization and Cold War geopolitics. The effects and affects are still being felt today in terms of how knowledge claims help manage the continent's exploitation and preservation while preserving original settler colonialism(s). The final intervention explores interest in Asian states' involvement in Antarctica, and how that alerts us to how rival knowledge claims, political practices and long-term ambitions work to shape the understanding and management of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean. What a 'postcolonial Antarctic' does is to alert us to the presence

of what can be termed a ‘polar orientalism’, with regard to Edward Said’s legacy on the legacies of Euro-American colonialism, which challenges the Euro-American polar order. The chapter is, thus, different in style and content from Dodds’s earlier intervention in 2006, which did not posit the existence of a body of work called ‘critical Antarctic studies’.

Before commencing postcolonial analysis of Antarctica, it is crucial to note that postcolonialism does not necessarily entail a righteous pointing of fingers at ‘nasty imperialists’. The term ‘colonial’ is used a great deal in many different ways. It has been used so widely, and to stand for so many things, that it has become at best a vague pejorative portmanteau for ‘powerful and bad’. With the term so negatively loaded, and so diffuse in meaning, affixing it to Antarctica can seem judgmental. Pejorative judgement is not the purpose of this chapter however. The fact that the states and individuals involved in Antarctica today are not nasty and rapacious does not erase the fact of that the bulk of the continent is claimed by a handful of states on the basis of ‘discovery, claim, and occupation’. The fact that Antarctica has no indigenous population makes Antarctic colonialism different from more northern varieties, but it does not diminish it. The point here is that colonialism takes many different forms, and it does not necessarily mean ‘evil empires bent on plunder’. Australia’s massive claim to Antarctica, for example, may have started off in part as a claim to minerals and whale stocks, but it is now focused heavily on environmental protection and understanding. The Australian government may substantiate its polar claim by building bases and funding Australians to inhabit them, but this does not make these people mindless dupes of government, or rapacious colonists. Scientists, artists, researchers, and base support workers, as well as government workers, travel to and work on Antarctica for a number of reasons, most of them because they love the place, they are fascinated by it, and they want to help, protect, and understand it. But love doesn’t cancel colonialism. ‘Colonialism’ here then, is used as an objective framework for understanding the geopolitics, territorial division, and discourses of Antarctica.

NATURALIZED TERRITORY: POSTCOLONIALISM AND CRITICAL ANTARCTIC STUDIES

Postcolonial scholars, in the main, are driven by a commitment to investigate and interrogate the history of colonialism and its aftermaths, and how it persists. Resistant to straightforward-sounding categories such as the ‘end of empire’ or ‘decolonization’, the ‘colonial present’ (in Derek Gregory’s words) is the starting point for further reflection.¹⁰ Challenging amnesiac histories of colonialism, postcolonial approaches are in part about recovering and retrieving those histories and experiences obscured by dominant accounting and auditing of imperial enterprises, while at the same time sounding a warning that colonial institutions, discourses, and practices are part of the here and now and not confined to a distant historical epoch.

In other words, the past is very much in evidence in the present, stubbornly persisting through such categories as hierarchies of knowledge, experience and language, which enable white, Euro-American, and Anglophone worlds to emerge as hegemonic; even if postcolonial and International Relations (IR) scholars are increasingly grappling with the etymologies of ‘China/Asian’ rising powers and its implications for a post-colonial encounter shaped by spatial divisions between North and South.¹¹

The postcolonial unsettles by making visible power-knowledge hierarchies, and encouraging and facilitating the periphery to 'write back', 'to act up' and take its 'proper place' in the making of pasts, presents, and futures. How might such an approach be relevant to the Antarctic, a space not filled with a human history and settlement stretching into the millennia? Some twenty years ago, Lisa Bloom's seminal text *Gender on the Ice* brought Arctic and to a lesser extent Antarctic studies into conversation with critical scholarship on gender, race, and nationalism.¹² Bloom's work emerged at a time when a new generation of scholars reinterpreted narratives of polar exploration and exploitation, but also took fresh approaches to the Antarctic Treaty and the post-Treaty period of international scientific management. Bloom, however, was not the first to use the prism of gender to make sense of the distinctly masculine (and masculinist) encounter with Antarctica. Elizabeth Chipman's account, *Women on the Ice*, offered a welcome intervention in that regard.¹³

In retrospect, we might see this period as the start of a 'critical Antarctic studies', as contemporary social science and humanities-based theorizing was brought to bear on a part of the world that had been defined by appeals to bio-geographical, geographical, historical, and political exceptionalism. A recent edited volume entitled *Critical Arctic Studies* conveys well something similar in the scholarship produced on the communities, ecosystems, and geopolitical relationships within and beyond the northern latitudes.¹⁴ The Antarctic and Southern Ocean were remoter and colder than other parts of the world and were often seen as politically irrelevant because of the 'political anaesthetic' applied in the form of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. Using the analogy of the 'anaesthetic' is a deliberate one because it implies that the 'patient' (that is Antarctica) might well awaken at any time. For some observers, however, the Antarctic was a 'pole apart' because, unlike other areas of the world, this was a region apparently characterized by enduring peace, co-operation, international harmony and even the absence of colonial rivalries.¹⁵ Laurence Gould, a distinguished American polar geologist, claimed, in 1960, that the Antarctic Treaty would take its place alongside the Magna Carta (1215) as indicative of human enlightenment.¹⁶ These common 'exceptionalism' claims have until recently made the application of post-colonial analysis to Antarctica seem irrelevant at best, and at worst, unfair. But Antarctica is part of the world, and in order to understand it, it is crucial that it not be segregated from the complex ideological and geopolitical dynamics by which it is shaped.

