Introduction: What colonialism tells us about Antarctica, and what Antarctica tells us about colonialism

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As exceptional as Antarctica is when compared to the rest of the earth in terms of its physical geography, it is often regarded as even more exceptional for its political geography. The Antarctic Treaty and its associated instruments, often known collectively as the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), have become emblematic of an innovative approach to governance.[1] In the standard telling, the International Geophysical Year (IGY) (1957–58) marked a decisive shift because its provision that scientific activities would not have consequences for sovereignty claims paved the way for the successful negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, which entrenched the continent as a space for science and peace with sovereignty claims frozen (though definitely not extinguished).[2]

Today, such 'Antarctic exceptionalism' no longer stands up to scrutiny. Declaring that Antarctica is not and has never been isolated from the social, political and economic contests that shaped the rest of the world has fortunately become uncontroversial. James Cook's circumnavigation of the continent in the late eighteenth century took place in the context of British naval imperialism; the brutally effective harvesting of Antarctic fur seals at the start of the nineteenth century made sense only in the context of international capitalism; the Protocol on Environmental Protection at the end of the twentieth century responded to concerns over political, as well as environmental, injustice through the potential effects of mining; and the current failure to agree on the designation of new Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean reflects wider geopolitical tensions, with Russia and China repeatedly blocking proposals.[3] Even the Treaty itself is now recognised as in many ways a product of its political circumstances rather than being wholly exceptional to them.[4] Setting aside a portion of the earth from militarisation dovetailed neatly with the overarching aims of the superpowers – to establish a space where prior claims to supremacy (sovereignty) would be negated, and the dominant currency of prestige would be science, which in turn was a function of financial resources and political will.

Klaus Dodds and Christy Collis have called for a development of 'critical Antarctic studies' that denies the Antarctic exceptionality thesis and examines Antarctica through the same analytical tools employed by the social sciences and humanities beyond Antarctica.[5] This call has resonated with a growing scholarly community that recognises Antarctica as a site of race, gender and class discrimination, as well as a site of capitalism, imperialism, nationalism and many of the other -isms that characterise the modern world.[6] No intellectual equivalent of biosecurity exists that strips humans of their political, social, economic and cultural commitments once they cross 60 degrees south. There is, however, one category whose application to the southern continent remains particularly controversial: when it comes to colonialism (as readers will see in the chapters that follow), there is disagreement as to whether it took place in Antarctica or not, what shape it took (if it did), and what analytic purpose is ultimately served by examining Antarctica through its lens.

Part of the reason for that controversy is that Antarctica lacks any people to be wronged. Violence in the Belgian Congo or the American West had no counterpart in Antarctica. But are there commonalities between conceptions of domination over Antarctica and those over inhabited spaces elsewhere? As legal scholar and historian Martti Koskenniemi has shown, the role of international law in legitimising colonialism during the era of the 'Scramble for Africa' and beyond reflected the politically negotiated norms of control over territory and resources that permeated European conceits of civilisation.[7] The paternalism embodied in the 'white man's burden' and the French 'civilizing mission' persisted as a positive concept well into the twentieth century.[8] Colonial powers from Denmark (in Greenland) to Australia (in the Pacific), Portugal (in Africa) and many more claimed to be acting in the spirit of longstanding principles rooted in benevolent tutelage, principles that many regarded as a convincing argument for administration of 'backward' peoples even as opposition grew during the early years of the twentieth century.[9] These attitudes are now generally regarded as wrong, an inescapable conclusion given the genocidal violence (cultural as well as physical) that often followed. We agree in centring the systemic violence against subjugated humans that today is regarded as the most defining feature of colonialism. Our contention is nevertheless that colonialism as an analytical category can help to illuminate Antarctica's place in the world – and the world's place in Antarctica.

While the Cold War was the dominant frame both then and now for understanding the origins of the ATS, we suggest that colonisation and decolonisation might also be foregrounded. The territorial claims of seven countries that were also founding members of the Antarctic Treaty were

frozen, but not extinguished, by virtue of its Article IV. This has allowed them to retain their sovereignty claims while actively participating in the ATS. Decisions made about Antarctica are deeply influenced by domestic policies and aspirations, often grounded in a conviction that a particular nation has a privileged claim to Antarctica based on exploration and possession of territory, and maintaining permanent settlements. The co-existence of these claims with the functioning of the ATS is the strongest example of the 'constructive ambiguity' that defines the governing of Antarctica, an agreement to disagree to avoid disrupting the system as a whole.[10] But they are also a reminder that the structural features of political geographies past still linger in the present.

The aim of this introduction – and of this book, ultimately – is to argue that it makes sense to analyse Antarctica through a colonial lens because doing so illuminates our understanding of both colonialism and Antarctica. Colonialism pushes us to ask questions not only about the practices of humans in Antarctica and the power relations established between them, but also about the overarching logics and attitudes that have governed both specific human activities in Antarctica and larger human schemes to govern Antarctica. At the same time, Antarctica pushes us to ask where the limits of colonialism as an analytic category might lie, and how far the concept's utility extends for providing insight not available through other tools. What follows, then, is an exploration of what colonialism can do for Antarctica, and what Antarctica can do for colonialism.

