

Antarctic Treaty:

The Meltdown

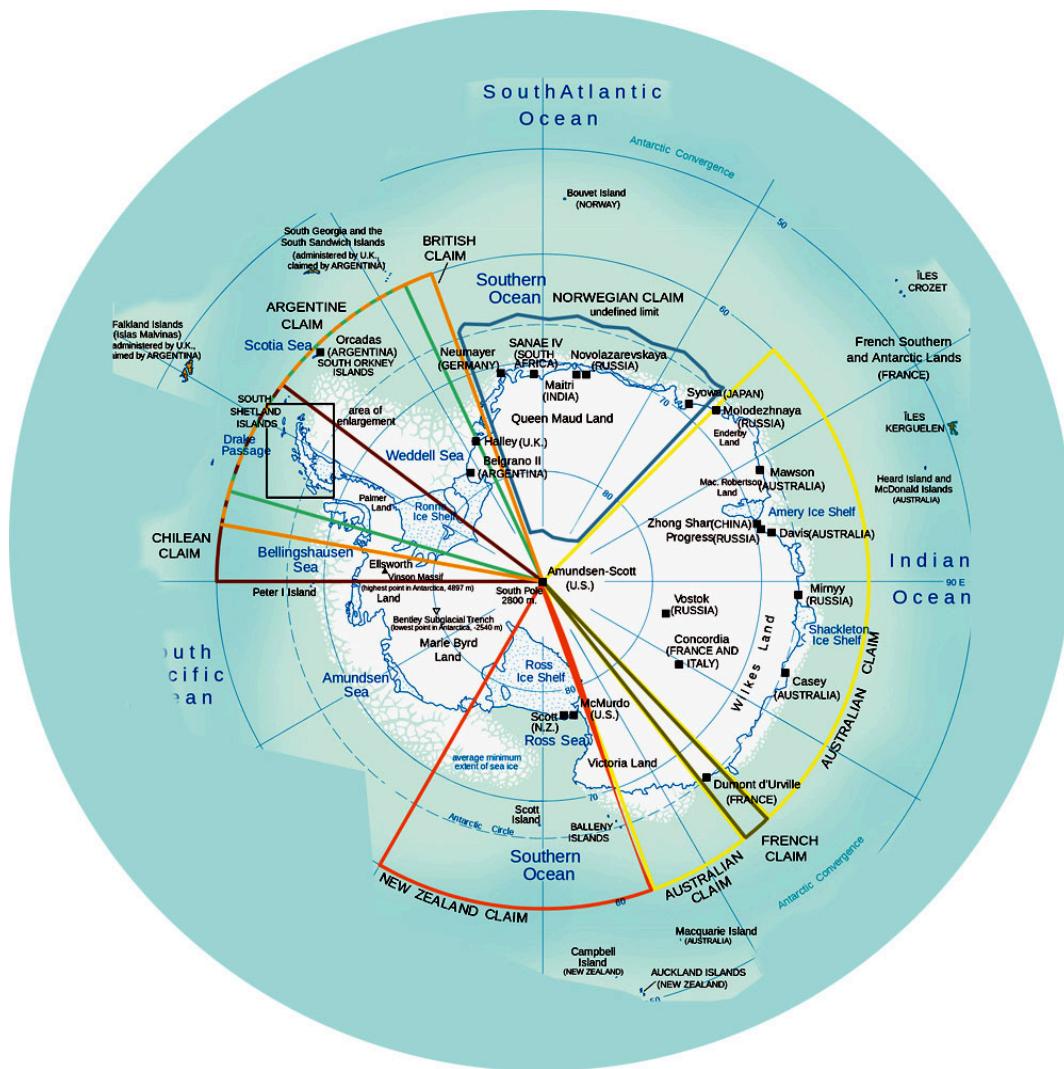


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Letter from the Chairs

Hello Delegates,

We are excited to chair Antarctic Treaty: The Meltdown, in the first ever Lane Tech Model UN Conference!

