

Working Document No. 30

GEOPOLITICAL UPDATE OF THE CHILEAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY



Cover: Photograph of the Union Glacier, Chilean
Antarctic territory
Juan Pablo Toro, 2014.

The comments and opinions expressed in this
document represent those of its authors, which
may differ from those of the institution.

GEOPOLITICAL UPDATE OF THE CHILEAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY

John Griffiths
Marcelo Masalleras
Juan Pablo Toro



0.1

Introduction

The icy wind hits hard at the South Pole, where a chrome sphere on a red and white pedestal reflects the flags of the 12 original signatory countries of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. In this inhospitable place, so sought after by explorers of the past, all current territorial claims on the continent converge, perhaps along with those yet to come.

The competition between great powers that characterises current times promises to reach every corner of the planet. Different geographical areas, in one way or another, could be the object of conflict—direct or indirect—or witness tensions in this reconfiguration of the international order.

It is a reality that Chile is a tricontinental country. As noted by General Ramón Cañas Montalva, Chile has a privileged continental position on the western Andean slope of South America, which gives it a clear and definitive projection over the Pacific Ocean¹. Also, its possessions in Rapa Nui and Salas y Gómez Island give Chile a relevant position in regard to Oceania, and further project its interests toward Asia and the Indian Ocean. Finally, Chile has an indisputable sovereign claim over Antarctica, due to proximity, continuity and geographical contiguity. All these arguments oblige the State of Chile to pay attention to the past, present and, above all, future events that affect its national interests wherever they may be.

In this sense, the situation in Antarctica is unique. The creation of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS)² has provided stability, with a centralised governance model that has so far been effective and served Chile's interests. However, there is no guarantee that this will last forever. Quite the contrary, everything indicates that geopolitical pressure and interest in the latest continent to be discovered will only increase over time.

The Chilean State is thus compelled to become directly involved in all Antarctica-related matters, particularly in the South American quadrant. The staunch defence of sovereign rights over Chilean Antarctic territory, as well as the preservation of its habitat, represent a permanent and unavoidable challenge for authorities. Hence, important and varied challenges arise, one of the most obvious of which being the need to inhabit Antarctica more decisively and further south, which still posits a major challenge despite all the technology available for protection against low temperatures. Extreme isolation, changing and severe weather conditions, and the need to travel great distances without reliable communications, are the natural context on the white continent.

Despite all these challenges, Chile must make every effort to positively exercise its sovereign rights within the recognised legal framework. This is not optional, but rather a national obligation, which will undoubtedly become a long-term investment for the country.

1 Cañas Montalva, Ramón. "Chile el más Antártico de los Países del Orbe y su Responsabilidad Continental en el Sur-Pacífico". John Griffiths and Marcelo Masalleras. *General Ramón Cañas Montalva: Pionero de la Geopolítica en Chile*. Ediciones AthenaLab. Santiago de Chile, 2024, pp.54-85.

2 More information available at: https://documents.ats.aq/keydocs/vol_1/vol1_2_AT_Antarctic_Treaty_s.pdf

In the context of updating geopolitical research into areas of national interest, an AthenaLab team visited Antarctica, including the South Pole, accompanied by diplomats and experts in Antarctic law. They conducted fieldwork aimed to address the challenges facing a country with rights to, and an unbeatable position over, a significant section of Antarctica.

by an analysis of the geopolitical situation; addressing matters related to geopolitical competition, the overlapping of Chilean sovereignty and claims by other States, as well as the need to prioritise Antarctic affairs, including raising national awareness. Finally, conclusions are drawn, and proposals are made to improve Chile's position in Antarctica.

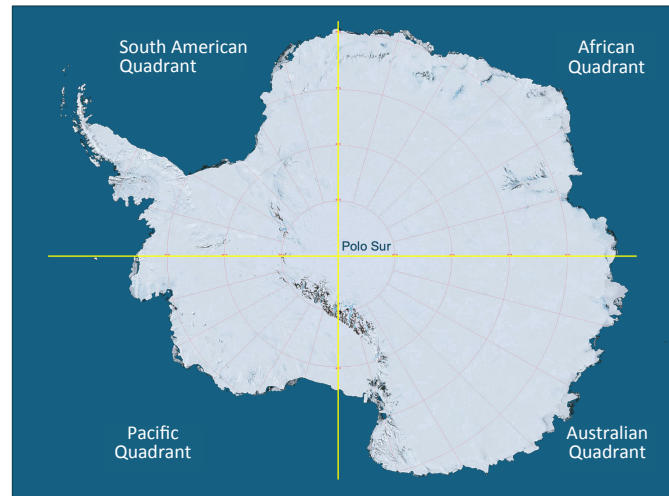
This first section describes aspects related to Antarctic exploration, its natural resources, the most relevant aspects of the Antarctic Treaty system, and a review of Chile's rights, policies and activities related to the continent. This is followed



Overview: rights and interests of Chile in Antarctica

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

From a geological perspective, the Antarctic continent is divided into two parts that form different areas: the eastern part, between 0° and 180° E longitude, and the western part, between 0° and 180° W longitude, respectively. The eastern region is geologically older, with rocks dating back 500 to 600 million years. The western side, on the other hand, exhibits young, dynamic, igneous rocks, approximately 300 million years old. Deposits associated with rocks such as diamonds have been found in the eastern part, while copper and iron are found in the western part. Also, coal deposits exist in the Transantarctic Mountains that separate the two areas³.