The chapter begins by noting that, while imperialism has been a comparatively uncontroversial concept when describing Antarctica's history and politics, it is much more contentious whether colonialism took place in Antarctica and, if it did, in what form. We then examine different definitions of colonialism and different accounts of the specific moral wrong embedded within it, noting that a common feature in the definitions is the domination of one group of people by another. In the next section, we discuss what analytic use the term could then have in Antarctica, where there were no people to subjugate. The aim here is less to provide a narrowly defined tool with which Antarctica will be analysed, and more to demarcate the contours of the space which colonialism can usefully illuminate. We suggest that, while there was no subjugation of people in Antarctica, the colonial logics, attitudes and – to a certain extent – practices underlying it were present here as elsewhere. We suggest, moreover, that what happened and happens in Antarctica might entrench colonial structures still present at the international level. The chapter then considers decolonisation as a concept and how it may expand the scope of the analysis in Antarctica, particularly in considering the structural legacies of colonialism worldwide.

Imperialism, yes – but colonialism?

Imperialism, broadly understood, refers to a system of state expansion and domination 'through settlement, sovereignty or other indirect mechanisms of control'.[11] In the case of Antarctica, what was central was the acquisition of territory and the administration of power over it, reflected – among other things – in the production of instruments of authority such as cartography and scientific knowledge. Shirley Scott has suggested that there have been not one, but three distinct imperialist waves in Antarctica. The first was led by Spain in the fifteenth century when, by virtue of the Treaty of Tordesillas signed with Portugal, it considered itself entitled to claim lands yet to be discovered in the 'New World' all the way to the South Pole. The second was the European imperial wave that took place roughly from 1830 to 1914, when the last bits and pieces of what was considered global *terra nullius* (including Antarctica) were sought after and claimed. The third wave is still ongoing, according to Scott, led by the United States in the form of an informal empire ruled by science and multilateral negotiations.[12]

The basic thought here is that imperialism does not require a conquered population in a conquered territory. Antarctica would then constitute a 'pure' case study of imperialism, undistracted by the presence of people: the imperial state projected power over territory without any form of local resistance. On the contrary, a common reaction to the question of whether colonialism took place in Antarctica is to deny it, on the grounds that colonialism consists in the subjugation of one group of people over another, and that in Antarctica there were no people to subjugate. Colonialism is standardly theorised as a 'thick' concept, namely a concept that is evaluative but at the same time descriptive (like 'courage', 'injustice' and 'generosity').[13] In terms of description, most definitions of colonialism foreground the presence of people. In terms of evaluation, they refer to some problematic trait in the treatment of people. To give some examples from different disciplinary fields, anthropologist Ronald J. Horvath defines colonialism as 'the form of intergroup domination in which settlers in significant numbers migrate permanently to the colony from the colonising power'.[14] Political scientists Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy consider it 'a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another … the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin'.[15] Historian Dane Kennedy defines colonialism as 'the imposition by a foreign power of direct rule over another people', while historian Frederick Cooper stresses 'the institutionalisation of a set of practices that both defined and reproduced over time the distinctiveness and subordination of particular people in a differentiated

space'.[16] Philosopher Daniel Butt proposes that three traits emerge when describing colonialism. First, there is domination of one group over another, where that domination implies denying the self-determination of the colonised and locating the rulers in a separate political jurisdiction. Second, there is cultural imposition, inspired by a belief that the customs of the colonisers are superior or that the colonising process is part of a religious mission, or simply because controlling the local culture serves to consolidate political control. Third, there is exploitation in diverse forms, paradigmatically through enslavement and through the misappropriation of cultural heritage and natural resources.[17] The creation of structural inequality between people could thus be regarded as a hallmark of colonialism, although there are different ways of rendering its distinctive wrong.

And indeed, the past generation (and more) has seen a flourishing of studies on colonialism, postcolonialism and decolonisation that stress colonialism's enduring structural presence in contemporary societies. Responding to this surge, as well as to the growing number of theories seeking to justify the territorial rights of nation-states from a moral standpoint, political theorists have in the last decade attempted to pin down the essential evil of colonialism. None of these theories, taken literally, seems to apply to the Antarctic case. Lea Ypi proposes that the wrong of colonialism lies in 'the embodiment of an objectionable form of political relation … the establishment of a form of association that fails to offer equal and reciprocal terms of interaction to all its members'.[18] As such, colonialism belongs together with all other associations that deny equality and reciprocity to their members, but its specific procedural injustice is that it applies to territorially distinct political agents. Relatedly, Anna Stilz proposes that the specific wrong of colonialism lies in the fact that the colonised could not identify with the colonising practices and institutions imposed on them, therefore affecting their freedom as makers of their own rules.[19] Because there were no political agents living in Antarctica at the time when it was claimed, Ypi's and Stilz's definitions would have no bearing on Antarctic history.

