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Post-colonial Antarctica: an emerging engagement

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ABSTRACT. This paper outlines an emerging post-colonial engagement with Antarctica. Although 'post-colonialism' is a term that covers a great diversity of theoretical and political perspectives, it is generally agreed that it is united in its critical evaluation of colonialism and associated practices. Antarctica, thus far, has not attracted a great deal of attention from post-colonial scholars. By drawing on the limited engagement with Antarctica thus far, it is proposed that there are the intellectual resources for a deeper interrogation of polar colonialism and associated practices such as territorial claiming and base construction. The paper is intended to be a starting point for a more sustained and potentially unsettling engagement with post-colonial Antarctic projects.

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Introduction

If post-colonial studies are concerned *inter alia* with investigating and challenging the varied geographies of colonialism (and associated practices of knowledge production), then it is perhaps strange that so little attention has been devoted to Antarctica (for example, Sidaway 2000). Since 1908, a range of states — Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom — have claimed parts of the continent and surrounding ocean. In the case of Britain, for example, the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) is the largest remaining element of the imperial portfolio re-branded in 1999 as Overseas Territories (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1999). There is also a so-called 'Pacific Ocean' sector to consider, not least because it is the only substantial part of the Earth's terrestrial surface unclaimed by any one state. Even if one remains attentive to the danger of regional special pleading, it is a significant lacuna with regards to a post-colonial engagement with Antarctica.

The polar continent and surrounding Southern Ocean present a significant opportunity to think again about what Derek Gregory (2004) has termed the 'colonial present.' Scholars working in polar studies have been seemingly slow and/or reluctant to embrace the intellectual terrain occupied by post-colonial literatures and practices (with exceptions, for example, Collis 1999; Haines 2002). By way of contrast, perspectives from international law, environmental politics, geopolitics, and cultural history have unquestionably shaped contemporary Antarctic and Southern Ocean studies (for example, Elliott 1994; Chaturvedi 1996; Rothwell 1996; Dodds 1997; Joyner 2002; Jabour-Green and Nicol 2003; Jones 2004; Scott 2004). The neglect has been two-way, as much of the analysis that exists within post-colonial studies concentrates on either contesting the intellectual and political domination of the Euro-American world or eliciting critical perspectives from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Herr and Davis edited one important collection of essays bucking such a trend in 1994 when they brought together a range of Asian and non-Asian scholars to comment on Antarctic politics and resources (Herr and Davis 1994). More importantly, the Indian scholar, Sanjay Chaturvedi recognised that his analysis of the polar regions needed to acknowledge a wider intellectual canvas: 'My argument is that penetration of both polar regions by the imperial-colonial forces needs to be seen as an extension of a similar but much larger process emanating, at least to begin with, from Europe, and unfolding differently in various parts of the world' (Chaturvedi 1996: 39).

This paper is organised into three major sections. Initially, it considers the emerging research-led literature, which is creating a post-colonial research agenda for Antarctic-based studies. The neglect of Antarctica within the existing literature on post-colonialism is briefly considered alongside that development. The paper then reconsiders two moments in the history of Antarctic politics that have tended to be treated in a narrow manner (as challenging the political hegemony of dominant polar parties) rather than as significant aspects of post-colonial resistance. These might be summarised by reference to India's attempt to raise the issue of Antarctica in the United Nations in the 1950s and Malaysia's campaign regarding the 'Question of Antarctica' in the 1980s (for a summary, see Beck 2004). One of the reasons for this re-assessment is to demonstrate that there are ample opportunities to re-cast even those areas within Antarctic studies that appear to have a more self-evident colonial/post-colonial dimension. It also helps to identify more clearly the continuities and legacies of the colonial past

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(Gregory 2004: 7–8). Finally, the paper concludes with an appeal for further investigation for the purpose of enabling the cross-fertilisation of polar studies and post-colonial literatures. The overall purpose is to consider whether a more trans-national production of scholarship would help enrich intellectual and political interest in Antarctica (Robinson 2003: 4).

Post-colonialism and Antarctica: a geographical lacuna?

During the last 10 years, geographical research has concentrated on critically examining the cultures of imperial exploration, mapping, and administration. The roles of geographical societies and agencies (such as the Royal Geographical Society) have been scrutinised with regard to the production of knowledge and imperial networks, which contributed to the colonisation of spaces outside European and North American 'heartlands' (Ednay 1997; Driver 2001; Lester 2001). In a supposedly post-colonial era, it is perhaps unsurprising that many geographers have sought not only to expose these colonial connections but also to re-affirm a determination to 'decolonise' the geographical imagination and associated areas relating *inter alia* to 'Third World' development (Blunt and Willis 2000; Escobar 1995; Simon 1998; Power 2003; Robinson 2003). In this sense, then, the term 'post-colonial' does not refer to the ending of European imperialism in the post-1945 period; rather it highlights how systems of colonial domination (whether in the form of knowledge production or the prevailing geopolitics of international order) persist in the contemporary era.

Post-colonialism is an extremely diverse category of scholarship, even if there is general agreement regarding influential authors (such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha) and its general willingness to contest the enduring presence of colonial power (Loomba 1998; Gregory 2004). Even if it is acknowledged that differences remain within that body of scholarship, Antarctica presents something of a challenge to those who contemplate colonial legacies and post-colonial exchanges and opportunities. Unlike the so-called 'dots on the map' such as the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar (Dodds 2002; Lambert 2005), the colonial imprint on Antarctica is frequently overlooked. The continent and surrounding ocean constitute an immense geographical space, but many accounts of the British Empire and associated decolonisation nonetheless neglect to mention — let alone engage with — the resistant colonial condition of Antarctica (for example, Darwin 1988; Butler 2002).