MAP 1: ANTARCTIC QUADRANTS

Source: Prepared by the authors using the AP map.

Antarctica is the fifth largest continent by area, at 14 million km², of which 97% is covered by ice, with the coldest and driest climate on the planet. Its average altitude is around 2,300 meters, and the ice cover is estimated to contain 70% of the planet's freshwater. The entire continent is surrounded by the Antarctic Ocean, which separates it from neighbouring lands such as South America, New Zealand, Australia, and Africa⁴. It is a land mass devoid of terrestrial

vegetation and fauna and was uninhabited at the time of its discovery.

Based on its proximity to other continental territories, the geographical division of Antarctica establishes specific sectors: the "South American" (0°-90° W longitude); the "Pacific" (90°-180° W longitude); the "Australian" (180°-90° E longitude); and the "African" (90°-0° E longitude)⁵ (see Map 1).

3 De la Barrera, Werner. "La Antártica Chilena, Recursos Potenciales". *Revista de Marina*. November–December. 1977. Imprenta Armada de Chile, p.651.

4 De la Maza, Cristián & Paulo Botta. *Antártica: Una aproximación desde Argentina y Chile*. Serie Perspectivas. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Centro Estudios Internacionales, Universidad Católica de Chile, p.13. Available at: <http://centroestudiosinternacionales.uc.cl/images/publicaciones/publicaciones-ceiuc/antartica-web.pdf>

5 Bruna Opazo, Mariana & Pía Forlivesi Rodríguez. *Chile en la Antártica: La Ciencia como Instrumento Soberano*. Thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Legal and Social Sciences. Universidad de Chile. Faculty of Law. Department of International Law. Santiago, Chile, 2021, pp.8-9. Available at: <https://repositorio.uchile.cl/handle/2250/180445>

The "South American quadrant", already delimited by eminent Chilean geographer Luis Risopatrón in 1907, is located between 24º and 90º W. This area was later included in the security zone of the Americas by the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance of 1947 (TIAR).⁶

SOVEREIGNTY, EXPLORATION AND OCCUPATION BY CHILE

The first confirmed discovery of the Antarctic continent was made in 1820 by explorer Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen, in service of the Russian Empire. A decade later, between 1830 and 1832, the continent was circumnavigated by British explorer John Biscoe.⁷

The earliest traces of Chilean sovereignty are related to Spanish rule and the corresponding jurisdiction over its territories. An early landmark is found in the papal bulls of Pope Alexander VI, issued in 1493, and in the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494. Both treaties granted Spain sovereignty over the polar region located west of 27°31' W longitude from 1493 to 1810.⁸ In this regard, José Javier Gorostegui and Rodrigo Waghorn,⁹ quoting Jorge Berguño, state:

“When the monarch Charles V learned of the existence of these southern lands, he issued Royal decrees to assign the so-called ‘Terra Australis’ to governors who were in charge of the Captaincy

General of Chile, and later to governors of the Kingdom of Chile, whom he entrusted with exercising sovereignty over all the southern lands that had been or would be discovered. This is how Sancho de Hoz, Pedro de Valdivia, Gerónimo de Alderete and Francisco de Villagra held the position of governor of Terra Australis.”

After the Spanish American wars of independence, the principle *uti possidetis juris*,¹⁰ established that the territories of the new nations would be based on what was stated in Spanish royal decrees and maps. Therefore, the region located in the Antarctic zone neighbouring America was granted to our nation by the express will of the Spanish monarch.¹¹ Later, independence leader Bernardo O'Higgins had a well known geopolitical fixation for Magallanes, which in 1843 would lead Manuel Bulnes to occupy the Strait of Magellan, to materialise the great dream of Chile's Founding Father.

In the case of Chile, once independence was declared (1818), the first sovereignty-related activities were the hunting of seals and sea lions, mainly from 1820 to 1830. During this time, many English and American ships set sail from the port of Valparaíso southbound to hunt these animals in order to market their skins. This caused the Juan Fernández fur seal to go nearly extinct, and therefore the seal boats were withdrawn from the Antarctic territory at the end of 1830.¹²

6 Cañas Montalva Ramón. “El Valor Geopolítico de la Posición Antártica de Chile”. John Griffiths and Marcelo Masalleras. *General Ramón Cañas Montalva: Pionero de la Geopolítica en Chile*. Ediciones AthenaLab. Santiago de Chile. 2024, p.87.

7 Peavey, Ross & Lawrence Gould. *Antarctica, international land of science. The UNESCO Courier: a window open on the world*, XV, 1 [537]. January 1962, p.15.

8 Romero, Pedro. “Chile's Presence in Antarctica”. In Orrego Vicuña Francisco, María Teresa Infante Caffi, and Pilar Armanet. *Política Antártica de Chile*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, 1984, pp.35-50.

9 Gorostegui, José and Rodrigo Waghorn. *Chile en la Antártica: Nuevos Desafíos y Perspectivas*. LOM, Santiago de Chile. 2012, p.195.

10 Pinochet de la Barra, Oscar. *La Antártica Chilena*. AthenaLab reissue. Santiago, Chile. November 2023. Chapter Four. “The *uti possidetis* of 1810 and the Antarctic rights of the Republic”, pp.99-105.

11 Berguño Barnes, Jorge. *Cincuenta años de Política Antártica (1940-1990)*. Academia Diplomática de Chile, Santiago, 1991, pp.23-24.