Another candidate for the essential wrong of colonialism is violence as a means to the end of control. Rather than considering torture, murder, destruction of settlements, enslavement and all other evils associated with colonial practices as contingent, philosopher Vittorio Bufacchi singles out the systematic use of arbitrary violence aimed at domination.[20] Such violence, we suggest, might also take the form of the erasure of a culture, a practice that has increasingly been recognised as a form of genocide (notably with regard to Indigenous peoples in Canada).[21] Historian Ben Maddison seems to confirm this way of understanding colonialism when he claims that the explorers who first came to Antarctica 'found the prospect of a vast uninhabited landmass profoundly unsettling to their prevailing understandings

and procedures of colonial possession'.[22] These prevailing understandings were inevitably associated with violent practices, to the point where their absence broke a mental mould. Here, instead, as the French Second Officer Dubouzet expressed in taking possession of Adélie Land, 'it was … "a wholly pacific conquest" undertaken with none of the "abuse which has been born of such acts" in many places, because they "dispossessed none, and our titles were incontestable"'.[23] In a similar spirit, when New Zealand accepted Britain's request that it administer the Ross Sea Dependency in the early 1920s, reaction among public servants included laughter that it would be an easier task than administering a territory populated largely by indentured labourers.[24] There were of course animals present, and as Peder Roberts and Kati Lindström discuss in this volume, their treatment by human visitors to Antarctica might be regarded as echoing colonial practices. But the penguins were unlikely to resist.

Focusing on settler colonialism, philosopher Margaret Moore highlights that its characteristic wrong was the taking of land by a dominant group (the settlers), aimed at reproducing their own culture on the land.[25] That process for Moore necessarily involved the domination and erasure of pre-existing Indigenous cultures, robbed of the possibility of constructing their life as a self-determining collective in a space to which they had strong affective attachments and in which they constructed their life plans and projects. From this standpoint, again, it is hard to see how colonialism could be meaningfully applied to the Antarctic case. Exerting epistemic authority, the right to classify and to map – and even to erase – was central to the exercise of centralised power over distant spaces and peoples under European imperialism.[26] But, if there were no social relations to be recast, no converts to be won, no local labour to be exploited, no land from which Indigenous populations were displaced, then what function might colonialism serve as an analytical category when looking to Antarctica? Our answer is in part to return to Dubouzet's example and switch attention from actions to ambitions, and to ask whether a commonality of purpose and intent linked Antarctica with other sites of colonisation.

Colonial practices, logics and attitudes in Antarctica

The connotations of imperialism and colonialism are often regarded as similar to the point where some Antarctic actors and scholars have used them interchangeably. The United Kingdom initially used the language of 'dependencies' rather than 'colonies' to refer to the South Atlantic and Ross Sea areas, but when it changed the name of the Falkland Islands Dependencies to the 'British Antarctic Territory' in 1962, the new entity was described

as a 'colony' in formal diplomatic correspondence.[27] (Chilean newspapers promptly protested that this new British 'colony' insulted Chile's own claim to that space.)[28] Scholars have often acted similarly. To give just one example, Scott moves between describing Antarctica as a site of imperialism and describing it as a site that 'has always been infused with artefacts of colonialism' (like the idea of establishing a trusteeship arrangement, echoing a concept from the League of Nations mandate system, and the application in Antarctica of the international law doctrine of territorial acquisition).[29]

One way of responding to these usages is to say that they are misplaced: the fact that the terms are used almost interchangeably does not mean that they should be. A more charitable response is to consider whether the use of the term 'colonialism' in Antarctica brings to light other features that its closest cognate, imperialism, does not, even if both are sufficiently close that they possess meaningful overlap.

If one revisits the characterisations of colonialism provided in the previous section, it is worth noting that they all refer to a practice or set of practices that were morally problematic because of some specific feature or features that had a direct impact on other humans: non-reciprocal treatment, domination through the imposition of rules, display of arbitrary violence and territorial displacement. We suggest there are three additional ways in which colonialism might be more directly useful to thinking about Antarctica. First, there may be problematic features in the practice of colonialism that do not refer directly to the treatment of people. Second, and relatedly, maybe the wrongs of colonialism are also connected to an underlying logic and attitude. And third, even if one denies that colonialism occurred in Antarctica, one could still accept that a class of people (i.e. those from 'non-Antarctic states') were entrenched in institutionalised positions of structural disadvantage and oppression because of decisions made around Antarctica.

Regarding the first point, historian Adrian Howkins refers to Antarctica as the site for an idealised form of settler colonialism, promising economic wealth without having to deal with any Indigenous populations.[30] The thought here is that what grounds the settler colonial project is the desire to accumulate space and resources: to take as much as possible at the expense of others – where the presence of Indigenous populations is considered a complication rather than an essential part of the enterprise. This position necessarily operates at the level of idealisation because it lacks the replacement and erasure that Moore, historian Lorenzo Veracini and others regard as central to settler colonialism.[31] In a similar vein, Elizabeth Leane and Hanne Nielsen explore the United States explorer Richard Byrd's practices and statements related to his 1933–35 expedition to West Antarctica. Leane and Nielsen pay particular attention to the three Guernsey cows that Byrd brought along, inscribing a particular form of American identity upon

a continent that Byrd deemed ripe for colonisation – with himself as the heroic agent of that process.[32] But they qualify their argument by describing this as 'symbolic settler colonialism', and we agree that such a qualification is necessary, given that Byrd's work was of inscription rather than erasure and replacement. Even granting Stephen Pyne's claim that Byrd consciously regarded himself as inaugurating a more enduring form of presence than previous expeditions, with echoes of settlement, we agree with Leane and Nielsen that Byrd's actions were provocations to future settlement rather than acts of settlement in their own right.[33]