This notion of the Antarctic being quite different to other parts of the world manifests itself most clearly in discussions about colonialism, settler or otherwise. Critical Antarctic scholars have demonstrated that Antarctica is and always has been articulated to the power/knowledge configurations that shape the more temperate world. One vein of critical polar scholarship, for example, attends to the role of class in Antarctic history and discourse. In the absence of an indigenous human population, the human history of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean has been one largely narrated through the prism of heroic polar and oceanic exploration, stretching from eighteenth-century maritime voyaging to twentieth-century sledging and flying over the polar interior.¹⁷ It has been one that has concentrated on heroic explorers and what Ben Maddison terms 'the masters' rather than the Antarctic working classes.¹⁸ Maddison showed that sailors, sealers, and whalers were vital elements to the interplay of polar exploration, commerce, and science. If Maddison brought class and colonialism into conversation with one another, Collis used early-twentieth- and mid-century Australian encounters with the Antarctic to

reconsider how the southern oceanic and polar worlds were discovered, encountered, proclaimed, and administered by men as opposed to women. By examining the embodied performances of men such as Douglas Mawson and expeditions such as the 1929–31 BANZARE (British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions), she makes the case for how Antarctic colonialism was enacted through a series of manly performances on the rock, ice, and water of the far south. Critical Antarctic studies have thus worked to foreground and denaturalize the specific discourses, practices, and knowledge configurations which shape human interaction with the polar south.

A postcolonial analysis points out that the legal geopolitics of Antarctica are similarly grounded in existing power dynamics. The bulk of Antarctica is claimed by seven states; of these, five base their claims on ‘discovery, claim, and occupation’. According to international territorial law written during the period of European imperial expansion, a state may make sovereign claim to *terra nullius* – or, land owned by no one – through standardized rituals of discovery. In these rituals, an explorer must first be authorized by the government to act as an agent of territorial claim. Once that authorized body touches *terra nullius*, plants a flag, reads a proclamation of possession, and then returns the documentation of that event in the forms of photographs, journals, and maps; the explorer’s state gains inchoate – or partial – title to that territory. Inchoate title is solidified into full territorial possession once the state permanently occupies its claim;¹⁹ for example, through year-round research stations. Australia, the UK, Norway, New Zealand, and France base their sovereignty claims to Antarctica through this colonial process of legal territorial acquisition, the same process that was used to transform Australia into a British possession. The colonial law of occupation helps to explain why each of these states has at least one permanent research station in its territorial claim,²⁰ and why some states, such as Australia – which claims the largest ‘slice’ of Antarctica – build research stations only in their claimed territories. Understanding the colonial background of these states’ legal claims to Antarctic territory explains the siting of these stations. Postcolonial analysis, then, points out not only the discursive, but also the legal and the material nature of Antarctic geopolitics. To imagine that Antarctica is somehow exempt from colonialism is to miss one of the fundamental dynamics which has shaped human engagements with the continent.

The ‘discovery and occupation’ mode of acquisition echoed a settler colonialism already implemented in Australia. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, expeditions criss-crossing the Australian continent played a considerable role in claiming, colonizing, and inhabiting the coastline and interior. As settler colonists, those white travellers came to stay in environments and landscapes largely thought of as ‘deserts’; not in a literal sense necessarily but in the sense of being thought of as devoid of culture, thinly populated and in need of European ‘improvement’. Settler colonialism involved the creation of infrastructure, institutions, as well as administration and policing – ‘settler sovereignty’. Scholars such as Tom Griffiths have also detected uncanny similarities between ‘interior’ settler colonialism and a polar colonialism. Having attained independence only in 1900, Australia felt the need to emphasize its own national strength (in addition to demonstrating its vitality within the British Empire), and many looked to the Antarctic frontier. Undertaken by men and underscored by a white imperial masculinity, this polar form of settler colonialism was distinctive in terms of the intersection of nationalism, race, and gender, but unquestionably considered possible even in the absence of indigenous native communities.

Although we frequently think of Antarctica as a space in which all human presence is transient, as with other forms of settler colonialism(s), these men ‘came to stay’. While the physical environments and extreme climates posed challenges and certainly unsettled expedition life; institution building, ‘improvement’, and later permanent settlement accompanied such ventures. Postcolonial scholarship into the early phases of Antarctic exploration and colonization are buttressed by a revisionist investigation into ‘Heroic era’ exploration and discovery, which considered how the icy adventures of Scott, Shackleton, and others were caught up in a matrix of colonial logics of acquisition and administration.²¹ Resource exploitation in the form of sealing and whaling contributed to making these territories ‘productive’ and even ‘improved’. As Peder Roberts reminds us in his comparative analysis of British and Scandinavian colonial/imperial engagements with the Antarctic, the management of living resources such as the whale was hugely significant not only in consolidating control over the Southern Ocean and islands such as South Georgia, but also in helping to legitimate and justify the Anglo-Norwegian presence as a managerial necessity – a kind of benevolent administration of non-human actors and environments.²²

It was not until the post-1945 era, however, that settler colonialism entered into what is sometimes dubbed a new phase, the so-called ‘permanent era’. Research stations, like the frontier outposts in other parts of the world, doubled as scientific and administrative hubs. Scientists were often asked to perform multiple roles: as researchers, as administrators, and as legal officers. The scientific station, as Collis suggests, became complicit with the colonization of Antarctica and helped to consolidate the presence of those who were either part and parcel of the claimant community and/or others who reserved their rights with regard to pressing a formal claim to the polar continent.²³