12 De Toro Álvarez, Carlos. “Vinculación Histórica del Territorio Continental a la Antártica”. In Orrego Vicuña Francisco, María Teresa Infante Caffi, and Pilar Armanet. *Política Antártica de Chile*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, 1984, p.55.

In the 1870s and 1880s, interest in seal hunting in the Antarctic area resurfaced. At that time, Punta Arenas was the obligatory departure point for both domestic and foreign vessels. This city had achieved significant commercial development,¹³ thanks to its privileged position in the middle of the bi-oceanic passage known as the Strait of Magellan. At the same time, in 1881, the Boundary Treaty was signed with Argentina, thereby establishing the boundaries in the southernmost part of the American continent.

The next significant step in terms of Chile's Antarctic interests was Fishing Ordinance No. 1623, issued in 1892 by the Ministry of Industry and Public Works and signed by President Jorge Montt, aiming to regulate the hunting and fishing of seals, sea lions and otters on the coasts, islands, and seas south of Chile, and to protect the interests of Chilean workers against foreign invasions.¹⁴ In December 1902, through Supreme Decree No. 3310 of the Ministry of Industry and Public Works, President Germán Riesco granted Pedro Pablo Benavides a concession to hunt and fish in Antarctic waters, marking the first time that any country in the world had exercised such a clear act of sovereignty in Antarctica.¹⁵

In the opinion of Ambassador Jorge Berguño Barnes, 1906 was the year in which a Chilean Antarctic policy began to be developed, as the then Foreign Minister Federico Puga Borne planned the first national policy to administrate, populate, and exploit the Antarctic regions.¹⁶

A concrete manifestation of this was the 27 February 1906 Supreme Decree 260 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed by President Germán Riesco and the aforementioned Foreign Minister, by which Domingo Toro Herrera and Enrique Fabry were granted a 25-year authorisation to carry out agricultural and fishing activities on and around the Guamblin and Desolación islands, other uninhabited islands located south of the Beagle Channel, the Diego Ramírez, Shetland and Georgia islands, the Graham lands and the part of Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego that faces the Beagle Channel.¹⁷

It is worth highlighting the Chilean government's complete certainty regarding national sovereignty over the aforementioned territory, which is evident in the text of the aforementioned decree:

All this should bear in mind the advantage of exercising, in a positive manner, due vigilance over the national assets of those regions as well as compliance with the ordinances governing fishing in the southern seas.¹⁸

At the same time, the government authorised the establishment of fishing societies that would operate in the southern seas, the first of which, Sociedad Ballenera de Magallanes, was created by the 7 July 1906 Supreme Decree No. 2,905. It operated in Antarctica until 1914, obtaining permission from the local governor to establish a docking station in the Shetland Islands, more specifically, on Decepción Island, which became its general base of operations.¹⁹

13 Ibid, pp.55-56.

14 Romero, Pedro. "Presencia de Chile en la Antártica". In Orrego Vicuña Francisco, María Teresa Infante Caffi, and Pilar Armanet. *Política Antártica de Chile*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago. 1984, p.36.

15 Pinochet de la Barra, Oscar. "Antecedentes Históricos de la Política Internacional de Chile en la Antártica. Negociaciones chileno-argentinas de 1906,1907 y 1908." In Orrego Vicuña Francisco, María Teresa Infante Caffi, and Pilar Armanet. *Política Antártica de Chile*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, 1984, p.70.

16 Gorostegui, José Javier & Rodrigo Waghorn. *Chile en la Antártica: Nuevos Desafíos y Perspectivas*. LOM, Santiago de Chile, 2012, p.197.

17 Romero, Pedro. *Síntesis de la Historia Antártica de Chile*. Instituto de Investigaciones del Patrimonio Territorial de Chile, Universidad de Santiago de Chile. Editorial Universitaria. Santiago de Chile, 1985, p.7.

18 Ibid, p.8.

19 Ibid, p.8.

At the end of the 19th century, the rise of scientific expeditions began, as Antarctica remained the only unexplored continent. The main milestone was the conquest of the South Pole, first by Norwegian Roald Amundsen on 14 December 1911, and a month later by British explorer Robert Falcon Scott.

In August 1916, an historic event confirmed Chile's early action in the Antarctic region: Chilean Navy pilot Luis Pardo, on the cutter *Yelcho*, rescued the English explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton and the crew of his ship, the *Endurance*. This act demonstrated Chile's knowledge and ability to operate in these Antarctic zones via Chilean territory, which is the geographical area closest to the Antarctica's South American sector. This heroic action undoubtedly increased interest in the white continent.

However, the question of Chilean Antarctica's borders would have to wait until 1939, when the government of President Pedro Aguirre Cerda commissioned Professor Julio Escudero Guzmán to study national titles, with the purpose of demarcating the southernmost zone of the country. For this purpose, a Special Commission was created by Decree No. 1541 on 7 September 1939.²⁰ This study, in turn, resulted in Supreme Decree No. 1,747 on 6 November 1940, which established Chile's limits in the Antarctic territory as between 53° and 90° E longitudes, in the South American zone, based on geographical, historical, legal and diplomatic rights.²¹ This decree provided new momentum to the occupation of this space (see map No. 2²²).