Byrd was not alone in wanting to recreate agricultural settlement on the continent, with its attendant connotations of permanence and improvement – hallmarks of earlier justifications of settler colonialism.[34] As Alejandra Mancilla's contribution to this volume notes, the Chilean military stationed at O'Higgins base in 1947 brought with them chickens, sheep and dogs. Decades later, both Chileans and Argentinians brought whole families to live, respectively, in Villa Las Estrellas and Base Esperanza, a vanguard of *colonos* who, in the same vein as those who had been sent to inhabit Patagonia before, would lay the ground for permanent settlement and occupation. These Latin American bases were depicted in their national media as organic extensions of the homeland, and those who lived there were considered to be fulfilling a patriotic role that those who remained on the mainland did not.[35]

One might ask why this should be characterised as 'colonialism' rather than 'imperialism' or the more morally neutral 'colonisation' (which might simply describe the practice of appropriating and occupying natural spaces, common both to humans and non-humans). While recognising that these categories lie along a spectrum, rather than pointing to qualitatively different phenomena, in line with our second point above we suggest that what these scholars are illuminating is an underlying logic and attitude of colonialism, laid bare in a place where there are no humans to dominate. What Howkins calls 'settler colonialism' can perhaps be redescribed as 'resource colonialism' or 'extractive colonialism', driven by the assumption that everything in the non-human natural world is a potential resource for humans to use, control and possess – and where the definition of 'human' is such that many fall out of it and end up being treated also as resources.[36] Scholars in postcolonial studies and ecocriticism have highlighted this dimension of colonialism, emphasising the continuum from the exploitation of nature to non-humans to 'other' humans. As postcolonial studies scholar Helen Tiffin puts it, 'human slavery and environmental damage are connected because human – and, more specifically, Western – exploitation of other peoples is inseparable from attitudes and practices in relation to *other species* and the extra-human environment generally'.[37] Connecting imperialism with

colonialism as its armed force, historian Richard Grove made a similar point when he claimed that: 'In many ways the business of empire, for most of the colonised, had far more to do with the impact of different modes of colonial resource control and colonial environmental concepts, than it had to do with the direct impact of the military or political structures.'[38] To the question 'What is colonisation?' (which he took to be synonymous with colonialism), Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire also underlined the focus on resource extraction: 'the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force'.[39] As much as Césaire was concerned with the brutalisation of the coloniser in the process of brutalising the colonised, he recognised this dimension of colonialism without people, for the sole purpose of accumulation and enrichment – which, as a communist, he connected to capitalism specifically.

Capitalism was indeed integral to European imperial expansion and the colonies created within that context. Lenin famously argued that acquisition of dominion over territory and peoples was a necessary consequence of the evolution of capitalism, and that the acquisition of territory rather than the achievement of national self-determination was the most important factor in the First World War. This view, formed against the backdrop of the Scramble for Africa and the second industrial revolution, established an enduring notion that colonialism and capitalism were linked in a way that is not just incidental, but necessary.[40]

While recognising the link between imperialism and capitalism, we reject the notion that capitalism is the sole root from which colonialism can grow. Although communist regimes provided vital material and ideological support for anti-colonial national liberation movements from South Africa to Vietnam during the Cold War, the USSR forcibly remade societies and economies in eastern Europe and elsewhere. Moreover, rapacious occupation and accumulation were as characteristic of Soviet whalers in Antarctic waters as of their western, capitalist competitors.[41] And the USSR and its satellites' eagerness to extract value from Antarctic krill or minerals (as Roman Khandozhko persuasively shows in his contribution to this volume) was also present as in any other western capitalist state at the time. It is this logic that turns everything in the non-human natural world into a mere resource that comes to the fore when looking at colonialism in Antarctica – and it is arguably also this attitude that justified the treatment of other humans as resources rather than as equals in the colonies elsewhere. Extractive conceptions of the world as a store of treasure to be found and conquered were equally present in capitalist and communist worldviews.[42]

For those who remain sceptical about the analytical utility of extending the definition of colonialism along the lines suggested above, one could

still grant that colonial practices and attitudes were perpetuated and deepened *through* Antarctica, if not *in* Antarctica. A range of works identify colonialism as a crucial ingredient in ongoing injustice around the world, from pollution to asylum seekers to consumerism, all drawing important attention to how structural inequality derived from colonialism continues to facilitate inequality in the present.[43] Colonialism could thus be seen as a background against which to make sense of Antarctic history and politics. This is one way of interpreting Maddison's historical analysis of nineteenth-century Antarctic exploration, as an expression of the same (mainly British and French) impulse to colonial rule, dependent upon colonial infrastructure and strengthening the power of colonial empires. Furthermore, giving a twist to Ypi's definition of colonialism as a practice of domination of one territorial group over another, one could also interpret the origin and maintenance of the Antarctic Treaty as deepening the more general structures of domination entrenched by international law at the global level.[44] The connection between domination and colonialism is explored further in Yelena Yermakova's contribution to this volume.

If one accepts that colonialism is connected with Antarctica in any (or all) of these three ways, the next question is how decolonisation may function as a meaningful category of analysis in Antarctica. To this point we now turn.