Post-colonial studies generally tend to concentrate on periods and places such as the nineteenth century and India or countries where a legacy of imperialism and colonialism created artificial borders and displaced peoples. This is perhaps understandable when post-colonial writers such as the late Edward Said (1978, 2001) wrote against a personal backdrop of colonial domination by the British in Palestine and Egypt. But a lack of indigenous human population alongside a harsh climate and remote location may unwittingly contribute further to a view either that Antarctica does not present a particularly complex or interesting case of the 'colonial condition' or that terms such as 'decolonisation' have no intellectual purchase here. As David Lambert recently noted with reference to Gibraltar, this perhaps suggests that post-colonial scholars do not recognise sufficiently that decolonisation is a complex and contested term and not simply reducible to anti-colonial liberation (Lambert 2005). But it also raises the issue as to whether post-colonial studies are too preoccupied with a linear account of liberation in certain countries and has thus taken to heart that 'Post colonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority . . . Post colonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of East, West, North and South' (Homi Bhabha cited in King 2000: 2–3).

In the Southern Hemisphere — and particularly in countries relatively proximate to the Antarctic, such as Argentina, New Zealand, and South Africa — the dialogue regarding Antarctica is frequently intellectually and geographically parochial (Dodds and Yusoff 2005). A great deal of scholarship on, for instance, New Zealand settler colonialism, simply does not consider these countries' entanglements with Antarctica as part of their analysis of metropolitan geographical imaginations (for example, Belich 2001). Likewise, an important element in the development of Argentina was the colonial possession of Antarctica, yet very few scholars have been prepared to critically evaluate Argentina's colonising behaviour (for an exception see Escude 1988). By contrast Australia's post-1780s colonial development has been subjected to a far more sustained examination of the post-colonial dimension, even if it is recognised that the label 'post-colonial' serves a purpose in highlighting the awkward relationship between the indigenous and the non-indigenous population (Collis 1999; Hains 2002).

There are five good reasons for a critical post-colonial study relating to the Antarctic, and each deserves to be elaborated upon in detail. The intention is to create a starting point for more detailed research and analysis on all these themes.

Antarctica and the lack of an indigenous human population

Antarctica does not possess an indigenous human population. Ever since the first human contact with the continent and surrounding islands, visitors — whether scientists, explorers, or tourists — have been temporary in nature. Very few people spend more than three years on the continent at any one time and usually in the capacity as research scientists or logistical personnel working for agencies such as the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and or the National Science Foundation (NSF). Most research stations have been around for no more than 60 years. The International Geophysical Year of 1957–58 (IGY) provided

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a powerful catalyst for station building, as 12 nations sought to devote 18 months to intensive research in the polar region. Scientists became a temporary social microcosm scattered around the Antarctic's coastline and forbidding interior. This population has expanded alongside the development of the Antarctic Treaty System membership and the occasional presence of other stations, such as the one (World Park) created by Greenpeace and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) in the late 1980s.

In the absence of an indigenous human population, Antarctica immediately creates a rather different context for any discussion of colonialism and or post-colonialism. Unlike India, the Caribbean, British settler colonies, and Africa, the question of a colonised population engaged in anti-colonial resistance or Third World nationalisms does not arise. However, it does not follow that Antarctica is incapable of 'hosting' a critical evaluation of colonialism and associated practices such as mapping, surveying, and the subjugation of territory and non-human populations. Indeed this general reluctance to consider Antarctica within the pantheon of post-colonial criticism tells much about the ignorance of mainstream scholars about polar colonialism and perhaps hints at a certain ambivalence for a distant and poorly understood 'wasteland.'

A number of scholars have avoided the temptation to rule Antarctica out of an engagement with post-colonial criticism (for example Collis 1999; Glasberg 2000). Politically, the absence of an indigenous human population was an important factor because it enabled claimant states to contend that certain proposals to declare Antarctica an international trust territory in the 1950s were inappropriate, because in the words of one Australian briefing paper the only possible beneficiaries were the resident penguins (Dodds 1997: 65). The Antarctic Treaty was an attempt not only to manage political relations between interested parties but also an extraordinary suspension of territorial assertion. The territorial claims of Britain and six other parties were considered irrelevant (certainly by the non-claimants, including the United States and the Soviet Union) for the purpose of scientific co-operation. The colonial map was effectively 'frozen' for the duration of the Treaty — a 'holding pattern' was established. A short section of the Antarctic Treaty (Article IV) was carefully drafted to ensure that transition. But it also facilitated a form of historical amnesia, which ensured that Treaty members would neither challenge nor substantiate those territorial claims.

Antarctica was not simply a stage on which men (and it has been men in the main) and their nations either carved out claims to the continent and or initiated scientific programmes. The polar continent was and is a lively and dynamic place that could and did call into question attempts to settle and colonise. The ice prevented ships from sailing just as the weather often prevented airplanes from flying. Volcanic eruptions and unstable ice formations occasionally consumed bases. The lack of an indigenous human population did not mean that polar colonists did not face genuine adversity. While this does not in itself amount to some kind of anti-colonial resistance, it does indicate the hostile physicality of Antarctica itself. By the time the 12 parties gathered in Washington in October 1959, thousands of days had been devoted to establishing and maintaining a presence on the ice as a consequence of the International Geophysical Year 1957–58.

Antarctica and settler colonies

Post-colonial studies of British settler colonies such as Australia and New Zealand, as well as Latin American states such as Argentina and Chile, frequently marginalise Antarctica. If Antarctica is conceptualised as empty space and devoid of human population, then perhaps it is understandable that it is neglected with reference to wider discussions of state building, settler colonialism, and territorial expansion. This is fundamentally misguided, and arguably a great deal more attention needs to be devoted by historians of empire and colonialism to the histories and geographies of 'benign settlement,' including Antarctica (Paisley 2003: 1).