During the first four decades of the 20th century, Argentina, Australia, France, Norway, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom also made sovereignty claims and delimited what they considered their Antarctic territory. This triggered

"a climate of rivalry and conflict,"²³ mainly due to the great difficulty of consecrating Antarctic territory for exclusively peaceful purposes, given that seven countries had claimed rights to it. This sovereign dispute was even more complex between the United Kingdom, Chile, and Argentina, considering that they had overlapping claims to the Antarctic Peninsula, and their claims were not recognised by other countries.

Tensions between these countries led to a race to establish permanent facilities. In January 1947, the Chilean expedition to Antarctica set sail from the port of Valparaíso with the goal of establishing the first station, "*Soberanía*", which was inaugurated on 6 February 1947, and was later renamed "*Capitán Arturo Prat*," continuing to operate to this day.

On 18 February 1948, the Bernardo O'Higgins Base was inaugurated. Its opening became one of the most significant events in Chilean Antarctic history, as it was attended by President Gabriel González Videla,²⁴ the world's first head of state to visit the continent. Another milestone was the creation of Instituto Antártico Chileno (Chilean Antarctic Institute) in October 1963 by President Jorge Alessandri. It is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its main headquarters are currently located in Punta Arenas.

However, by the 1950s, it was already abundantly clear that there was an international need to regulate activity on the Antarctic continent to prioritise cooperation, protection, and scientific research there, keeping it safe from the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective allies.

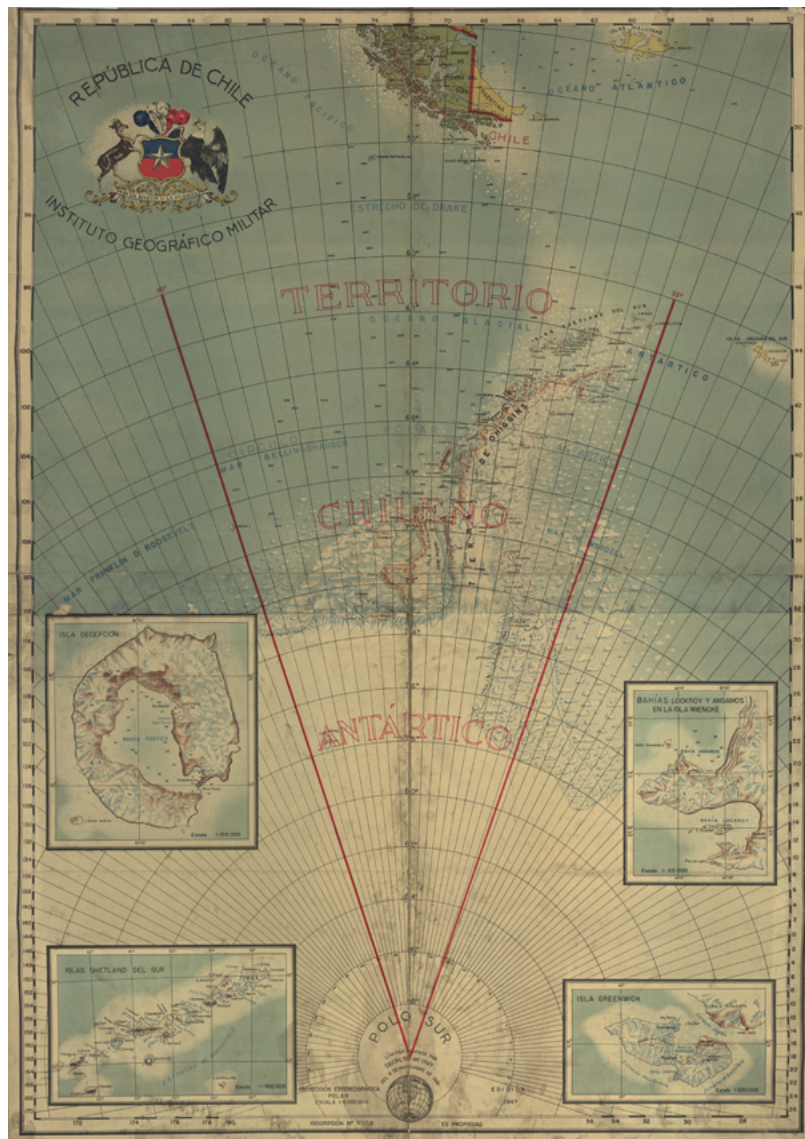
20 Gorostegui & Waghorn, op. cit., p.202.

21 Pinochet de la Barra, op. cit., pp.85-87.

22 Map prepared by Chile's Instituto Geográfico Militar in 1947, available at: www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/631/w3-article-311724.html

23 Gajardo Villarroel, Enrique. "Antecedentes de la Negociación Diplomática Previa al Tratado de 1959 y la Posición de Chile". *Política Antártica de Chile*. Orrego Vicuña Francisco, María Teresa Infante Caffi, and Pilar Armanet. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile, Editorial Universitaria, p.81.

24 Cañas Montalva, "Chile, the most Antarctic of the World's Countries and its Continental Responsibility in the South Pacific". In op. cit., p.61.



MAP 2: CHILEAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY (53°-90° W)

Source: Chile's Instituto Geográfico Militar

ANTARCTIC TREATY SYSTEM

By the mid-20th century, several countries had staked territorial claims in Antarctica, and research stations were being built to consolidate those claims. Fearing rising tensions between Antarctic claimants—many of whom were close US allies—and rising Soviet activity in the Southern Hemisphere, Washington began

promoting the idea of a governance regime for the region.²⁵ At the same time, the 1957–1958 International Geophysical Year (IGY) was taking place, focusing largely on Antarctica, and demonstrating what countries could achieve scientifically if they combined their efforts.