My name is Valentina Vianna (vgvianna@cps.edu) and I am looking forward to co chairing at this monumental conference. This is my second year participating in Model UN and as a sophomore, my first time chairing, since this is LTMUNs first ever conference! I prefer crisis committees, and I look favorably upon funny speeches (however please do *not* sing). Outside of Model UN, I am a varsity rower, a student and council member of Lane's Omega program, and an Editor in Chief of Lane's Newspaper, the Champion, and I enjoy playing the piano, trumpet, and reading classics. Additionally, I spend most of my time laughing with my best friend Sarah Gonzalez while she throws things at me.

My name is Sarah Gonzalez (sgonzalez158@cps.edu) and I'm super excited to meet you all in March! I'm a sophomore and this is my second year in Model UN at Lane. I'm a member of Lane's debate team, and a Varsity rower at the Chicago Rowing Foundation. I am also in Lane's humanities-centered program called Omega, and on the Omega Council. I enjoy spending time with my friends, playing Roblox, and reading! Additionally, I spend most of my time laughing *at* my best friend Valentina Vianna :)

Committee Overview

The aim of this committee is that delegates represent the interests of national leaders, covert operatives, environmental watchdogs, and corporate stakeholders. The goal is to negotiate (or seize) control of Antarctica while addressing ecological disaster, treaty violations, and global responsibility- or feign doing so while advancing their agendas. They can work together to either amend the treaty, or start from scratch with the possibility of uneven power division. The chairs and dais will all view each crisis note, which should be creative while still staying within bounds of the plot, and with the goal to reach a common solution.

Historical Context

As climate change accelerates, the frozen frontiers of Earth are shifting. By the year 2040, the once-inhospitable Antarctic continent has begun revealing resource-rich land, navigable routes, and strategic advantages. Now, the territory is highly sought after due to its resource density in the form of oil, despite the risks of environmental degradation. The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), long upheld to preserve the continent for peaceful and scientific purposes, is unraveling under global pressure and ambition.

Several nations—Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom—maintain historical claims on overlapping parts of the continent. The United States and Russia, while not claiming territory outright, have shown an increasing disregard for the treaty's inspection provisions, raising tensions. Amid this geopolitical thaw, secret military installations, energy explorations, and backroom deals emerge under the guise of scientific expansion. While the Antarctic Treaty's Environmental Protocol currently bans mineral mining

until at least 2048, Russia has conducted various seismic surveys finding oil reserves in the Wedell Sea region leading to further established interest in claims to the territory.

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), alarmed by the potential for ecological collapse and conflict, calls for an emergency summit. However, cooperation quickly deteriorates into a high stakes struggle for control, legitimacy, and survival on a continent reborn.

The following are the main points of the Antarctic Treaty as seen by the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty:

“The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 by the twelve countries whose scientists had been active in and around Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58. It entered into force in 1961 and has since been acceded to by many other nations. The total number of Parties to the Treaty is now 58.

Some important provisions of the Treaty:

Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only

-Art. I

Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end... shall continue

-Art. II

Scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available

-Art. III

Among the signatories of the Treaty were seven countries - Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom - with territorial claims , sometimes overlapping.

Other countries do not recognize any claims. The US and Russia maintain a “basis of claim”.

All positions are explicitly protected in Article IV, which preserves the status quo:

No acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any rights of sovereignty in Antarctica. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica shall be asserted while the present Treaty is in force.

To promote the objectives and ensure the observance of the provisions of the Treaty, "All areas of Antarctica, including all stations, installations and equipment within those areas ... shall be open at all times to inspection "