Shirley Scott notes that the seven territorial claims made in the Antarctic by Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom were based on varying rationales and justifications.²⁴ Argentinian and Chilean polar territories were an imperial inheritance from Spain, which had been granted title by a 1493 Papal Bull that encapsulated all lands from the North Pole to the South Pole, west of the Cape Verde Islands. Geological and geographical continuity and proximity helped to bind portions of the Antarctic Peninsula region to the southern tips of their respective continental territories as integral parts of the nation, as did the bull, which dates from the period of Spanish imperial dominance. By way of contrast, the UK and its former Dominions of Australia and New Zealand (in an explicitly imperial British context) based their claims on prior discovery and exploration; later strengthened by resource management, year-round settlement, and scientific mapping and research. In the UK context, the establishment of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) in 1945 after a secret wartime naval operation (codenamed Operation Tabarin) was designed to use mapping, surveying, and meteorology as colonial modes of governance tied to a network of central government departments (including the Colonial Office, the Directorate of Colonial/Overseas Surveys, and the Foreign Office) and institutions (including the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University). Antarctic colonialism, in other words, has never been a continentally homogenous dynamic.

As these colonial modes of governance matured, so the Antarctic became ever more measured, collected, dated, and administered. And as such, the claims also became more firmly established as the legal colonies of their claimants: in the Lockean logic of the

international law of colonial territorial acquisition, surveying and administration of land are core mechanisms of 'effective occupation', particularly in the case of land judged to be largely uninhabitable. The seven claimant states and others, such as the United States and Soviet Union, established a powerful *modus operandi*; a way of framing the Antarctic as a space to be governed through the privileging of science, the work of scientists, and the practices of mapping and surveying, which included radio-echoing investigations of the thickness of the polar ice sheet. This work did not come to pass straightforwardly however. Recent critical scholarship, for example, on the International Geophysical Year (IGY) 1957–8 illustrates well that this relationship between geopolitics, science, and governance was complex, as interested parties engaged with the rationale of IGY while at the same time engaging in hedging strategies.²⁵ Not one of the twelve participants in the Antarctic component of the IGY assumed that there would be a lasting political settlement after the IGY itself. The mere fact that there were only twelve participants says something about how limited that political-scientific engagement was with Antarctica in the 1940s and 1950s.

However limited that engagement was in terms of the states involved, the Antarctic was being bordered, divided, and demarcated as well as measured in terms of height and depth. The permanent research stations helped to indigenize the colonization of the Antarctic as residents began to live there all year round. As individuals they returned eventually to home locations, but collectively the permanent occupation and inhabitation of the Antarctic was a turning point in the human encounter with this southern polar world. Because their claims were not based on discovery and claim of *terra nullius*, Chile and Argentina opted for a different mode of colonization, and set up permanent communities in their Antarctic claims. Their colonization included women, children, and schools, as well as the scientists and administrators deployed by the other claimants. As the human occupation became permanent, greater resources were devoted to measuring not just the physical geographies of the polar continent and its seas but also its birds, penguins, seals, and whales. The indigenous faunal populations of Antarctica were, as with the aboriginal populations elsewhere in the world, ordered and classified with the aid of investment from states. Viewed through a postcolonial perspective, this ostensibly neutral scientific engagement becomes more complex, and the articulation of scientific practice and colonial geopolitics becomes clear.

WHITE PRIVILEGE? ANTARCTICA AS A PROMISED LAND

One of the most powerful orthodoxies regarding the emergence and signing of the Antarctic Treaty revolves around citing and siting the far-sightedness of those who found themselves around the negotiating table between October and December 1959. At play was an intriguing political culture of invisibility and visibility. While the focus was on diplomatic negotiations and the signing ceremony, less attention was given to the element of colonial dispossession. In the opening statements of Antarctic Treaty delegations, the claimant states were quick to emphasize their geographical proximity and historical connection to the continent. What no one dwelt upon was the politics and practices of claiming: the flags planted, the maps drawn, the bases built in the hope of persuading others of the viability of their exclusive claims to the polar continent. As Robert Young

notes, 'the task of the postcolonial is to make the invisible, in this sense, visible' and as such as we might ask what can be done to re-position this pivotal period in Antarctica's geopolitical history.²⁶

Just before the Antarctic Treaty, the politics of Antarctic territorial possession and influence had undergone a moment of tension: in the creation of the post-war 1951 Treaty of Peace between Japan and the allied powers, Australia and New Zealand were insistent that Japan be forced to renounce forever any claims to Antarctic land.²⁷ Like New Zealand and Australia, Japan had mounted a polar expedition, but unlike Australia and New Zealand, it had not commenced occupation or formal claiming of specific polar territory. Curiously, Japan had not demonstrated any intention to encroach upon either Australia's or New Zealand's polar claims; the vehemence of these states' stance on Japanese polar claiming seemed to stem more from a colonial sensibility about which states 'belonged', and which did not, to the exclusive club of Antarctic territorial possession and control.