²⁵ According to then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the Antarctic Treaty was necessary to keep Antarctica “in friendly hands.” Cited in Anne-Marie Brady, “China as a Polar Great Power” (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, DC; and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017), p.42, Google Books.

During 1958 and 1959, the US hosted an Antarctic Conference and lobbied 12 of the IGY countries to define how scientific cooperation in Antarctica should continue.²⁶ This led to the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, which, following ratification by Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and the USSR, entered into force in 1961. Through this document, the signatories agreed to use Antarctica “exclusively for peaceful purposes”; guarantee that the “freedom of scientific investigation [...] and cooperation toward that end [...] shall continue”; share information and personnel; make no new claims nor enlarge existing claims to territorial sovereignty; neither detonate nuclear devices nor dispose of radioactive waste on the continent; and allow inspection by designated national Antarctic research station and facility observers²⁷ However, it should be clarified that, under the agreement, previous claims and their grounds remain valid, as established in Article IV.

The Treaty, which covers the entire Antarctic continent, that is, all areas south of 60° S latitude, remains in force and has been ratified by 45 additional countries, totaling 57 signatories.²⁸ At its heart are the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs), which have been held annually since 1994 (previously biannual). The ATCMs are attended by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs, the decision-making signatories) and non-consultative parties. The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) coordinates scientific research and

provides independent scientific advice to the ATCMs. The Antarctic Treaty, whose Secretariat is based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, will remain in effect until at least 2048, at which point any signatory may propose changes, which will have to be approved by 75% of the ATCPs.

Additionally, the Antarctic Treaty has become part of a broader system that includes “related agreements”: the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS, London, 1972), the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR, Canberra, 1980), and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Madrid, 1991), which in turn originated the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP).²⁹ These agreements were designed to prevent signatories and non-signatories to the ATS alike from exploiting Antarctic resources and degrading the continent's delicate ecosystems.

As the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) notes, the ATS “has become recognised as one of the most successful sets of international agreements, setting an example of peaceful cooperation for the rest of the world.” However, it would be wrong to think of the signatories as purely altruistic.³⁰ While the ATS has done much to impose itself above traditional geopolitics and economic exploitation in the “Deep south,” the signatories have continued to pursue their national interests. The original territorial claimants have not relinquished their claims, and in fact the Antarctic Treaty itself, with its emphasis on science, may have actively encouraged signatories to establish a presence, albeit for scientific and technological ends.³¹

26 The twelve countries were: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Final Act of the conference is included in the “Compilation of Key Documents of the Antarctic Treaty System”, Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2017, pp.9–20. Available at https://documents.ats.aq/atcm40/ww/ATCM40_ww014_e.pdf

27 Antarctic Treaty, Washington, DC, 1 December 1959, https://ats.aq/documents/key-docs/vol_1/vol1_2_AT_Antarctic_Treaty_e.pdf

28 List of countries available on the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty website: <https://ww.ats.aq/devAS/Parties?lang=e>

29 Further information on these related agreements: “Related Agreements”, Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, revised 10 July 2020, <https://www.ats.aq/e/related.html>.

30 “The Antarctic Treaty Explained”, British Antarctic Survey, revised 10 July 2020, www.bas.ac.uk/about/antarctica/the-antarctic-treaty/the-antarctic-treaty-explained

31 Klaus Dodds, “Governing Antarctica: Contemporary Challenges and the Enduring Legacy of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty”, *Global Policy* 1, No. 1 (January 2010), p.110.



MAP 3: SECTORS WITH ANTARCTIC TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

Source: CIA World Factbook- Antarctic Region (PDF). Archived from the original on 2012-05-18. Public domain: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3345384>

Indeed, signatories to the Antarctic Treaty can become ATCPs only if they demonstrate their capacity to conduct “substantial [emphasis added] research activity” on the Antarctic continent.³² In this sense, the geopolitical approach to Antarctica has not necessarily been postponed; rather, it has been pursued through other means.

In addition to Chile, whose rights are clear, six other member nations of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) have claimed Antarctic sovereignty, in the following order (Map 3):

- France	1840
- United Kingdom	1908
- New Zealand	1923
- Norway	1931
- Australia	1933
- Chile	1940
- Argentina	1943

The main arguments for their claims are based on the proximity of their territories to Antarctica, or the establishment of primarily scientific activities on the continent. It is well known that there is an overlap between Chile's sovereign territory and the claims of Argentina (between 25° and 74° W)

32 “ATCM and Other Meetings”, Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty. Available at www.ats.aq/e/atcm.html

and the United Kingdom (between 20º and 80º W).

MAIN OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS REGULATING THE CHILEAN ANTARCTIC

In terms of formal policy, the most recent version of the National Antarctic Policy was published on 17 October 2024, and is expressed in the following terms³³:

The National Antarctic Policy is the guiding document for Chile's Antarctic activities and is based on a long tradition of ties to Antarctica. This connection is historical, geographical, legal and diplomatic, and is deepened through a continuous history of public and private activity in that part of the world.