-Art. VII

Topic A: Response to Development and Inspections

The Antarctic Council has existed peacefully for 66 years, but, recently member states have begun to notice that Russian scientists seem to be testing weapons in the Antarctic... A routine group of inspectors is mandated as per the treaty, to check on all scientific research in the Antarctic periodically. However, Russian scientists have refused inspection during the last check in cycle, and tensions are heightening. Suspicion is building that Russia may be violating the treaty, specifically the clause against weapons testing. Should the Russian delegation be found in violation of this clause, they are subject to fines. However, in the case of such events other delegations may be inspired to similarly skip such check ins. The development of any such utilities would entirely violate one of the most important principles of the treaty: Peaceful use. Theoretically, all discoveries or advancements in science made in the Antarctic should be subject to public domain, seen in the Article on Scientific Freedom in the original treaty that encourages the exchange of data, giving public access to both citizens in the other countries and competing developers in other delegations. This possible infringement could also result in tighter regulations or increased journalistic presence in each base, further publicizing internal affairs; both of which are capable of revealing any other incidents within each delegation. The original treaty leaves inspection responsibilities vaguely defined, assigning them to the “parties” themselves, which are diminutive of the authority of the treaty. This leaves inspections vulnerable to biased accusations. In expansion of this section of the treaty, said ‘parties’ are able to inspect aircraft, installations, and stations. However, the original twelve signatories have expanded to fifty-eight parties in the Treaty. As these new parties weren’t present during the original drafting of the treaty, some have interpreted aspects of the treaty as serving the original

twelve signatories, granting them greater claims over newer signatories. Other parties that have been long tied to the treaty haven't considered this aspect as a relevant flaw.

Questions to consider:

1. How should the treaty continue to enforce/change regulations on mandatory inspections?
2. Considering the treaty was made in the International Geophysical Year 1957-1958, is the treaty outdated? Does the lack of updates decrease the favorability of newly added parties?
3. How should the treaty evolve to further include tourism to generate resources to be put toward restoration, and anti climate change efforts?
4. What can be done to increase communications between delegations and improve transparency in research?

Topic B: Reworking the Treaty

Since 1959, the Antarctic Council has preserved democratic relations for all countries involved with Antarctica. Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom all have claims in the Antarctic. The US and Russia have a “basis of claim” which means that they do not necessarily have claims in the Arctic, but they have provided reasons for why they should.

Delegates now have the opportunity to edit, remake, or leave the treaty as it is. Currently, no military development is allowed in the Antarctic, but countries suspect Russia is testing weapons (see Topic A). One solution could be to amend the treaty and allow military development though this may imply various consequences. However, scientific research is highly encouraged, no physical damage can be done to the Antarctic as a result. Countries must also undergo inspections, as mentioned in Topic A. The treaty allows for tourism, which is already occurring, as 15,000 tourists visit the Antarctic each year. Delegates could choose to expand tourism in the Antarctic, or begin to limit it in order to avoid tradeoffs. This issue is complex, as tourism often leads to environmental degradation, and protecting the Antarctic is the Council’s first priority. In terms of climate change, the Antarctic Treaty details the importance of protecting the Antarctic, but more could be done. There are no specific solutions, just a commitment to reaching common ground.

Questions to consider:

1. Should more countries be allowed to have claims in the Antarctic? How will claims be allocated and who will claims be given to?
2. Should military development be allowed in the Antarctic?

3. How should tourism be handled? Should there be an increase, to increase profits? Or should there be less tourism in the Antarctic to avoid consequences such as environmental degradation?
4. What are some solutions to climate change in the Antarctic?

Positions:

1. Argentina
2. Australia
3. Belgium
4. Brazil
5. Chile
6. France
7. Germany
8. Italy
9. Japan
10. New Zealand
11. Norway
12. South Africa
13. South Korea
14. United Kingdom
15. United States
16. Russia

Resources:

Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty <https://www.ats.aq/e/tourism.html>

US Department of State <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/193967.htm>

Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

<https://scar.org/policy/antarctic-treaty-system>

British Antarctic Survey - Natural Environment Research Council

<https://www.bas.ac.uk/about/antarctica/the-antarctic-treaty/the-antarctic-treaty-explained/>

Forbes - Russia's Oil Exploration in Antarctica threatens Science Diplomacy

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/saleemali/2024/05/25/russias-oil-foray-in-antarctica-threatens-science-diplomacy/>