The Antarctic Treaty conference occurred at a moment of great transformation as European empires were dismantled, and the idea of a 'Third World' gained political currency. The emerging nation-states, some of whom were profoundly altered by partition, such as India and Pakistan, were eager to claim their own space in a world deeply divided by the Cold War. Decolonization was a process rather than an outcome, and 'emergencies' in British-controlled Cyprus, Kenya, and Malaya were significant in the way in which decolonization was performed and staged.²⁸ Frank Furedi has labelled this era (*c.* 1945–1960) as shot through with anxieties about 'white prestige', a term that well-known writers such as Ian Fleming might well have recognized as he brought into existence a super-spy designed to reverse fears of long-term loss of British vitality.²⁹ Further research informed by archival research and the diaries and memoirs of some of the participants at the Antarctic Treaty conference in late 1959 is helping to produce a more nuanced picture of how the treaty was negotiated, signed, and then presented to the wider world, one that highlights the anxieties as well as the ambitions with which its creators wrestled.³⁰

The public presentation of the Antarctic Treaty in December 1959 onwards mattered because of earlier interest in the political order of Antarctica from representatives of newly-independent India. Using archival resources in India and other Commonwealth countries, Sanjay Chaturvedi and Adrian Howkins have shown how India's interest in the current and future status of the polar continent was caught up with broader concerns that decolonized states should engage (and be engaged by others) on 'big ticket' issues such as nuclear disarmament, the status of global spaces such as Antarctica and the oceans, and the role of institutions such as the UN.³¹ Four years earlier, the Bandung Conference initiated the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), with an explicit agenda: on the one hand, to resist Cold War superpower rivalries, and, on the other hand, to agitate and promote for what was later to be termed a new international (political) economic order. India was one of the first members of the NAM.

Chaturvedi in particular has explored why India did not pursue a more radical agenda, one that threw into sharper relief the 'colonial legacy of territorial claims'. When the Indian government expressed a desire to place the 'Question of Antarctica' on to the UN agenda in February 1956, it provoked a hostile reaction from Commonwealth allies and claimant states Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. It also found little favour with the two superpowers and semi-claimants, the United States and the Soviet Union, and other claimants such as Argentina and Chile. India's UN diplomatic representatives

and political leadership did not challenge the territorial claims per se, as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru noted in May 1958:

We are not challenging anyone's rights there [in Antarctica]. But it has become important more specifically because of its possible experimentation of atomic weapons and the like, that the matter be considered by the UN . . . the fact that Antarctica contains many very important minerals – especially atomic energy minerals – is one of the reasons why this area is attractive to various countries. We thought it would be desirable to have a discussion about this in the UN.³²

The future prospect of experimentation and exploitation was used to anticipate an Antarctic future that was clearly deemed undesirable by the Indian leadership – either a nuclear test site and/or yet another site for established powers to extract resources. Alternatively, such a resource-based future might have been more desirable if India was involved with the decision making, especially where it occurred in places that appeared to be on the edge of the world of sovereign states and claims to exclusive authority. Ultimately, however, Britain and its Commonwealth allies clamped down on India's interventions, and any proposals by senior political figures to relinquish territorial claims were quashed.

Although the Indian proposals have received considerable attention, the then leader of the opposition in New Zealand, Walter Nash, offered an arguably more unsettling vision that also deserves scrutiny. In January 1956, Nash proposed that New Zealand should relinquish its claim and posited the notion that the international community should govern the polar continent. Nash's *ballon d'essai* drew alarm and criticism in equal measure both within and beyond New Zealand. Up to that point, Commonwealth and American negotiators had been engaged in talks about how to manage their collective interests, and from the British point of view, how it might be possible to encourage the United States to join the claimant club and thus help restrain the interests of the Soviet Union. Nash changed his tune when elected prime minister, instead working closely with New Zealand's political allies to not only maintain New Zealand's territorial claim, but also to facilitate US access to the Ross Sea sector of Antarctica as part of the IGY.³³ The alarmed response to Nash's initial suggestion signals the powerful commitment to Antarctica as colonial – and not international – space.

Six weeks of intense negotiations produced a short treaty, which used the widely cited Article IV to manage the vexing issue of territorial claims and ownership of the Antarctic. It offered an interregnum resolution: claimant states were not asked to cede their sovereign rights, while non-claimants were not expected to recognize the existence of those claims to Antarctic sovereignty. The semi-claimants, the Soviet Union and the United States, reserved their rights to make future claims and ensured that access to the polar continent was unfettered by territorial claims. Moreover, the treaty's area of application, Article VI, acknowledged that

The provisions of the present Treaty shall apply to the area south of 60° South Latitude, including all ice shelves, but nothing in the present Treaty shall prejudice or in any way affect the rights, or the exercise of the rights, of any State under international law with regard to the high seas within that area. Colonialism is thus enshrined by the Treaty, albeit with the proviso that colonial claims do not have to be universally recognized.

When the Antarctic Treaty parties gathered for their first consultative meeting in Canberra in 1961, it might have appeared that Antarctic colonialism had successfully

evolved into a scientific internationalism. The twelve participants in Washington DC accumulated for themselves an epistemic and legal authority through past exploration, mapping, exploitation, and settlement. They also helped to establish a material culture, which helped to archive and represent that engagement through flags, plaques, sample collection, journals, and photographs. Now they gave themselves a treaty basis for that authority and devised Article IV of the Treaty as a facilitating device, which allowed all the signatories (claimant and non-claimant alike) to defer their colonial ambitions. These acts of deferral were claimed to be enlightened and far-sighted, buttressed by scientific and environmental authority. The evocation of ‘political anaesthesia’ seems appropriate in the manner in which it masked rather than resolved underlying tensions and ambitions, and reinforced unequal power relations and patterns of domination, albeit through scientific-political and technical discourses and practices. The claimant states – their claims based on either ‘discovery and occupation’ or the Papal Bull – continued to lay claim to 90 per cent of the continent, and continued to enjoy privileged roles as core members of the ATS. Subsequent to the Treaty, there have been no new colonial claims to Antarctic territory, but neither did the original ones disappear.