In the case of Argentina, which emerged in the nineteenth century as a consequence of anti-Spanish resistance, the country's incorporation of Patagonia (conceived as *terra nullis*) provided important clues as to how this country approached apparently 'empty spaces.' The so-called 'Conquest of the Desert' in the 1870s and 1880s was a misnomer. A range of indigenous Indian communities with distinct social networks in fact inhabited the 'Desert.' It was politically expedient for the Argentine state authorities in Buenos Aires to conceive the region as 'desert-like' and culturally many contemporaries conceived the conquest as indicative of a white civilisation presiding over 'Indian savages' (Dodds 1993). There are parallels with the experience of the United States and its nineteenth-century development of the frontier.

When President Peron initiated the conquest and occupation of Argentine Antarctic Territory in the 1940s and 1950s, he used anti-colonial rhetoric to castigate the British for their prior occupation of the Antarctic Peninsula and the neighbouring Falkland Islands. Even if it appeared to be a slight of hand, the notion that Argentina was simply occupying a proximate territory needs to be contested. The Republic employed military men armed with surveys, maps, and flags in order to colonise Antarctica. As with the 'Conquest of the Desert,' geographers and surveyors played their part in aiding and abetting this occupying force. Alongside polar occupation, Peron also organised the nationalisation of the British-financed railways in Argentina as part of a broader colonial purging process in the late 1940s. The subsequent occupation of the Argentine Antarctic Territory, as Carlos Escude (1988, 1992) has explained, was also carried out alongside a concerted campaign to ensure that Argentine citizens were informed of the Republic's associations with the Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding islands.

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Within Australian polar studies, a new generation of scholars such as Christy Collis and Elizabeth Leane are critically interrogating Australia's occupation of Australian Antarctic Territory and how that might be understood alongside the post-eighteenth century development of the Commonwealth of Australia (Collis 1999; Leane 2003). As a country founded on the misapplication of *terra nullis*, these authors have revealed how certain ideologies (such as the notion of territory as simply a blank space) and practices (for example, international law, geopolitics, architecture) enabled the colonisation and pacification of both spaces — Australia and Antarctic. The construction of research stations in Antarctica replicated earlier episodes of colonisation (Carter 1987). Both territorial spaces experienced intense investment in mapping and surveying as part of claim consolidation. However, this does not mean that these strategies of occupation have not encountered resistance, whether from the indigenous populations of Australia or the Soviet Union in the case of Antarctica. In the 1950s, the Australian government of Robert Menzies was concerned that the growing Soviet Antarctic programme posed a major threat to claims to the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT). From the point of a view of a post-colonial Antarctica, the most significant challenge is to refuse to endorse the notion that the Australian Antarctic Territory should be seen as anything less than intimately connected to the long-standing appropriation of territory and resources by white Australians.

These kinds of post-colonial perspectives fail to recognise (in a positive sense) the Antarctic as inherently distinctive. Relative geographical isolation in combination with the supposedly palliative presence of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty is no reason to assume that the desire to claim and administer portions of the continent were somehow profoundly different from earlier episodes of occupation and settlement in more northerly territories. Such an intervention would also call into question the claims made by a generation of scholars and political leaders regarding 'national histories,' which usually feature a celebration of Antarctic exploration and scientific achievement. A pan-settler colonial perspective would challenge those national and exclusive claims regarding Argentine Antarctic Territory, Australian Antarctic Territory, Chilean Antarctic Territory, and the Ross Dependency.

Antarctica and science

The role of science and the production of scientific knowledge (especially when funded by national governments and their specialist agencies) have to be considered essential elements in the colonisation of Antarctica. The burgeoning research in cultural histories of science allows a better understanding of the inherent complexities of Antarctic science. As David Livingstone recently noted, the 'hidden geographies' of the field station, laboratory, and research ship all play their part in making science possible (Livingstone 2003: 15). In the case of Antarctica, the research station was (and remains) instrumental in enabling the creation of scientific knowledge and the conferment of political authority (Collis and Stevens 2003). The station provides an essential platform for information to travel back to, in Bruno Latour's phrase, 'centres of calculation' such as the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) in Hobart, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) in Washington DC (Latour 1987). Field practices such as mapping and surveying were essential in helping to create a sense of confidence and reliability with regards to knowledge production and exchange, and such institutions helped to order and amass that information.

If science is seen as much as a cultural practice as a description of research (and associated techniques/philosophies of knowledge), then it becomes easier to contemplate the performing role of practices such as fieldwork. Agencies such as the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS, created in 1945) helped to regulate and standardise fieldwork in the Falkland Islands Dependencies (the British Antarctic sector). FIDS surveyors and geologists were instructed in various techniques associated with mapping and survey and trained to move information from the field to the research station and thereafter onto London and elsewhere in the UK for processing. A whole network of informational processing was created involving the universities, SPRI, the Foreign Office, and the Directorate of Colonial Surveys. Rather than merely accepting that science and associated practices were innocent accomplices, it needs to be recognised that science helped and continues to help to cement the human presence in the Antarctic and the ways in which information is moved from the field to the government agency. Without such movement, Britain's foothold in the Antarctic would not have been possible. Apropos the latter, officials connected to the British Treasury routinely demanded to see 'progress' in the forms of maps and surveys throughout the 1940s and 1950s (see Dodds 2002).

As has been widely noted, the role of science is critical in facilitating the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) (for example, Stokke and Vidas 1996). However, social scientists have devoted less attention to how these scientific practices contribute to the consolidation of geopolitical power. This might require, for example, a more detailed analysis of the actual practices surrounding the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings and the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). As the Treaty parties have improved accessibility for observers, including ASOC, so the opportunities to disseminate scientific knowledge have improved even if the knowledge production is concentrated within particular states and regions. This is important because scientific endeavour has enabled states such as the United States and English-speaking allies – Britain, Australia and New Zealand — to shape political agendas and crucially to disadvantage states such as India, which do not have the capacity to mobilise comparable levels of scientific/logistical investment and expertise. Within the cohort of Antarctic

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Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs), there are important differences relating to capacity and subsequent political influence.