Decolonisation in Antarctica and through Antarctica

The processes of rolling back the social, political and economic structural inequalities associated with colonialism are often given the blanket name of decolonisation. In the wave of changes that brought independence to states in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean during the 1960s, political decolonisation was equated with the acquisition of sovereignty, and equality was measured through participation in international forums such as the United Nations (UN). Persistent economic inequality, meanwhile, led to calls for structural reform through the New International Economic Order (NIEO), adopted by the UN in 1974.[45] Central to the NIEO was the argument that the newly independent states were voiceless during the earlier period when the economic structures governing the world were created and solidified. Decolonisation may thus have granted political sovereignty, but it had not erased the entrenched economic inequalities inherent in the global economy.

A serious objection to decolonisation as it would pertain to Antarctica derives from the work of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, who have criticised the blanket use of decolonisation as a term for addressing social justice and inequality.[46] In their view, such a broad usage decentres the defining wrong of colonialism – the theft of Indigenous lands and the erasure of Indigenous

cultures and lives. Their analysis is focused on settler colonialism, which in their view (correctly, we think) represents the most urgent theatre for the work of decolonisation. The external colonialism that Tuck and Yang note as part of the wider architecture of colonialism includes the appropriation of Indigenous flora, fauna and space in addition to human lives. Can that process of appropriation still be regarded as colonial if the objects of appropriation are not initially possessed by another culture but the appropriation serves to perpetuate injustice linked to colonialism? We argue that this may be possible. If one goes back to the analysis of how colonialism is manifested in or through Antarctica, we suggest that there are – analogously – at least three ways in which decolonisation can have conceptual relevance for thinking about the continent's history and politics and, through it, about decolonisation processes happening beyond it.

If one considers Antarctica as a clear-cut case of resource colonialism and as a site where the logics and attitudes underlying it acquired full expression, then an obvious way to decolonise the continent would be to recognise the colonial origin of the territorial claims and give them up.[47] This could be regarded as decolonisation in that it relinquishes the authority of a select group of states whose privilege derived from acts of discovery and occupation, and thus removes a structural advantage over states excluded from such acts. It may be objected that the unjust authority rests not with the claimant states but with the ATS consultative parties as a whole, the group of states that hold decision-making power within the ATS by virtue of their scientific activity and/or their pre-1959 engagement with Antarctica. Relinquishing claims would not therefore solve the problem, given that consultative party status is not predicated upon claimant status. This is true, but the persistence of territorial claims means that those states believe they are in continued possession of a trump card that grants rights to object to decisions over the territory in question. The response that such claims are not in themselves colonial – a position articulated by a number of scholars, including Ignacio Cardone in this volume – is however worth exploring in further detail.

Furthermore, the wider definition of decolonisation as a set of practices aimed at reversing the broader legacies of colonialism seems appropriate in the case of Antarctica, especially if one looks at international law itself as being shaped by colonial logics and attitudes.[48] For states such as Malaysia, the club-like nature of the ATS (which was in the midst of an opaque process of negotiating an agreement on minerals exploitation in the 1980s) reflected the colonial power structures of the past.[49] In a well-known speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad acknowledged that 'those countries [the members of the ATS at the time] are not depriving any natives of their lands, and they are therefore

not required to decolonise [Antarctica]'.[50] Instead, what required changing for Mahathir was the very mindset that allowed the colonisers to appropriate uninhabited lands for themselves, just as they had appropriated populated territories before, with the aim of enhancing their own wealth and power. Against the view that effective prior occupation granted privileged rights in Antarctica, Mahathir suggested that 'like the seas and the seabed, those uninhabited lands belong to the international community'.[51] Ensuring that all the world's states had a say in the governance of Antarctica's mineral resources was thus part of the larger project of decolonising international power structures. In short, decolonisation was not to happen *in* Antarctica, but *through* Antarctica.

It is important to stress the context within which Mahathir spoke. By the 1980s the structural economic advantages of coloniser over colonised were widely acknowledged, and their redress was sought through the NIEO, adopted at the behest of the Group of 77, a coalition of 'developing' states at the United Nations. The heart of the NIEO was recognition that political sovereignty did not produce economic equality: colonialism had locked in economic dependency on the former colonial periphery.[52] When the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) concluded negotiations in 1982, an additional concept emerged: that of 'common heritage of mankind' over areas of the earth not subject to the sovereignty of states (in this case, the seabed of the deep oceans).[53] When negotiations began in the early 1980s on a regime for administering minerals exploitation in Antarctica, initially as a closed process conducted by the ATS consultative parties, states such as Malaysia immediately linked it to a wider process of entrenching unequal access to resources – for which an alternative model now existed, a designation of common heritage of mankind under the United Nations. It might of course be noted that common heritage itself presupposes the same logic of appropriation of the non-human natural world that, as argued above, is a problematic feature of colonialism. As the term makes clear, its intent was not to move the non-human world out of the category of potentially exploitable resources, but more to ensure that all humans were entitled to do the exploiting.