ASIA–ANTARCTIC ENGAGEMENTS AND POLAR ORIENTALISM

With due acknowledgement to Edward Said,³⁴ the term ‘polar orientalism’ is used here to draw attention to how a growing Asian interest and engagement in the Antarctic once provoked (and still provokes) unease from the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty.³⁵ Australia and New Zealand’s intense efforts to ban Japan from Antarctic ownership, by legal means, points to one manifestation of this unease. In Said’s original formulation, orientalism represented three different things – first, a body of thought and practice produced by western academics, journalists, explorers and governments about the Middle East and South West Asia; second, a mode of thought which invents a fundamental distinction between a modern West and a backward Orient; and third, as a form of episteme that authorizes and legitimates Western control and domination over the Middle East. While Said’s intervention has attracted scholarly and political criticism, sympathetic authors have taken his insights to infer that attention should be paid to how scholarly and political structures enable and constrain understandings of other places, peoples and cultures.

One of Said’s critics, Homi Bhabha, offered a rather different view of orientalism and colonial discourses more generally. For Bhabha, orientalism is better conceived as a more ambivalent mode of representation. The colonial view of the native and the colony as interminably backward and primitive is not a stable one. In Bhabha’s reading, the native can also be cast as capable of reform and ‘improvement’. Teasing out the ‘good native’ from the ‘bad native’ becomes, in his reading of British colonial rule in India, a major preoccupation of colonial authorities.³⁶ Colonialism and colonial cultures become defined more by ambivalence and anxiousness rather than by expressions of hegemony and domination.

But even to consider ‘polar orientalism’ demands us to be cautious about how terms like ‘rising Asia’ and ‘Asian century’ are put to strategic use. As Jamie Gillen notes,

Relatedly, a last concern with the Asian Century is the term's clear link to roots in the long established and problematic ontological binary dividing Asia from the West and the Orient from the Occident. Bundling 'Asia' as a super-organic body circulating above the world and driving all manner of patterns of globalization in the current century masks the heterogeneity in and of Asia and packages what is arguably three-fourths of the world's population and its biggest land area into one digestible 'thing'.³⁷

What we can take away from a postcolonial polar orientalism perspective is twin track. The first is to consider further how growing interests from states and regions judged to be largely external to human encounter with Antarctica caused unease and anxiety, provoking a determination by Western states to reinforce their claims to legitimacy and precedence. The second is to investigate further the rise of what we term neo-colonial powers, originating in Asia and elsewhere in the world. A postcolonial sensibility alerts us, as a consequence, to how power and knowledge are put to work in this contemporary Antarctic context.

While the nascent Antarctic Treaty parties managed the Indian interventions in the 1950s, the emerging ATS managed the entry of new members by controlling admission criteria. In the 1980s, amid rising interest in Antarctica's natural resources and demands for a new international economic order, Asian and Latin American states such as China, Brazil, and India became ever more interested in the fate of the polar continent and Southern Ocean. Within a decade, these countries and others from the global South became Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to the ATS, ushering in a distinctly new phase of membership at a time of growing interest and attention to the 'Question of Antarctica'.

In retrospect, we can trace what an orientalist analysis might see as a distinction created between 'bad' and 'good' Asians. The 'good Asians' involved what we might term 'Antarctic Treaty' mimicry (in Bhabha's terms) as new consultative parties such as China and India established and populated research stations and began national programmes of Antarctic research. The second strand ('the bad Asians') was led by Malaysia, a country that had experienced at first hand anti-colonial turbulence, known colloquially as the 'Malayan Emergency', in the 1950s. Spurred on by parallel developments, especially the signing of the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, the Malaysian government *explicitly* questioned the territorial and resource status of the Antarctic continent. It pointed the finger at the Euro-American states, which designed and signed the Antarctic Treaty and questioned their political and scientific authority to speak on behalf of a global community. As Prime Minister Mohammed Mahathir remarked in 1983,

Where there is some merit in the [Antarctic] Treaty, it is nonetheless an agreement between a select group of countries, and does not reflect the true feelings of members of the United Nations or their just claim. A new international agreement is required so that historical episodes are not made into facts to substantiate claims.³⁸

When it reserved the right to a future territorial claim to Antarctica in the 1940s, Japan was a 'bad' Asian state which needed to be legislated into submission through the Treaty of Peace; subsequent to its participation in the IGY and its accession to the Treaty, Japan shifted into the ranks of the 'good'.

