

## Book Review

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### **Australia and the Antarctic Treaty System – 50 years of influence**

*Edited by* Marcus Harward & Tom Griffiths  
University of New South Wales Press Ltd, Sydney, 2011.  
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This book is an unashamedly Australia-centric view of Australia's part in the first fifty years of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Its sixteen scholarly contributions cover topics ranging from sovereignty, law and science, through mapping and resources, to diplomacy, the environment and culture. The authorship ranges from a post-graduate to senior academics, lawyers and policy makers. As a result it does provide a broad-based and comprehensive narrative on Australia's involvement in Antarctica. Its central theme that Australia has consistently been a leader in Antarctic affairs is borne out by recent independent research (Dudeney & Walton 2012), but the book does exhibit a level of somewhat strident hubris in making this case.

The summary of Australia's historical involvement in Antarctica (Kawaja & Griffiths) is detailed and well researched. Its underlying thesis is that Australia took the lead in the face of a reluctant UK to make a territorial claim. This thesis really rests on the extent to which Leo Amery was influenced by Australian lobbying in 1919 in developing his plan for "Imperial Antarctica". There is no cited evidence that he was influenced by Mawson, and the delay until 1933 in creating Australian Antarctic Territory has much to do with the problems of Adélie Land and exactly where the boundaries should be placed. The chapter also claims that Rymill was "recruited by the British Government to confirm its claim to the Falkland Islands Dependencies". There is no evidence in the UK public records that this was the case, though Rymill's expedition was bailed out by the Treasury when it faced bankruptcy midway, and it did serve to highlight the UK claim to the FID at a time when the USA was making counter-claims.

The events leading up to and the negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty are covered in a chapter by Hall & Kawaja. This gives a good account of the Australian viewpoint and quite properly credits the Australian diplomat Robert Casey with convincing the USSR to agree to the explicit inclusion of the issue of territorial claims in the Treaty. However, it is curious that the authors omit any reference to the Indian proposal in 1956 that the "Question of Antarctica" be part

of the agenda of the United Nations, since this was an important extra dimension to the problem of Antarctica. Also, the Australian position on the banning of nuclear dumping or testing was more complex than the chapter would have the reader believe. The Australian Government (along with other western powers) were interested in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Antarctica and were thus resistant to a complete ban. Only a few years earlier the Australian cabinet had used as one of its reasons for establishing continental stations the possibility of siting nuclear power stations there (see National Archives of Australia 1950a, 1950b).

The chapter on sovereignty (Rothwell & Jackson), although necessarily focussed on the Australian claim, is a masterful essay on how the territorial truce embodied in Articles IV and VIII of the Treaty has allowed nations with very different views on who owns Antarctica to work together, but also where the weaknesses in it lies and may cause problems in the future. This chapter is nicely complemented by one on law (Kaye *et al.*), which will primarily be of interest to an Australian audience but does highlight the delicate balancing act required to maintain the stability of the Antarctic Treaty.

Hemmings & Jabour chronicle Australia's role in the first decade of the Antarctic Treaty. It was during this period that the institutional shape and culture of the Antarctic Treaty meetings was forged. As one of the original 12 signatories, Australia played a full part in this. Australia's involvement in Science in Antarctica is discussed by Stoddart & Haward, though they do not actually describe major science outcomes. The Australian territorial claim has always been the primary focus with the Antarctic programme embedded within a government ministry, unlike other leading Antarctic nations where there is a more arms length arrangement. The chapter shows how, as a consequence, the science has evolved to be more closely driven by government policy objectives than for other countries. There is more than a touch of hubris in this chapter, though it is undoubtedly the case that Australia is consistently in the top handful of countries in the production of science publications relating to Antarctica. It is also true that Australia has made the running on the vexed issue of alien species and clean-up, though their claim that Annex VI (liability) will cause Antarctic Programmes to evaluate the cost of clean-up of old contaminated sites is a misreading of the annex. It is focussed very specifically on the much more limited objective of dealing with environmental incidents for which remedial action is possible. As a point of fact, the Nature paper describing the ozone hole was based on data from Halley station not Faraday.

Kaye et al provide a chapter about the evolution of international management of marine living resources and Australia's role in that story. Australia was a leading light in the negotiation of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), with Hobart the site of the CCAMLR secretariat and of the Convention's annual meetings. This chapter is followed by one on mapping (Scott) which gives a nice exposition on the difficulties for mapping and naming in Antarctica because of the territorial issues, which in this regard have not been put to sleep by Article IV of the Treaty. Curiously, given the prominence of Australia's leadership in SCAR on mapping and geodesy there is no mention in this chapter of two major SCAR products: the Antarctic Digital Database and Bedmap.