The ATS states rejected any attempt to undermine their privileged status. Richard Woolcott, Australian ambassador to the UN and leader of the ATS opposition to the Malaysian initiative, argued that 'emotional rhetoric about the New International Economic Order and residual colonialism in the debate on Antarctica' would be unlikely to attract support from 'moderate countries', implying that drawing those broader connections was an extreme position.[54] Woolcott's position comes across at best as patronising. Emotionality was contrasted to rationality, echoing the logic through which colonising powers justified their authority over colonised peoples and lands,

their superior capacity to govern (and to know what was best) legitimising their power. But the global process of decolonisation, to which the NIEO was central, had to include Antarctica because the persistence of a structure that excluded most of the world's poorest countries from decision-making over one of the world's last potential major stores of natural resources was unjust.

Among the advocates of the opposing view – that the privileged status of the ATS consultative parties was just and appropriate – was the historian Stephen Pyne. Writing in 1986, he characterised their privileged position as a legitimate consequence of 'national heritages of which they are properly proud'. To question that status was to bring 'to Antarctic discussions an anticolonial rhetoric as inappropriate as the colonial cant that was applied to Africa a century earlier'.[55] The real wrong would come from states that hitherto had not been engaged with the continent's being granted authority at the expense of those currently in charge. States that had earned their place through the worthy sacrifice of exploration and science, and who had since administered the continent in a responsible manner (as even Malaysia acknowledged), ought not to be pushed aside by states whose interest in Antarctica had been non-existent until mineral exploration became an issue.

Pyne's category of 'national heritages' evoked a blank field upon which noteworthy acts had been inscribed without their overriding previous ownership – there were no Indigenous peoples whose presence could be erased. The wrong of erasure would be committed by denying those legacies and instead imposing a common heritage of mankind on the continent. Yet legacies of national achievement through science and exploration have been intertwined with colonialism elsewhere in the world. The distinction here rested partly on the absence of people, but also – in our view – on the result, that national actions led to an international treaty and not to a mutually recognised parcelling out of sovereign territory. This fails to address a more fundamental issue: namely that regardless of how well they have ruled Antarctica, the fundamental assumption that a certain group of states ought to hold that power remains debatable, independent of the specific actions they discharge as self-appointed trustees.

The question of science

The Antarctic Treaty is often cited as an open instrument that may be ratified by any state, which may then rise to the status of a consultative party. But in practical terms the costs of earning that status make it impossible (or at least very difficult) for many of the world's states.[56] And the reason for that economic disadvantage, in the great majority of cases, may be linked to

the systematic structural inequalities of colonialism. One way to respond is to suggest that specific reforms should be made to the system. Dropping the requirement to perform 'substantial research activity' as a prerequisite for consultative party status could remove a structural barrier to full participation in Antarctic decision-making, for instance.[57]

Another is to say that science in Antarctica should itself be decolonised, by defining research with value within the ATS as including alternative knowledge systems, thereby ending the hegemony of western science (on this point, see Germana Nicklin's chapter in this volume). The projects of 'decolonising methodology' and 'decolonising science' have particular importance in spaces where the hegemony of European knowledge systems over pre-existing systems of Indigenous knowledge has been a central component of enforcing state power.[58] Analogously, insofar as Antarctic science served to legitimise and strengthen the authority of colonial power structures more generally, a more inclusive approach to knowledge-making in Antarctica that reflects voices structurally silenced by colonialism may also serve to further the decolonisation of the states that make that knowledge. Along these lines, Priscilla Wehi and her collaborators have called for *matauranga Māori* (Māori traditional knowledge) to be incorporated into Antarctic research.[59] Much of the attention of their article focused on the group's findings regarding Māori knowledge of Antarctica preceding European contact. But the more ambitious claim is that, as part of the work of decolonising Aotearoa/New Zealand, the hegemony of colonial-era intellectual structures in Antarctic research should itself be challenged. This could mean including Māori cosmologies that posit human–non-human relationships in terms of kinship rather than dominion, and emphasise reciprocity and responsibility, thus reshaping the practices of the national Antarctic programme itself.[60]

It could be objected that there are legitimate practical reasons to privilege certain knowledge-making practices over others, even if they are the fruit of colonialist trees. The IGY embodied an assumption of universality with its network of World Data Centres in which information collected by different national expeditions could be made accessible by all scientists – which in turn presumed commensurability.[61] This was by and large successful, even if the IGY itself (and indeed science under the ATS regime more generally) reflected international co-ordination more than collaboration. Nor is there dispute that scientific research, from the breeding cycle of penguins to the history of Antarctic climate as measured through ice cores, may be considered valuable for humanity at large. What is at stake in decolonising science is not the fate of such research, but rather the acknowledgement that research conducted from other perspectives and traditions may also be accorded the status of legitimate knowledge. Researchers in the natural sciences already collaborate with researchers in the social sciences and humanities in Antarctica.[62] We suspect that the issue is less the difference of

the backgrounds and more the willingness (and ability) of the researchers to work collaboratively with mutual respect for the different traditions from which they come.[63]

Might the point be extended not just to Indigenous knowledge systems that exist within the borders of many consultative parties, but to those that lack the Māori claim to Antarctic relevance, and whose knowledge keepers reside in states unconnected to the ATS? Just as including Māori knowledge systems in Antarctic research would help to reconfigure the relations between scientists and their objects of study, considering other perspectives would be valuable too. After all, the very rationale of excluding from political decision-making those who do not have the means to conduct traditional science in Antarctica is what a decolonising process should target.