From 1983 onwards, Malaysia used the forum of the United Nations General Assembly to raise the 'Question of Antarctica'. In the 1980s, Malaysia and its allies were particularly

concerned about the status of the mineral resource negotiations (CRAMRA 1982–1988) and the implications for the international legal status of the Antarctic. CRAMRA's origins were inspired by earlier living resource negotiations in the 1970s (resulting in CCAMLR) and intended to be a forward-looking intervention designed to provide some 'ground rules' for the possible mineral exploitation of Antarctica. Malaysia contended that the ATS, notwithstanding the recent membership of China and India, remained an exclusive club created by a select group of nations which happened to be involved in the 1957–8 IGY and which were now spearheading the development of a mineral exploitation framework. This all served to remind the critics of the ATS that this select group appeared to be taking major decisions on the future fate of the polar continent and in so doing they were excluding many nations of the global South which, in the 1950s and 1960s, were still involved in anti-colonial struggles and in no position to engage on the matter. Twenty years later, many of these post-colonial states were still caught up in colonial legacies and challenges. The historic involvement of Argentina and Chile, which secured independence in the nineteenth century, proved how unusual their experience was compared to many parts of Africa and Asia. In 1982, pressure from then-developing states had resulted in the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea III, which declared the deep seabed – another *terra nullius* – as the common heritage of mankind (*sic*). Under UNCLOS III, any revenue made from deep seabed mining must be shared with developing states; the deep seabed was no longer simply available for mining by whichever state could get there first. This anti-colonial shift of a significant portion of the Earth's surface and its resources created an unsettling political environment for the handful of states who laid claim to Antarctica and its resources.

The 'Question of Antarctica', as the framing suggested, sought to unsettle the 'answer' provided by the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. It suggested that there was a 'question' that still demanded attention from the wider international community. The reaction within and beyond the ATS was, at the time, intriguing. The ATS membership was hostile to the intervention, and strikingly a claimant state, Australia, was charged with representing the ATS within the UN. Another reaction was to question the 'credentials' of a 'tropical country' such as Malaysia to advocate interest in the 'white continent'. Such crude environmental determinism was not, however, applied to Australia. Others questioned the motivations of the Malaysian government and speculated on a rapacious attempt to grab a share of the alleged resource wealth of Antarctica. The CRAMRA negotiations invited, almost by their mere existence, such speculation about potential resource wealth.

The diplomatic history associated with the 'Question of Antarctica' has been addressed and evaluated by the British historian Peter Beck.³⁹ But in more recent years, Malaysian scholars have written on the country's interest and engagement with Antarctica, including the decision to become a signatory in 2011 after a period of 'constructive engagement' with Consultative Parties.⁴⁰ In 2002, for example, Malaysia was 'invited to observe' the ATCM (Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting) and in 2004 became a member of SCAR (Scientific Commission on Antarctic Research).⁴¹ Within a decade one of the strongest critics of the ATS had become a signatory, embarked on a national Antarctic programme and participated in the 2007/8 IPY. As with Japan, Malaysia appeared to shift into the 'good'.

Malaysia's UN campaigning coincided with a different response to the 'Question of Antarctica'. India and other Asian states such as China were not actively involved in

Antarctic politics and science in the 1960s and 1970s, even if they were concerned with access to the resources of the Southern Ocean and the influence of the region on their weather patterns in the case of the Indian monsoon. However, it is worth bearing in mind that India, as a member of the NAM, was supportive of new proposals in the 1970s to explore how the global community as a whole might manage Antarctica's resources, as well as those of the deep seabed and outer space. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reminded her audiences in the early 1980s that the Indian Ocean linked India to Antarctica, as preparations began in earnest for the first Indian expedition to the far south in 1981.

India's first expedition led to the establishment of its first research station and the start of India's direct engagement with Antarctica. As with earlier European and North American explorers, flags and inscriptions were left on the ice; subsequent interest mounted in being involved with the ATS, as it negotiated living resource management. Indian scientists also began to investigate the geological and meteorological connections between Antarctica and India, and their research proposals echoed earlier work by southern hemispheric states – such as Argentina, Chile, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia – all of which have imagined themselves as 'gateways' to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean, as well as being fundamentally connected to those southerly spaces. The ATS was altered when India and China were admitted, with some haste, as consultative parties. The 'good' Asian in this context was capable of reform and regulation. The decision to embrace both Asian states was unquestionably driven by countervailing pressures, as the NAM and UN members led by other states, notably Malaysia, pressed for greater accountability and challenged the right of the ATS to act on behalf of the wider international community. All of this was further heightened in the 1980s as the ATS found itself under greater scrutiny and criticism from environmental groups, which took issue with the CRAMRA negotiations. Throughout that decade and beyond, the ATS membership was altered in terms of numbers and distribution by the influx of new members from Asia and Latin America, who were prepared to accept the epistemic authority of the ATS.

Ironically, perhaps, China, South Korea, and India's scientific base-building programmes have been cause for some alarm by those original signatories, as they increasingly make their presence felt on the polar continent. China has established four research stations ~~and~~ at the time of writing and has plans for a fifth, leaving commentators in Europe, North America, and Australasia to reflect on not only the polar research budgets for Asian Antarctic activities but also on the long-term implications of this investment. As *The Economist* opined in November 2013,

China is steadily implementing its considerable polar ambitions. Over the past two decades its yearly Antarctic spending has increased from \$20m to \$55m, some three times the country's investment in the Arctic. There are many reasons to stake a claim, not least to bolster national pride and global geopolitical clout. The goal of the current five-year polar plan, according to Chen Lianzeng, the deputy head of China's Arctic and Antarctic administration, is to increase the country's status and influence, in order to protect its 'polar rights'.⁴²

One interesting reaction was to be detected in Australia when it was announced that China had established a station in 2008 at Dome A, an area in the 'Australian Antarctic Territory' that was so remote that it took repeated land-based attempts to reach that part of Antarctica. The underlying reaction appeared to be one of shame and disappointment that Australia was not in the position to claim that particular Antarctic 'first'. A year

before, the Australian commentators Anthony Bergin and Marcus Haward released a pamphlet entitled 'Frozen Assets: Securing Australia's Antarctic Future', which seemed to coincide with a broader exhibition of what Dodds and Hemmings termed 'frontier vigilantism' – an imaginative geography that positioned Chinese, Indian, and South Korean Antarctic activity as worrisome and in the Australian case, threatening to their interests in the Australian Antarctic Territory.⁴³ Under the terms of the Antarctic Treaty and associated legal instruments, such as the Madrid Protocol, the geographical location of research stations is subject to contestation solely on the grounds of scientific value and environmental impact. Claimant states cannot, for instance, object to the construction of a new base simply because it happens to be in their claimed territory.