Antarctic Treaty

The Antarctic Treaty has escaped a critical scrutiny with regards to the manner in which it 'rewarded' colonial occupation and annexation. While it might seem churlish to criticise the Treaty in the context of Cold War antagonisms and Anglo–Argentine–Chilean tension, scholars have been reluctant to tackle the organising foundations of the Treaty above and beyond the legal and political factors involved. The widely noted Article IV, which 'froze' territorial claims for the duration of the Treaty, is more than a careful diplomatic solution to the thorny issue of claimant and non-claimant states. In effect, it rewarded colonial appropriation. Britain and the other claimant states were condoned as colonial powers for the sake of enabling agreement with others such as the United States and the Soviet Union who wanted to reserve the right to make their own claims in the future. Only New Zealand, as one of the most financially pressed claimant states, raised the issue of relinquishing their claim in 1956. Prime Minister Nash's commitment to internationalism notwithstanding, this proposal was swiftly aborted after Britain and other Commonwealth allies persuaded the country to drop such a 'radical' proposal, although it was briefly re-visited in the mid 1970s. Twenty-five years after the first expression of interest in broader internationalisation, Malaysia and other critics of the ATS returned to this issue and used the United Nations General Assembly to publicly debate the merits of changing the political-geographical condition of Antarctica.

The Antarctic Treaty and its associated zone of application helped to consolidate a particular vision of the continent and surrounding ocean. As a consequence, a distinct territory was demarcated (below 60°S) and access to the Antarctic controlled in part by a series of mechanisms, understandings, and accompanying practices usually associated with scientific and logistical behaviour. A number of writers have captured the significance of the Antarctic Treaty in promoting a particular view of the continent and Southern Ocean even if it is clear that the parties attached to the Antarctic Treaty System have not all agreed on zones of application, including the subsequent incorporation of CCAMLR in the 1980s (Herr and Hall 1989; Hemmings 1990).

Antarctica was declared a zone of peace, and was also identified as a place for scientific investigation and international co-operation. Besides the benefit of relative isolation and the high cost of specialised vessels, the original Treaty signatories were also able to constrain full Treaty membership by demanding that new members carry out 'substantial scientific research.' While member states of the United Nations could sign and therefore accede to the Treaty, full membership was dependent upon substantial investment in science, usually in the form of the creation of a permanent research station. As Chaturvedi noted: 'In contrast to the obligation of the latter [acceding states] to carry out "substantial scientific research activity" in Antarctica, understood to mean the establishment of scientific stations or the dispatch of scientific expeditions (Article IX), the original signatories are not obliged to do so' (Chaturvedi 1996: 112). New members were, therefore, expected to replicate (or mimic as some post-colonial critics would contend) the colonising behaviour of earlier parties, perhaps even more so given that some of the original signatories such as Belgium did not carry out substantial scientific research in the aftermath of the IGY. In other words, complicity was essential even if Article IV proclaimed that all this kind of occupational activity had a suspended quality with regards to future territorial claims. This model of engagement did not fundamentally alter until the involvement of the Netherlands as an ATCP in 1990 when scientific credentials were established via co-operation with existing states and their stations.

The role of the Antarctic Treaty and the international regime that was created following its ratification in 1961 remains significant. Although much discussion has ensued about its political and legal effectiveness and legitimacy, perhaps less attention has been paid to the wherewithal and structures for the production of knowledge. The structure of the ATS 'rewards' those Consultative Parties that have demonstrated 'substantial scientific research' with full voting rights. The power–knowledge nexus is perhaps most clearly witnessed in the annual meetings of the ATCPs, which are overwhelmingly dominated by English-speaking parties with established histories and geographies of engagement with Antarctica. This is consolidated by the role played by specialist agencies/bodies such as SCAR, the Committee on Environmental Protection, and the Scientific Committee of CCAMLR, which further reinforces the connection between scientific knowledge production and political influence and decision-making.

Antarctica and the United States

The activities of the United States deserve critical elaboration because the unwillingness to see this country as a 'polar colonist' (Klotz 1990) may also be symptomatic of a broader malaise (see King 2000; Pease 2000; Johnson 2004; Park and Schwarz 2005). As Karen Morin has shown with her analysis of women travellers in the nineteenth century, America is frequently excluded from critical discussions of colonial practices except when mention is made of the occupation and annexation of the Philippines, Cuba, and a series of scattered islands in the Pacific Ocean (Kaplan and Pease 1993; Morin 2002). Created in the aftermath of an anti-colonial revolt in the eighteenth century, it is as if countries that have repelled colonial occupation (such as Argentina and Chile) are incapable of acting in a colonising manner (King 2000: 3–4). This contention has been shown to be tendentious. Jenny Sharpe's (1995) essay in the journal *Diaspora* posed the question: is the United States post-colonial?

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Amy Kaplan has contended that, 'Most current studies of imperial and postcolonial culture, however, tend to omit discussions of the United States . . . The history of American imperialism strains the definition of the post-colonial, which implies a temporal development (from 'colonial' to 'post') that relies heavily on the spatial co-ordinates of European Empires, in their formal acquisition of territories and the subsequent history of decolonization' (Kaplan 1993: 17).

Part of the answer to that question of 'reluctance' would involve consideration of United States land purchases and the colonisation of the North American Midwest (with its associated costs in terms of indigenous Indian losses of life), which was not only violent but also similar in nature to other occupations, such as affecting Patagonia in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, it would also necessitate reflection on how the United States embarked on a strategy of global (and neo-imperial) domination in the Third World during the Cold War. Countless countries in the Caribbean and Latin America could point to the cost of American intervention, invasion, and de-stabilisation — Dominican Republic in 1965 and Chile in 1973, for example. Yet the same administrations were eager to end European colonial domination, as witnessed by the 1941 Atlantic Charter and events such as Suez in 1956, when the Eisenhower government forced the Anglo–French invasion force to withdraw from the Canal Zone.