The stake of Indigenous communities in Antarctica may be regarded as real from another perspective. The term 'green colonialism' is increasingly used to describe how transitions toward a lower-carbon global economy shift environmental, economic and health-related burdens to the peoples already structurally disadvantaged through colonialism.[64] Indigenous homelands from Sápmi in northern Fennoscandia to northern Nevada are redesignated as spaces where extractive industry supporting green transitions is justified, even needed, to support continued high-energy lifestyles among the rich. A ban on mining in Antarctica is thoroughly justified both on environmental grounds (the scale of damage that could result, and the cost and difficulty of remediation) and on what might be termed security grounds, as it removes a potential source of conflict. But could mining in Antarctica be regarded as preferable to mining elsewhere on the grounds that it might spare the lands of Indigenous and formerly colonised peoples elsewhere in the world? While the question is complex, it points to an important issue: restricting the authority to take decisions over Antarctica to a group of states who claim to act on the continent's behalf is no guarantee that such actions will be in the best interests of humanity. Sacrificing Indigenous homelands on the altar of the green transition while preserving Antarctica as a space free of mining is, to say the least, a situation that invites reflection on the structural power dynamics involved. As long as Indigenous peoples remain structurally discriminated against within global political and economic systems – legacies of colonialism – decisions on the future of Antarctica will continue to sideline their interests.

Conclusion

Analysing Antarctica through a colonial lens helps to connect the continent with world history and politics. It shows that, despite its remoteness and lack of human inhabitants, Antarctica remains part and parcel of global social, economic and political processes in the last two centuries, especially – but not

exclusively – connected to the western world. More interestingly, we think, analysing colonialism through an Antarctic lens helps to bring out certain problematic features that tend to be clouded when the focus is put on the wrongs directly done to colonised peoples. The accumulation of space and resources with the purpose of eventual exploitation – what we have called 'resource colonialism' – is at the heart of the Antarctic enterprise, attended by a logic and attitude where the non-human natural world is placed at humanity's disposal (and where sometimes even particular humans are labelled as belonging in that category, thus allowing for their exploitation). Furthermore, the way in which decisions have been made and are still made around Antarctica – through the Antarctic Treaty – might reinforce structural inequalities at the global level that were rooted in colonialism. Malaysia's complaint in the 1980s brought this to the fore, but the Protocol on Environmental Protection and other legal instruments geared to the protection of the Antarctic environment could also be questioned along these lines.

What is at stake is not the content of these arrangements, which may be laudable, but the procedure through which they were established: excluding from the negotiating table three-quarters of the world's states (and, within them, the vast majority of Europe's former African, Asian and Caribbean colonies). This distinction between content and the procedure might be more relevant today than at any point in the history of the Antarctic Treaty. In a context where one of the Treaty members has invaded another, and where flexing muscles in Antarctica has become a way to mark increased presence on the global political stage more generally, the need for the ATS to be accepted as just and legitimate is greater than ever.

We have chosen to err on the side of being provocative in this volume. The contributors come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, and their interests – while including Antarctica – range geographically from western Europe to Latin America, Oceania to the USSR. Collectively we hope that the result is a stimulating cacophony rather than a reassuring harmony. Our overarching question (why think about colonialism in connection with Antarctica?) does not have an obvious or easy answer, but we trust that readers will follow our contention that the process of answering it will provide illumination to compensate for the lack of neatly packaged conclusions.

Structure of the book

This volume is divided into two parts. In the first, we collect a series of chapters that deal with the question of Antarctic colonialism from the perspective of specific countries, especially claimants and potential claimants. Whether Argentina, Chile, France, Poland, China and the Soviet Union enacted or

enact colonial practices, and to what extent their actions were or are infused by the attitudes and logic of colonialism elsewhere, are the central questions around which their arguments revolve.

Against standard accounts, historian Roman Khandozhko suggests that Soviet Antarctic politics may be interpreted as colonial if one grants that an important dimension of colonialism is resource extraction. Despite its official anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist rhetoric, the Soviet Union engaged in a process of expansion where Antarctica appeared as a promised land of valuable mineral resources and even as a potential site for future settlers. 'Extractive socialism', Khandozhko claims, thus followed the same underlying logic of 'extractive capitalism', no matter how much the Soviet authorities tried to distance themselves from it. 'Rational' or not, it nonetheless concerned the conquest and exploitation of nature.

Katherine Sinclair compares three French colonial sites that, despite their differing geographies and histories, all served one common purpose: the furthering of French power and prestige in the second half of the twentieth century against the backdrop of decolonisation. Algeria, French Guiana, Terre Adélie and the Kerguelen Islands were all sites for the development of the French sounding rocket programme, and also became part of a network of satellite tracking stations, through which France aimed to become a space power at a time when its terrestrial power was in decline.

Katarzyna Jarosz looks at the institution of Historic Sites and Monuments within the ATS and asks to what extent these help to foster and maintain colonial narratives in the continent. Provocatively, Jarosz suggests that Poland, China and the Soviet Union can be interpreted as engaging in colonial practices not qualitatively different from those of the original claimants, based on their attempts to show priority and superiority over others, and therefore a sense of entitlement to territory.