Australia and other claimants have, nevertheless, clearly reacted with alarm as larger states, such as China, have located research stations around the Antarctic in a manner reminiscent of the United States and Soviet Union/Russia – in other words, a form of what we might think of as colonial mimicry or recolonization. China, India, and South Korea all participate in Antarctic place-naming and use exactly the same sorts of nationalistic, patriotic, and commercial sponsorship and symbols that European and North American states deployed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the Australian media, there is no shortage of articles complaining that the AAT (Australian Antarctic Territory) is vulnerable to this external intervention and that the consensus-based ATS is insufficiently robust to challenge such opportunism on the part of newer members. The 2014 Australian Senate Committee's report on Australia's future role in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean recommended further investment and involvement in the region. The report also reflected on what it termed 'emerging players' and noted:

Much has been written and said in recent years about the increasing interest of 'new players' in the Antarctic region. A number of emerging nations including China, India, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea are rapidly increasing their investments and activities in the region, giving rise to speculation about the nature of their interests, and concern about the declining influence of the traditional Antarctic powers. In particular, the growing profile of China as an Antarctic actor was mentioned frequently to the committee. China joined the Antarctic Treaty in 1983, but its engagement was relatively modest until this century. In the last ten years China has significantly increased its investment in the Antarctic region, including more than doubling spending on Antarctic science and logistics, and building new bases on the continent itself, including in the Australian Antarctic Territory. This has provoked public soul-searching in Australia with fears expressed that the country was being 'over-taken' and 'overwhelmed' by a country with greater infrastructural reach and resource need.⁴⁴

Alongside other states, such as South Korea and Japan, this contributes to a broader concern of a 'rising Asia' gradually becoming more dominant in the overall governance of the Antarctic.

The concern over investment, spending, and interests has also manifested itself in debates and controversies regarding marine protection areas (MPA). Australia, New Zealand, the United States and other original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty routinely note their concern about the reluctance of Russia, China and the Ukraine to agree to the establishment of marine-protected areas in Eastern Antarctica and the Ross Sea. A longer-standing antagonism exists between Australia and New Zealand and Japan and its 'scientific whaling' in the Southern Ocean. Russia and China have been accused of being intent on prospecting for mineral resources, despite the prohibition contained

within the Madrid Protocol. What is apparent is that the status accorded to the value of consensus in the ATS is changing – in previous generations ‘consensus’ would have been viewed as something to be celebrated; now it is more likely to invite cynicism about how countries can exercise a ‘veto’ and thus prevent consensus from coagulating.

All of the above feeds a southerly polar orientalism, which is fundamentally suspicious of East Asian states, Ukraine and Russia, and their motivations for being involved in Antarctic and Southern Ocean activities. Aspiring countries such as Belarus (which has explicitly noted the natural resource value of Antarctica) and Iran are placed into a similar category, with their interest in Antarctica deemed intrinsically suspicious. At the same time, claimant states continue to act in a manner that evokes a colonial-era past, for instance Britain’s renaming of a large part of the Antarctic Peninsula as ‘Queen Elizabeth Land’ in December 2012 in tribute to the Queen’s fiftieth year as sovereign of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. Other claimant states have long taken an interest in resource management, and sought preferential access to fishing grounds in the Southern Ocean. So while Europeans and Australasians are urged to remain vigilant, we might wonder how unique East and South Asian states are when it comes to shoring up their interests in Antarctica. If anything, those newer members have simply copied the example of older member states; the difference being that their science budgets can now exceed that of the UK (in the case of South Korea), while India carried out its own expedition to the South Pole in 2010.

Australia has been particularly aggressive in its territorial management of what it claims as its sovereign oceans in the polar south. Since the early 2000s Australia has vigorously resisted Japanese whaling, not globally, but only in the Antarctic waters that it claims as its own. Under the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, Japan is not obliged to recognize Australia’s claims to sections of the Southern Ocean, and so, in another enactment of colonial mimicry, it treats those waters as unowned high seas and conducts whaling in them. Although it was a whaling nation itself until 1978, Australia has reacted with outrage – both diplomatically and in media discourse – to the presence of Japanese whalers in ‘its’ Antarctic waters. Despite its membership of the ATS, and despite the legality of its polar whaling, in Australian politics and popular discourse, Japan has again shifted into the register of the ‘bad’ Asian states in Antarctica.