There follow two fascinating and complementary chapters covering the "Question of Antarctica" (Haward & Mason) and the minerals debate (Jackson & Boyce). Sandwiched between them is a chapter on resources (Jabour & Haward). The 1980s turned out to be very testing time for the Antarctic Treaty with Malaysia leading a concerted attack in the UN by the Non-Aligned Nations against what they saw as an exclusive and secretive club, and the attempt to negotiate a convention to cover minerals exploitation (CRAMRA). The latter saw an explosion of new nations rushing to become Consultative Parties so that they could participate. Haward & Mason give a valuable overview of the issues surrounding the "Question of Antarctica" and Australia's part in representing the ATCPs at the UN. The chapter on CRAMRA, why Australia decided to break the consensus and how the Protocol on Environmental Protection finally emerged instead, is an authoritative piece of work, showing as it does that initially the reasons why Australia turned away from CRAMRA were much more complex than pure environmentalism. The chapter is very comprehensive with a copious bibliography of references and notes. Of course it gives the story from an Australian viewpoint. Hopefully the story will be told again from different national viewpoints in the years to come. The chapter on resources is interesting because of the broad definition it employs, evoking the Antarctic as a resource for science and for tourism. It also raises (again) the issues of Antarctica as a major resource of water, noting that water exploitation is not covered by the PEP ban on mineral exploitation. This chapter also flags up the important issue that the ATCPs have yet to get to grips with bio-prospecting. It should be noted however that the chapter maintains the myth that tourist numbers are ever increasing. They are not. International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) figures show that a peak was reached in 07/08 summer season and have fallen by around a third since then.

The Chapter on diplomacy (Boyce & Press) is to some extent a reprise of earlier chapters as it revisits

Australia's role in CCAMLR and CRAMRA/PEP. However, it does provide valuable insights into why Australia decided to proceed with making a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in regard to its Antarctic claim and why it asked that the CLCS not to take any action for the time being. This was both a controversial move but one that demonstrated good leadership amongst the ATCPs. There is also the remarkable claim that Tony Press was able to render Mike Richardson speechless over the issue; a gift not given to many! The chapter ends with a fascinating insight into the style adopted by the Australian AT delegation. Jackson & Kriwoken provide a concise but useful commentary on the introduction of the PEP and some of the issues that were thrown up. However, it is disappointing that in their discussion on tourism they did not once mention IAATO. It is arguable that IAATO has always been ahead of the ATS in producing and applying a practical regimen to minimize environmental impacts. More than one of the National Operators could learn from their leadership. Australia's evolving journey towards best practice in waste management is chronicled by Kriwoken & Maggs. It is a journey undertaken by all the National Operators to a greater or lesser degree.

Under the title Australia's Antarctic future, Haward & Jackson give a thoughtful account of where the Treaty stands, how it might be challenged and what its future path might be. Though cast in terms of Australia's policy imperatives, this speaks generally to the issues that need to be embraced by all of the ATCPs.

The final chapter (Griffiths & Green) is unusual and initially seems out of step, but is actually an inspired way to finish the book. It talks about the culture of Antarctica from the way wintering stations live to the way the Antarctic Treaty and the other major international groupings (SCAR, COMNAP, CCAMLR, IAATO) work. It draws from the uniquely forbidding but beautiful continent the imperative to drive towards cooperation and consensus which is seen at all levels in the Antarctic story.

The book is well produced with a useful timeline of Australia in Antarctica and a good index. However, none of the contributions uses any interpretative graphical material and there is only a small selection of photoplates, none in colour, which makes the book less of a pleasure to pick up. Another curiosity is that the list of contributors does not apparently match the list of authors given in the "Contents". In fact, four contributors have short sections covering notable Australian Antarctic figures "inserted" into the middle of other larger chapters. There are also mini-contributions on the key Australian figures in Antarctic diplomacy and on the Antarctic culture of Tasmania. This editorial concept is interesting, but as it stands now they are effectively "lost", which is a pity. The biographies themselves are bland, and

that of Phillip Law rather one dimensional; he was a complex and difficult man and it is clear from the archives that the management had good cause to be frustrated with him! And why no biography of Bernacchi?

Though clearly aimed as a celebration of Australia's role, and hence aimed primarily at a domestic audience, overall this is a valuable contribution to Antarctic scholarship, and by and large, a good read.

J.R. DUDENEY

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