While American activities in the Antarctic have not formally resulted in a territorial claim, successive administrations have reserved the right to press for such a claim in the future (Bertrand 1971; Joyner and Theis 1997; Klotz 1990). Coming in the aftermath of the 'closing of the frontier' in continental America, explorers, military officers, and scientists mapped, surveyed, and studied Antarctica from the air, sea, and even under the ice. Well-known explorers and naval officers such as Richard E. Byrd could be seen as the embodiment of a 'rugged individualism,' which it was argued by writers such as Frederick Jackson Turner emerged from the experience of the United States' occupation of the Midwest and beyond (see Kearns 1993). Turner and others conceived of American settlers as agents of civilisation, empowered by a strong sense of 'manifest destiny,' who in turn helped tame the savage Indian (Slater 1999). Perhaps Joseph Conrad was far-sighted when a character (the American businessman Holroyd) in his novel *Nostromo* claimed that: 'We shall be giving the world for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics and religion from Cape Horn to Smith's Sound . . . And we shall take in hand the outlying continents and islands of the earth . . . The world can't help it and neither can we' (cited in Coker 2001: 94–95).

In his writings, Byrd talked of creating a new civilisation in Antarctica. As Stephen Pyne noted, 'Byrd envisioned a society in Antarctica and cast himself in the role of coloniser. He was the first man to consider Antarctica as a site for quasi-permanent settlement, not simply as a *terra incognita* awaiting geographical discovery or an arena for individual exploits' (Pyne 2003: 101). Research stations such as Little America were established across the continent and the highly symbolic South Pole station was created in the midst of the International Geophysical Year. Symbolic in the sense that an American presence had been established at the 'heart of Antarctica' and, as if recognising that issue implicitly, the Soviets created a rival research station at the Pole of Relative Inaccessibility during the IGY. Politically, it also ensured that the station was a physical presence within all the existing territorial claims to Antarctica. The United States also ensured that international legal conventions regarding the governance of uninhabited spaces such as Antarctica placed due emphasis on 'effective occupation.' With a network of bases scattered across the Antarctic, the United States was apparently well placed in the mid 1950s to consider a continental wide claim to Antarctica. Appropriately enough, President Kennedy was later to describe the Antarctic Treaty as being situated on 'the edge of a frontier.'

In the aftermath of the Treaty's ratification, the United States as the largest polar operator (in terms of total expenditure) has been essential in ensuring the consolidation and expansion of the ATS. As Joyner and Theis (1997: 1) contend: 'The United States is the chief architect of law and policy for the Antarctic. For over three decades [now four decades] the United States has exerted the political and diplomatic clout necessary to enhance and expand the legal regime governing the Antarctic continent and Southern Ocean.' Armed with considerable political and legal capacity, the United States has maintained a substantial presence in the Antarctic, including the largest base, McMurdo Station in the Ross Sea sector. Working with partners such as New Zealand and Italy, physical presence is an essential element in enabling the US delegation to dominate ATCP annual meetings.

The large-scale presence of the United States in Antarctica has not always been welcomed. Recent controversies surrounding the plans by NSF to build a 'road to the South Pole' have been criticised as indicative of the US' imperious manner. The planned pathway (started in 2003) was intended to facilitate the movement of people and objects from McMurdo to the Amundsen-Scott Station at the South Pole. Sir Edmund Hillary, the New Zealand mountaineer and explorer, denounced the road as 'terrible,' and ASOC complained that environmental impact assessment (prior to construction work) had not been carried out in sufficient detail and worried that this would further undermine Antarctica's status as a wilderness. The NSF nonetheless plans to continue with the construction. Notwithstanding those concerns, the scale of US activities in the Antarctic has frequently concerned not only collaborative parties such as New Zealand but also observers to the Antarctic Treaty System such as Third World states and non-governmental organisations. But perhaps what has been missing in the ensuing controversy is a sense of why the 'road' matters at all.

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Jon Stratton amongst others has contended that the 'myth of the road' is an important element in the construction of the post-revolutionary United States (Stratton 2000). The road, whether populated by stagecoaches or motorbikes, has had a powerful role in shaping cultural attitudes towards landscape, the 'American Dream,' and a sense of national importance. The road has also been linked to a sense of space, ease of movement, and the closing of the American frontier (with the help of the railways in the nineteenth century). Glasberg (2000) has indicated that there is more work to be done to understand the nature and cultural significance of the American occupation of Antarctica. Further research could, therefore, usefully contribute to an ever-growing field of post-colonial research into the contemporary United States and its global empire.

Taken together, all five factors, in different ways, seem to demand that post-colonial scholars consider carefully the Antarctic, not least because it promises to initiate a broader and richer discussion of Antarctica.

Co-opting the post-colonial critics? Third World and Antarctica

India between 1956 and 1958 and Malaysia in 1982 are familiar states and dates for those interested in the stories often told about the 'international politics of Antarctica.' While places have many histories and geographies attached to them, some of those elements have been prioritised over others (Massey 1995). Rather than seeing these moments as isolated incidents with regards to the organisation and management of the Antarctic Treaty regime, it is contended that they actually provide opportunities to consider how the colonial appropriation of Antarctica was possible. They do so for three reasons. First, these moments draw attention to how the Antarctic was colonised via a whole series of conventions and practices. In Patricia Seed's felicitous phrase, there are 'ceremonies of possession' that deserve to be better understood in the context of the development of the Antarctic Treaty (Seed 1993). Second, they remind how the original 12 signatories to the Treaty — especially the United States — shaped the post-Treaty geographies of Antarctica. The Antarctic Treaty could be seen as the rationalisation of a particular spatial experience. Finally, the emergence of the Antarctic Treaty effectively stabilised not only a particular vision of place but also an accompanying political architecture, which has been able to weather thus far the challenges posed by India and Malaysia.