In December 2013, the Chinese icebreaker *Xue Long* effected a rescue that offers an interesting concluding vignette. A stranded Russian vessel, containing a group of sailors, scientists, civilians, and journalists associated with the ‘Spirit of Mawson’ Expedition, was trapped in sea ice. The expedition was attempting to recreate the scientific work and travel of the 1911–13 Australasian Antarctic Expedition, led by Douglas Mawson. Previous efforts to rescue the Spirit of Mawson expedition had failed owing to inclement weather and sea ice. Although it was already involved with the construction of a fourth Antarctic research station, the Chinese icebreaker diverted its mission in order to rescue the passengers with its helicopter. The passengers were eventually transferred to an Australian polar vessel and returned to Hobart. What struck some western commentators in the aftermath was that China had effected the rescue as opposed to original Antarctic Treaty members, such as Australia or France. Yet the incident was not unique: three years earlier, a South Korean icebreaker rescued the crew of a Russian fishing vessel, which was operating in the Ross Sea region. So perhaps, once again, we have an outdated perception of exceptionality here, labouring under the misapprehension that

Asian involvement and expertise is somehow unusual or strange in an Antarctic and Southern Ocean setting.

CONCLUSIONS

The ‘post-colonial Antarctic’ as a term draws attention to the colonial histories and geographies that shape polar imaginaries and practices.⁴⁵ There is no one ‘post-colonial Antarctic’; rather it means of recognizing that colonialism is never fixed in the past, and that the past must be invoked to make sense of the present. As Derek Gregory has noted, a postcolonial approach or sensibility helps us to understand the enduring ‘colonial present’, including the role of colonial imaginaries, knowledges and practices. Such an approach also reminds us that the division of the polar continent into seven rival territorial claims and an unclaimed sector is artificial and arbitrary. Colonial powers have worked hard, however, to diminish that sense of being highly artificial by emphasizing their settling labour, and by framing their colonization efforts as objectively scientific. The seven claimants, despite repeated attempts to colonize and settle their polar claims, have never enjoyed exclusive rights or sovereign control. The United States and Russia continue to reserve their rights to make territorial claims in the future, while rejecting all existing claims. Others, particularly China, India, South Korea, and Brazil, have also sought through their investment and research stations and related infrastructure to make their presence felt on the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean. However, while Euro-American countries have located their investment and presence in longer traditions of exploration, science, and discovery, Asian engagement is more often than not framed in explicitly resource-strategic terms. China’s research station programme, for example, feeds into a wider canvas characterized by anxieties about China’s investment and involvement with other continents, especially Africa.⁴⁶ All of which appears breathtaking, given the extraordinary exploitation of Antarctica’s living resources, such as seals and whales, by colonial European powers and the United States.

A postcolonial analysis of Antarctica is alert to not only the legacy of the colonial past on contemporary power and knowledge structures, but also to how neo-colonial powers might be challenging earlier Euro-American forms of domination. Do the debates and controversies over marine-protected areas in the Southern Ocean point to competing colonial visions? For claimant states, such as Australia and New Zealand, environmental-scientific authority is invoked for ensuring that the large swathes of ‘their waters’ are managed in the name of stewardship and sovereignty. Others, such as China, Russia, and Ukraine, push an alternative agenda, which is eager to control and harvest the Southern Ocean through the prism of resource exploitation while at the same time challenging the dominant Euro-American conservation/rational use model, as espoused by CCAMLR. The future fate of marine-protected areas might well offer pointers as to whether it is possible to generate new forms of co-operative and fair ventures in the Antarctic.

Postcolonial Antarctic scholars might wish to think further about how the future governance of the Antarctic connects with a broader conversation about whether it is possible to imagine, think about, and practice a different kind of politics and governance for the polar continent and Southern Ocean. An alternative postcolonial framing of, and for, southern spaces would be attentive to the enduring presence of dominant frameworks,

while mindful of alternative voices and bodies of knowledge. Geophysical change in Antarctic ice sheets and shifts in the biology of the Southern Ocean can and do play a part in generating new geopolitical concerns and visions, ranging from renewed interest by claimant states to consolidate their resource and territorial interests to non-claimants demanding that their interests and rights are respected. Tracing out the postcolonial in the Antarctic remains a necessary work in progress, as we reflect further on the different ways in which the politics of the Antarctic manifests itself.

NOTES

1. Sidaway, Woon and Jacobs 2014.
2. Gilmartin and Berg 2007.
3. Griffiths 2011, 6 and 7; Collis 2000; Hains 2002.
4. Collis 2010.
5. Griffiths 2011, 7.
6. Howkins 2013.
7. Pyne 2003.
8. Imamura 2015.
9. Glasberg 2012; Hemmings et al. 2015.
10. Gregory 2004.
11. Raghuram et al. 2014.
12. Bloom 1993.
13. Chipman 1996.
14. Westerdahl et al. 2015.
15. Lewis 1965; Beck 1986.
16. Gould 1960.
17. Fogg 2002; Walton 2013.
18. Maddison 2014.
19. Triggs 1986.
20. Hemmings, Rothwell and Scott 2012.
21. Glasberg 2012.
22. Roberts 2011.
23. Collis 2007.
24. Scott 2011.
25. Howkins 2009; Powell 2009; Collis and Dodds 2009.
26. Young 2012, 23.
27. Scott 1999.
28. Craggs 2014.
29. Furedi 1994; Parker 2014.
30. Dodds 2009.
31. Chaturvedi 2013; Howkins 2008.
32. Chaturvedi 2013, 312.
33. Hemmings 2012.
34. Said 1978; 1993.
35. Dodds and Nuttall 2015.
36. Bhabha 1994.
37. Gillen 2016.
38. Barber and Selby 1983, 471.
39. Beck 2016.
40. Hamzah 2011.
41. Tepper and Haward 2005.
42. *The Economist* 2013.
43. Bergin and Haward (2007), and for a reaction, Dodds and Hemmings (2009).
44. Australian Senate 2014.
45. Hemmings 2012.
46. Brady 2015.

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