Ignacio Cardone defends Argentina and Chile against the charge that they engaged in colonial and/or imperial practices in Antarctica, and suggests instead that their actions must be understood in the context of their being young nations in the process of consolidating their sovereign territories against foreign powers. The way in which these two countries perform science in Antarctica is, for Cardone, indicative of their distinct approach to the continent as a permanent national commitment, as well as their understanding of their Antarctic territories as continuous and integral components of state territories (rather than separate units).

Alejandra Mancilla, on the contrary, argues that the position of the South American claimants in Antarctica was based on colonial assumptions that were not questioned, but embraced. Their claims should thus be seen as following a similar logic to the claims of the others, including the United Kingdom – even if this logic was rarely made explicit. This would be a step

forward in the recognition that these countries behaved in a colonial and imperial manner as they expanded to the south, and would help to see the history of their Antarctic territories in continuity with what happened in their southern continental territories.

The second half of the book takes a more thematic view, focusing upon concepts or practices that cut across national boundaries. Adrian Howkins considers the role of religion in Antarctica as an expression of values linked to colonialism: a firm Christian faith that linked missionaries in the Scramble for Africa to the first heroic explorers of the Antarctic continent, and later became institutionalised through chaplaincies associated with national programmes. Official expressions of faith have also strengthened Latin American and more recently Bulgarian presence in Antarctica, further inscribing national values upon Antarctic spaces.

Germana Nicklin focuses on border-making as a means to mediate human conceptualisations of Antarctic space. For Nicklin, the demarcation of an 'inside' and an 'outside' through the ATS cuts across the relationships that claimant states continue to maintain with settlements and stations upon their slices of Antarctica. Her characterisation of this as a fluid form of 'extra-colonialism' invites reflection upon how borders serve to create as well as reflect political and social imaginaries.

María Jimena Cruz, Melisa A. Salerno and Andrés Zarankin look at the Antarctic sealing era to discuss the connections between capitalism and colonialism during the early history of Antarctica. While the capitalist aspects of the Antarctic sealing industry have been widely acknowledged, the colonial aspects of the activity have been downplayed. Resorting to historical and archaeological evidence, the authors shed light on the potential colonial dynamics behind sealers' interests, their ways of establishing presence and their power relationships.

Peder Roberts and Kati Lindström explore how a focus on colonialism may help illuminate human–animal relationships in Antarctica. While cautious about equating Antarctic animals to human victims of colonialism elsewhere in the world, they ask whether colonial mindsets encouraged a view of animals as ersatz subjects, and whether the actions of Greenpeace in mobilising penguins within its campaigns to protect the Antarctic environment itself bore echoes of colonialism.

Alice Oates focuses on the British Halley VI station as a site of ongoing British colonial engagement with Antarctica. In particular, Oates argues that the mindset of settler colonialism has contributed to a distinctive local identity rooted in collective experience of a place. Her thought-provoking intervention pushes the concept of settler colonialism beyond its traditional bounds, stressing the domination of space as the first step toward the creation of a settler identity.

Yelena Yermakova points to the problem of domination in the Antarctic Treaty, manifested in a two-tiered system where consultative parties who perform 'substantial science' have decision-making power, while non-consultative parties may observe and speak, but not partake in the actual decision-making process. Yermakova suggests that this hierarchical system is a result of the colonial genesis of the Treaty, and that it reflects the colonial structures present at the time of its signature. The Treaty may thus be decolonised by moving toward a more equitable arrangement, where all parties have the same influencing power.

Luís Guilherme Resende de Assis concludes the section with a reorientation of colonialism itself, contrasting the metropolitan colonialism of European empires with the 'autochthonous colonisation' through which humans know and change the spaces they inhabit – including Antarctica. De Assis thus shifts from lines on a map drawn by politicians to acts in the field performed by scientists – practices whereby human presence becomes materialised through everything from instruments to organic waste. Antarctica has been colonised not by the words of states, but through the concrete culture of polar research.

The volume concludes with an afterword from Rebecca Herman that circles back to the main themes of the chapters. Words matter. Can colonialism without direct subjugation best be described with other terminology? Can states such as Argentina and Chile that emerged from European empires, and which were active in pushing the NIEO, still be placed on one side of a ledger at least partially defined by colonialism? These are questions that are easier to pose than to answer – but as Herman notes, the possibility of arguing in different ways is perhaps evidence of their importance.

Acknowledgements

For their thoughtful feedback on earlier versions of this text, we would like to thank Patrik Baard, Ben Etherington, Andrea Foss, Zsofia Korosy, Anna Wienhues, the participants at the 2022 workshop of the Norwegian Network of Practical Philosophy, participants at seminars held at the University of New South Wales and Western Sydney University, and the participants at the workshop 'Rights of Nature and Antarctica: Historical, Legal and Philosophical Perspectives', Lysebu, Oslo. We would also like to thank Fabian Stenhaug for his excellent research assistance.

This chapter received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement nos 948964 and 716211) and the Research Council of Norway (grant agreement no. 267692).

Notes

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41 Ryan T. Jones, *Red Leviathan: The Secret History of Soviet Whaling* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

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