India, decolonisation, and the Cold War

India's decision to raise the issue of Antarctica in the United Nations occurred at a delicate moment not only in the international politics of the region but also during a period of decolonisation. The 1950s marked a turning point in the fortunes of European imperialism, as the British and French in particular experienced anti-colonial resistance (Algeria, Aden, and Cyprus, for example) alongside the consolidation of Third World solidarity in the form of the 1955 Bandung Conference and later the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement (Simon and Dodds 1998). Frank Furedi has claimed that this period also witnessed growing evidence of uncertainty about what has been called 'white prestige' (Furedi 1994: 4 and 25). Post-war governments in Britain were deeply concerned about the country's standing in the world and the manner in which the imperial portfolio was carefully managed (Darwin 1988). Losses of territory and influence inevitably had implications for prestige and standing, something that was recognised in the so-called 'profit and loss' review of the British Empire in 1957. And these losses and or reversals also touched upon cultural debates linking race to an acute sense of 'fitness' to govern (Dodds 2002).

When India first announced its intention to raise the issue of Antarctica at the United Nation in February 1956, claimant states such as Britain and its Commonwealth allies were wrong-footed, in the sense that there was uncertainty about Indian intentions. The Indian statement in February 1956 merely requested that the UN consider it in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly and noted that 'With the development of rapid communications, the area might shortly come to have further practical significance to the welfare and progress of nations' (cited in Chaturvedi 1986: 355). It also warned that international discord might prevail if steps were not taken to demilitarise the continent. While Prime Minister Nehru was concerned about the Cold War spreading to Antarctica, Indian officials such as Krishna Menon and Arthur Lall were eager to raise the country's profile within the United Nations. But Antarctic parties were nonetheless worried that this intervention in the UN would unsettle attempts either to persuade the United States to press a claim to the unclaimed sector of Antarctica or to encourage the Soviets to become more active in the region. The British were keen to ensure that the US became a claimant, because that would help to legitimise their status still further as one of the seven claimant states. Australia and South Africa were worried about Soviet intervention in the Antarctic and a possible territorial claim (Beck 1986; Dodds 1997).

The Indian initiative in 1956 and 1958 was to be referred to by Prime Minister Nehru in a most instructive manner in May 1958:

> *We are not challenging anybody's rights there* [in Antarctica and author's emphasis]. But it has become important more specifically because of the possible experimentation of atomic weapons and the like, that the matter should 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. (cited in Ahluwalia 1960–61: 474)

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The most important part of that statement is the first sentence and it is one that has received comparatively little reflection by Indian scholars or others (see, for example, Chaturvedi 1986; Dey 1991). While considerable attention has been given to the nuclear question in the midst of the Cold War, the first part deserves further reflection because it implies that India recognised a particular 'order of things.' In this case, it was a group of 12 nations participating in the IGY which were soon to be the invitees of the United States at Washington in December 1959. Although India was prepared to assume a certain measure of the taken-for-granted, Malaysia was not prepared to do so 25 years later. It actively challenged hegemony of the ATS and those countries, which ensured the de facto political-legal management of Antarctica.

Ironically the most radical proposal regarding Antarctica came from a claimant state. As leader of the opposition, Walter Nash proposed in January 1956 that New Zealand should not only consider relinquishing its claim but also posed the question as to whether the Antarctic 'ought not to belong to all the world, and be free to all the world?' This provoked a spirited reaction not only from within New Zealand but from claimant states such as Australia, Argentina, and Chile, which rejected all attempts to decolonise the Antarctic in that manner. The New Zealand government never advanced any further with the proposal and Nash, as Prime Minister, later signed the Antarctic Treaty, which effectively preserved the New Zealand territorial claim. Britain, alongside its network of Commonwealth colleagues (Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa), was eager to maintain (where funds permitted) its presence. Their opposition, alongside Latin American parties, was critical in persuading India to drop its proposed UN initiative in the 1950s.

One of the key differences between the 1950s and the 1980s was the sheer number of states that had emerged from the shadow of European colonialism. The two Third World states most interested in the fate of Antarctica were Argentina and Chile. Both had by the 1950s substantial post-colonial histories, and both were determined to preserve their territorial claims. It was widely noted at the Washington Conference of October–December 1959 that the South American contingent were the most insistent (alongside France) that territorial claims could not be undermined in an attempt to secure an international agreement on the fate of Antarctica. Two decades later, the number of Third World countries had mushroomed, as decolonisation occurred in Africa and Asia. The membership of the United Nations was greatly altered, and, as Robert Young has noted, anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial politics were firmly established on the intellectual and political agendas of many newly created states (Young 2003).

Malaysia and the 'Question of Antarctica'

Malaysia's interest in Antarctica was arguably far more radical than India's earlier interventions. At one level, this is hardly surprising. A great deal had occurred during the intervening 25-year period, including further acts of decolonisation, nationalism and international co-operation within the Third World, resource speculation in Antarctica, and international legal developments affecting the global commons, such as the deep sea bed under the United Nations Law of the Convention on the Sea (UNCLOS 1982). Within Malaysia's anti-colonial biography, active resistance to British colonialism was an important element in explaining its involvement in organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Prime Minister Mahathir was not afraid to use the term 'colonialism' and to highlight the conditions, which enabled the genesis of the ATS. As he noted in 1983:

> While there is some merit in the [Antarctic] treaty, it is nevertheless 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*. (cited in Barber and Selby 1983: 471, author's emphasis)

While Malaysia began a challenge to the Antarctic Treaty System in 1983, India (alongside China and later Brazil) had not only acceded to the Treaty but also become a Consultative Party within a remarkably quick time in September 1983 (weeks rather than months or years). This occurred at a moment when India was chair state of NAM, which had been a harsh critique of the ATS (Rajan 1986: 306). As part of securing Consultative Party status within the ATS, India created a permanent research station in the Antarctic called Dakshin Gangotri – a reference to the mythical source of the River Ganges. As with other countries, the naming of research stations (Great Wall in the case of China, for example) could be seen as an important element in not only establishing a permanent presence but also building ancestral connections with the Antarctic. During the CRAMRA negotiations, India was approached by ATCPs, and as a consequence of this engagement it secured ATCP status in less than six weeks from acceding to the Treaty in August 1983. China's Consultative Party status within the Antarctic Treaty was not quite as speedy (two years from accession), but it nonetheless enabled the ATS to claim some kind of Third World mandate.