The above definition implies the act of national strategic planning and management of the national Antarctic territory. The Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines and expresses that this essential activity has its foundation in the "First Chilean Antarctic Commission" of 2 August 1906, presided by then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Huneeus.³⁴

Chile's Antarctic policies could be summarised in the following public documents:

33 Supreme Decree No. 31 of 27 January 2023, published on 17 October 2024, approving the National Antarctic Policy. Available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1207528>

34 Ibid. This commission met "with the aim of studying the best means that could be adopted to explore and occupy the islands and lands situated in the South American Antarctic zone, and to draw up a budget for the expenses that these operations would require", all of which would then "enforce [Chile's] unquestionable sovereignty rights in that region." This early national Antarctic planning is the basis for all subsequent public exercises and documents.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CHILE'S ANTARCTIC DOCUMENTS

Source: National Antarctic Policy 2021³⁵ and Supreme Decree No. 31, 2024.

Antarctic Policy	Main objective
Chilean Antarctic Policy (1984)	Consolidation of national sovereignty in the Chilean Antarctic Territory. Study and installation of new bases, such as Villa Las Estrellas in 1984. It included a National Antarctic Plan.
National Antarctic Policy (2000)	Adaptation of the previous document to the new challenges and guidelines implied by the enactment, in 1998, of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.
Chile in Antarctica: Strategic Vision for 2035 (2015)	Document approved by the Antarctic Policy Council at its meeting on 9 December 2015. It establishes a set of political, operational and logistical guidelines that allow progress in the construction of a unitary and consensual vision regarding Chile's Antarctic activities.
National Antarctic Policy (2017)	Update to the 2000 National Antarctic Policy, in accordance with the new challenges that emerged in the first decade of the 21st century. It laid the foundations for the development of new and strengthened national Antarctic legislation, combining national public interests and opening up greater space for the development of private projects.
National Antarctic Policy (2021)	Five objectives are listed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Protect and strengthen Chile's sovereign rights.- Establish the principles based on which the State of Chile conducts Antarctic policy.- Promote protection and care of the Antarctic environment and associated ecosystems.- Strengthen and regulate Chile's Antarctic activities.- Promote Chile's Antarctic activity, fostering the social and economic development of the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica Region.
National Antarctic Policy 2024	It highlights the importance of having an updated National Antarctic Policy that identifies priorities, outlines the principles that support it, and indicates the objectives toward which the country's action in the Antarctic continent should be directed, considering, in particular, the new institutional framework established by Law No. 21,255, which establishes the Chilean Antarctic Statute. It establishes itself as an essential component of the national Antarctic system and provides general guidelines to safeguard Chile's rights and interests in Antarctica.

35 Table prepared with information obtained from the National Antarctic Policy of 2021. Available at: https://www.minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/docs/20190906/20190906113642/3a_texto_politica_antartica_nacional_de_2021_aprobada_16_3_2021.pdf

0.3

Analysis of the geopolitical situation

ANTARCTIC GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION AND CHALLENGES TO THE ATS

Geopolitical interest in Antarctica has only grown over time. Various states, some geographically very distant from the South Pole, have taken concrete actions that demonstrate this. Open competition between the United States and China, joined by other powers such as Russia and Iran, has extended to different dimensions, even space. Thus, the stability provided by the ATS has become increasingly under threat, because given that the rules-based international order has been degraded, this special regime could be as well. It is true that the ATS reflects a different time and context than the present, but it is fair to maintain that, so far, it has served to protect this area of the planet and unite efforts in its conservation for peaceful and scientific purposes.

It is possible to conclude that the ATS has worked well from two perspectives. On the one hand, from a political-diplomatic perspective, in that it has kept Antarctica relatively free from the geopolitical rivalry and competition characteristic of the Cold War and the following decades. On the other hand, from a legal perspective, since it has provided a framework for effective governance for years. However, there are clear signs that this stability is deteriorating, and today the continent is beginning to experience a more competitive environment and, consequently, greater instability.³⁶ More and more countries are taking action on the white continent. The news of Russian prospecting in the Weddell Sea, as well as

the blockade by China and Russia to create maritime protected areas, are examples of this.³⁷

Aside from the signatories' bases, today an estimated thirty countries have some type of permanent or temporary facility on the continent. The latest to announce its intention to become a resident was Iran, with a noteworthy declaration that drew as much attention as scepticism, following the crossing of two of its Navy ships through the Strait of Magellan.³⁸ In addition, there have been some specific expeditions seeking to display its flag, as there is no better place to demonstrate its global reach.

Much has been written about the importance of Antarctica as a repository of untapped resources, such as minerals, hydrocarbons, fresh water, and all kinds of marine life that thrives in its cold waters. Yet, when mentioning the increased geopolitical competition over the continent in recent years, scientists and diplomats often emphasise the treasures stored there and the need to keep them intact, following the guidelines of the ATS. Even those who recognise the valid concern for Antarctic sovereignty and use warn that, ultimately, this question is too far ahead of its time.

36 James Rogers, Andrew Foxall, and Matthew Henderson, "Chile and the Southern Hemisphere: Antarctica in Transition?" AthenaLab. Santiago, 2020, pp.55-56.

37 Infobae. "Alarm over Russia's activities in Antarctica". Accessed 14 May 2024. Available at: <https://www.infobae.com/america/mundo/2024/05/14/alarma-por-las-actividades-de-rusia-en-la-antartida-las-investigaciones-que-generan-mas-preocupacion/>

38 The Diplomat (2023). "Will Iran Set up a Base in Antarctica?", Zia Madani and Alan D. Hemmings. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/will-iran-set-up-a-base-in-antarctica/>

Now, it may be tempting today to contrast the "banal nationalism" of territorial disputes with the high-level science carried out in Antarctica for the benefit of all humanity.³⁹ However, when assessing the importance of this vast region, one must take into account its projection into the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, which in itself gives it a central position for the world powers to position themselves advantageously and use it for purposes that go beyond the pacifist spirit of the Treaty.