Unlike India's earlier interventions, Malaysia was challenging the right of the ATS to manage Antarctica (United Nations General Assembly 1984; Beck 1985). At the heart of its critique lay a conviction, as clearly expressed by Matathir, that the ATS was an exclusive 'Antarctic Club.' The Antarctic Treaty regime was, so he contended, founded on a system of exclusion and confinement. When the Antarctic Treaty was negotiated in 1959, many nations were not even independent in Africa and Asia. The well-established post-colonial histories of countries such as Argentina and Chile proved to be the exception to the general rule that mass decolonisation was a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. So alongside his criticisms of plans to develop

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a Convention for the Regulation of Antarctic Minerals Resources (CRAMRA), the Malaysian Prime Minister called into question the capacity of a select group of states to determine the future of a continent without an indigenous human population. This is an important point to preserve because a great deal of the existing commentary on the subsequent 'Question of Antarctica' and Malaysia's role in Antarctic matters restricts the potential significance of this intervention in the early 1980s. Too often the debate becomes circumscribed, as critics ponder the challenge to the effectiveness of the ATS and its reformative strategy in the 1980s and then 1990s in the post-Protocol era. Even Third World scholars such as H.P. Rajan were inclined to narrow the ensuing debate: 'The question of a UN takeover of Antarctica would not be practicable. It would be unrealistic and counter-productive to think of a new regime in the present situation. Any attempt to undermine the Antarctic Treaty System could lead to international discord and instability as well as the revival of territorial claims and political controversies' (Rajan 1986: 318).

The Antarctic Treaty was also confining in the sense that Antarctica was defined in a particular way (everything south of 60°S with the exception of the high seas), and the members have sought to ensure that their discussions and negotiations were isolated from broader currents of global politics, including decolonisation, apartheid, and north–south relations. If the Antarctic Treaty System was conceived of an 'exclusive club' (especially in the early 1980s), then Malaysia's challenge could be seen in a more explicitly post-colonial vein. Why, for example, did the former Malaysian ambassador to the Soviet Union begin his address to an academic symposium in the following manner?

> I suppose it is somewhat odd that I should be addressing myself to the subject in this question, *coming as I do from Malaysia*, a country that is first of all not a member of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and besides, a country that has since 1983, been closely associated with efforts at the United Nations to bring about change in the way the affairs of Antarctica have been and are being administered. (Haron 1991: 299, author's emphasis)

As the statement makes clear, there are at least two reasons to potentially explain his apparent reticence to consider Antarctica. Perhaps there is also a third, often unstated, factor — the presumption that Malaysia as a 'tropical country' has neither a 'natural' nor 'understandable' interest in Antarctica. Unlike geographically proximate states such as Argentina and countries with a lengthy history of exploration and scientific investigation, such as the United States, Malaysia appears to be in a different category to the established members of the ATS. However, there may also be a sense among some parties that Malaysia has no reason to be interested in Antarctica and as a consequence no apparent right to comment on the 'Question of Antarctica.' As one writer noted, this time with reference to other Asian countries, 'No matter how brilliant may be their contribution by Indian and Pakistani scientists to Antarctic research, I believe their respective nations would be better off with scientific research being directed towards domestic problems' (Suter 1994: 163).

Many western commentators suspected that Malaysia's interest in the Antarctic was motivated by a desire to ensure that the ATS parties should not exclusively exploit the mineral resources of the continent. Prime Minister Matathir, in a frequently reproduced comment, once claimed that 'if the South Pole was made of gold' then he wanted a share of the spoils (*Sunday Times* 1985; cited in Beck 1986: 124). There are two ways of interpreting this kind of comment. The first is to note that this demonstrates that Malaysia's interest in the 'minerals question' was motivated by a strong sense of self-interest. If this was so then it might be contended that other Malaysian concerns relating to the governance and environmental protection of Antarctica need to properly acknowledge this resource-led agenda. The second response might be to claim that it is perhaps unsurprising that a post-colonial state would be highly interested in resource allocation given the symbolic and practical importance of colonial appropriation of land and its accompanying resource potential. As Robert Young has contended, land ownership is fundamental to post-colonial struggles not only because of the resource potential but also because of the appropriation of land was fundamental to colonial power (Young 2003: 7). While mapping and naming geographical features alongside permanent structures such as research stations are an integral part of that colonising process, the exploitation of Antarctic's resources is a clear part of that colonising condition as well.

Malaysia's Antarctic challenge should also be seen in a broader context of the country's willingness to use international and regional fora such as the United Nations, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and the Association of South East Asian Nations to 'mount an ideological challenge to the hypocrisy and neo-colonialism of the West in its advocacy of its understanding of human rights, environmentalism, free trade and democratisation' (Harper 1999: 365). While this agenda had considerable appeal to many Malaysian citizens (as Mahathir recognised), the move can also be seen as part of a strategy to re-position Malaysia as a leader of Third World opinion at the expense of connections with the United States, the Commonwealth, and its former imperial power, Britain. Given Malaysia's turbulent post-independence trajectory and the Great Power politics of the 1950s and 1960s, this is understandable in the sense that Malaysian governments have been very sensitive to the notion that 'White powers' such as Britain, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia have sought to dominate Southeast Asian regional politics (Jones 2002: 295–296).