"Such competition of national interests and international power balancing demonstrates that Antarctica warrants closer and more comprehensive analysis. The manoeuvring and positioning that is occurring may be a prelude to Antarctica's revered status as a 'shared space' shifting to that of a 'contested space'." warned a recent commentary from the RAND organisation.⁴⁰

In particular, the continent offers a privileged location for monitoring satellite communications, thanks to its skies free of significant interference. The stations there are key to providing greater precision to global positioning systems such as GPS, GLONASS, and BeiDou, whose uses range from guiding our cars to unknown destinations, to increasing the military readiness of global powers by increasing the accuracy of their aircraft movement and weapons.

Therefore, States face the dilemma of how to address the nascent "space race" over Antarctica and the growing number of activities related to the dual civil-military use of scientific activities declared there. This is compounded by the lack of effective mechanisms to enforce the Treaty, to halt or respond to dubious activities.

39 Howkins, A. (2021). "Political conflict on the Antarctica Peninsula", in *Antarctic Resolution*, by Giulia Foscari / UNLESS (Ed.). Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich, p.90.

40 Marigold Black and Peter Dortmans (2022), "Not So Quiet on the Southern Front." RAND. Available at: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2022/02/not-so-quiet-on-the-southern-front.html>

The Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) recently conducted an analysis using satellite imagery of China's polar activities, particularly focusing on the additional antennas that will be built at the Zhongshan Station, which will "supplement the station's existing antennas in sending and receiving data from Chinese satellites in polar or near-polar orbits, including those in China's dual-use BeiDou navigation system."

"The Zhongshan Station's assets could be leveraged to collect intelligence on foreign militaries in the Indian Ocean, including on the joint U.S.-UK Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia. It could also play a support role in monitoring India's developing naval forces operating in the region", the report said.⁴¹

Given the current situation, where political risk is escalating and communication channels between strategic competitors appear to be deficient, use by the United States, Russia and China of their ground stations in Antarctica to control offensive weapons systems and relay intelligence signals (in parallel with legitimate scientific activities) could have the "potential to modify the strategic balance that has maintained peace in the Asia-Pacific for almost 70 years," Brady estimates.⁴²

Considered individually and collectively, the positions and actions of Moscow and Beijing on Antarctic issues are reshaping the landscape of good governance and consensus-based decision-making in the ATS.⁴³ Both countries have

41 Center for Strategic International Studies (2023) "China's Great Power Ambitions in the Polar Regions", Matthew P. Funairole, Brian Hart, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Aidan Powers-Riggs. Available at: <https://features.csis.org/hiddenreach/china-polar-research-facility/>

42 Vanguardia Dossier (October-December 2021). "Strategic Competition at the South Pole", Anne-Marie Brady, issue 81, p.75.

43 Boulègue, M. (2023). "Five Eyes strategic interests in Antarctica: implications of contemporary Russian and Chinese strategy". *The Polar Journal*, 13(1), 71–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2023.2205239>

blocked the creation of marine protected areas. In particular, China does not always seem keen to adhere to rules it had no part in drafting, and Russia does not hesitate to violate them if its national interest dictates.⁴⁴

The authors of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty hoped their agreement would ensure that at least one region of the planet would remain free of competition and conflict by the great powers, something that has been achieved for seven decades. Geopolitical analyst Ian Bremmer argues, “We’re still a long way from worst-case scenarios”,⁴⁵ such as those involving skirmishes and wars, described in the special report “Chile and the Southern Hemisphere: Antarctica in Transition?”,⁴⁶ commissioned by AthenaLab.

Said study distinguishes two phenomena that will cause tensions in the future of the continent: climate change and the aforementioned geopolitical competition.⁴⁷ In this regard, it indicates that, although it is not expected that the continent will become “the ‘pivot’ of global geopolitics”, it can be expected that the region will become a stage for decisions made in other places, noting a substantial difference with respect to the Cold War: the new geopolitical era is centred on the Indo-Pacific region, much closer to and bordering the Antarctic region.⁴⁸

By combining these two elements—climate change and geopolitical competition—the study identifies four possible futures for the continent,⁴⁹ defined as: Glaciation,⁵⁰ Skirmish,⁵¹ Gaia,⁵² and Inferno⁵³ (see fig. 1⁵⁴).

For all the above reasons, this is not an issue of the future, but of the present. Of course, looking just beyond the dual use of activities labelled as scientific, it is necessary to assume that one of the reasons why the continent is vulnerable to strategic competition is the already existing scientific presence that some of the countries “could easily transform into a military presence.”⁵⁵ For example, the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station (US), which AthenaLab visited, would offer a “firm base”⁵⁶ for an eventual territorial claim, although its latest policy in May

44 Buchanan, E. (2021) “Russia’s 2021 National Security Strategy: Cool Change Forecasted for the Polar Regions”. RUSI. Available at: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-2021-national-security-strategy-cool-change-forecasted-polar-regions>

45 Bremmer, Ian (2023). “China’s ambitious plans in Antarctica have raised new suspicions”. Time Magazine. <https://time.com/6274924/china-antarctica-south-pole-us-tension/>

46 AthenaLab (2020). “Chile and the Southern Hemisphere: Antarctica in Transition?” James Rogers, Andrew Foxall and Matthew Henderson, p.46. Available at <https://www.athenalab.org/en/working-papers/publications/2020/09/29/study-chile-and-the-southern-hemisphere-antarctica-in-transition/>

47 Ibid, pp.42-43.

48 Ibid, pp.46-52.

49 Ibid, pp.46-52.

50 Ibid. “Glaciation” supposes that climate change will continue at the rate of current projections (a mean temperature increase of around 1.5°C) and global competition will continue at the current level, with geopolitical competition being constrained close to 2020 levels.