Post-colonial perspectives seek to de-centre the dominant ways in which the world, or in this case Antarctica, is viewed. The United Nations debates on the 'Question of Antarctica' could be seen as embodying that kind of process — challenging and contesting a dominant way of

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seeing and acting in Antarctica. As Ambassador Yusoff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Malaysia) reflected in August 2002:

> The debates have also highlighted the inadequacy of the Antarctic Treaty System to fully meet these concerns and challenges. The United Nations must address itself to this issue and re-examine the potential for a more universal framework of international co-operation in Antarctica . . . The continent should be used for peaceful purposes and not degenerate into a new hot-bed of tension and discord. We believe that the UN with its specialist organs such as the UNEP, FAO, IMO and WMO as well as the World Tourism Organisation is the most appropriate authority to enforce, administer and monitor the various scientific and non-scientific research activities in Antarctica . . . Malaysia has not signed the Treaty as we believe that Antarctica should be preserved as a common heritage of mankind and be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We are pleased to see increasing cooperation and goodwill established between the ATCP countries and the rest of the international community. (Yusoff 2002)

Malaysia's possible membership in the near future is an important milestone for the ATS. If it does accede to the Antarctic Treaty and then subsequently apply for Consultative Status then it could be reasonably contended that the regime's harshest critic has been co-opted. This would be a remarkable turn around from a period when Malaysia was calling for the dismantling of the ATS to a period when the country was 'invited to observe' Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings in 2002 (Tepper and Haward 2005). The choice of words was important — the UK and others did not want any faux legitimacy being applied to the invitation. In other words, Malaysia's invitation implicitly recognised the authority of the ATS and not the other way around. On the other hand, Malaysia's trajectory from critic to convert could be used to tell another story — formerly colonised countries and their elites have and continue to use scientific and technological expertise to define and defend the legitimacy of their own nations and civilisations. Prime Minister Mahathir's promotion of 'Vision 2020' could be interpreted as symptomatic of this desire to use science and technology in order to facilitate industrial, cultural, and political development (Harper 1999: 371). Malaysia's interest in Antarctic bio-prospecting would also tie in with their commitment to develop a scientific and technological base for an expanding population (see Hemmings and Rogan-Finemore 2005).

In the last five years, Malaysia has embarked on an international collaborative programme designed to enhance their National Antarctic Research Programme. Under the 8th Malaysia Plan, resources via the Academy of Sciences have been devoted to enable leading polar scientists, such as Azizan Abu Samah, to collaborate with Argentine, Australian, British, Japanese, and New Zealand-based operators in the fields of glaciology, biology, and upper-atmospheric research. In 2004, Malaysia joined SCAR. The Malaysian Antarctic Programme has also submitted five 'Expressions of Interest' for the forthcoming 2007/08 International Polar Year, which is intended to re-create something of the spirit and impact of the 1957–58 International Geophysical Year (S. Azizan, personal correspondence, 21 May 2005). A national IPY committee has been created in Malaysia for the purpose of further consolidating the country's polar presence, which in turn perhaps explains the recent calls by former Prime Minister Mahathir for Malaysia to accede to the Antarctic Treaty. Importantly in response to those calls, the Academy's executive director, Samsudin Tugiman, noted that if Malaysia does not join the ATS, 'there is a perception that knowledge [of Antarctica] is always the purview of the West' (*Melbourne Herald* 21 January 2003).

It could be argued that it is more than simply a matter of 'perception.' Leaving to one side Malaysia's expanding portfolio of international polar collaboration, the country's challenge to the ATS in the 1980s and 1990s could be seen in more potent and potentially destabilising terms than is usually the case. Thus far the research carried out on Malaysia's changing relationship and engagement with the polar continent (for example Beck 1985, 2004; Tepper and Haward 2005) has not sought to go beyond trying to explain Malaysia's interest in Antarctica. Important though this may be to analysts of the international politics of the polar continent, it could be an opportunity to ask more fundamental questions about the geopolitics of knowledge and to consider how the interventions by India and more latterly Malaysia called into question the ability and capacity of the ATCPs to manage *and* know Antarctica.

Ultimately, it appears that Malaysia is following India in embracing the prevailing political architecture that governs Antarctica. It has clearly accepted the de facto presence of the Antarctic Treaty System and, as noted above, joined SCAR. The explanation for such a radical change might lie in several places: mining in Antarctica appears to be on the international governmental agenda for the foreseeable future, Malaysia's Antarctic scientific programme is expanding (and international collaboration is vital for its continued success), and Prime Minister Matathir has formally retired from Malaysian political life. The latter was the fiercest critic of the ATS in the 1980s. The other possible explanation is that Malaysia has recognised that there is not a sufficiently strong 'coalition of the willing' to fundamentally challenge a system, and its associated political architecture, that contains most of the G8, the European Union, and major countries in the Third World, such as China, Brazil, and India. As with other areas of international life, prevailing norms and values associated with the Antarctic Treaty System have prevailed not least because the ATCPs showed themselves willing, sometimes under pressure, to expand the membership and engage with different polar stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations. But these kinds of engagements nonetheless occurred against

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a backdrop of the political and scientific hegemony of the ATS.

Conclusions

This paper calls for further research to be carried out in three major areas. First, the 'post-colonial' challenges to the Antarctica Treaty System by countries such as India and Malaysia need to be understood within a broader context that not only connects with European decolonisation but also the settler colonialisms of some of the leading Antarctic participants, such as the United States and the Southern Hemispheric 'gateway states.' Second, postcolonial and ontological investigation of Antarctica's representation in imperial and post-imperial terms as the white continent deserves further reflection. This would entail a more sustained debate with literatures associated with post-colonialism so that there is a more systematic examination of how Antarctica has been deployed as a site of 'white prestige' by states such as Britain, Australia, the United States, and New Zealand, often at the expense of effacing consideration of indigenous populations within domestic territories. The list could clearly include other states such as Russia and France, which have also had extensive experiences of internal and external forms of colonial appropriation and colonisation (see, for an Arctic example, McCannon 1994). This would help to connect up these two points and lead to the production of a genuinely post-colonial engagement with Antarctica. Finally, further investigation should be made of how other countries such as Estonia and Romania have cast their engagement with Antarctica in distinctly different terms to some of those original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty. Both countries have emphasised the importance of global citizenship and thus implicitly rejected a notion that some states are somehow more uniquely qualified than others to engage with Antarctica.

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