51 Ibid. “Skirmish” supposes that climate change will continue at the rate of current projections (a mean temperature increase of around 1.5°C) but that global competition will increase from 2020 levels and this will have an impact on Antarctica, leading to possible destabilisation of the ATS.

52 Ibid. “Gaia” supposes that climate change will increase beyond the rate of current projections (a mean temperature increase of around 2°C) but that the major powers manage to “ring fence” Antarctica from competition from elsewhere in the world.

53 Ibid. “Inferno” supposes that climate change will increase beyond the rate of current projections (a mean temperature increase of around 2°C) and that global competition will increase substantially from the 2020 level, with severe consequences for the broader Southern Hemisphere.

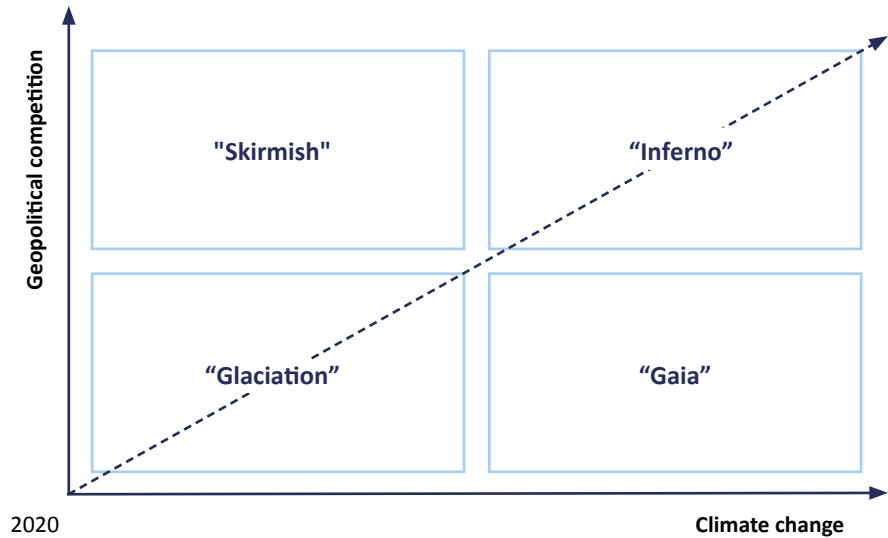
54 Op. cit., James Rogers, Andrew Foxall and Matthew Henderson, p.48.

55 Foreign Affairs (3/18/2024). “Great-Power Competition Comes to Antarctica”, Elizabeth Buchanan. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/arctic-antarctic/great-power-competition-comes-antarctica>

Headland, R. (2021). “National Claims in Antarctica”, in Antarctic Resolution, by Giulia Foscari / UNLESS (Ed.). Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich, p.73.

FIGURE 1: FUTURES FOR THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Source: "Chile and the Southern Hemisphere: Antarctica in Transition?"



2024 ratified Washington's intention "to maintain the Antarctic Region as an area of international cooperation reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes".⁵⁷

One alternative to address the suspicions being raised is to conduct inspections on behalf of the ATS, which in principle is possible, but difficult to implement. According to Article VII of the Treaty, each party must share information on its activities by communicating, in advance: 1) all expeditions to and within Antarctica, on the part of its ships or nationals, and all expeditions to Antarctica organized in or proceeding from its territory; 2) all stations in Antarctica occupied by its nationals; and 3) any military personnel or equipment it intends to introduce into Antarctica.

The requirements for reporting information are much more detailed, and reports on each country's activities and movements can be downloaded from the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty website. The big question is: how can we ensure that what is declared and what is actually done are the same? Therein lies the importance

of authorising inspections, the composition of inspection teams, and how welcoming the bases will be to such close scrutiny.

This is certainly becoming more complex, as many more countries have joined the established powers in Antarctica, thus complicating the continent's governance. For example, among the non-territorial claimants (in addition to the United States and Russia), it is necessary to consider Brazil, which has a very ambitious Antarctic program.⁵⁸ Additionally, the number of stations has grown steadily since 1904, exceeding 70 in 2024.

As noted above, 12 countries originally signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, and 45 countries have joined it in the following decades. These countries have the right to nominate representatives to participate in meetings, provided they demonstrate significant scientific research. Of the signatories, 17 have sustained activities, and today there are 29 Consultative Parties in total. The 27 Non-Consultative Parties are invited to attend meetings but do not participate in decision-making.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The White House (2024) National Security Memorandum on United States Policy on the Antarctic Region. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/05/17/national-security-memorandum-on-united-states-policy-on-the-antarctic-region/>

⁵⁸ Op. cit., James Rogers, Andrew Foxall and Matthew Henderson, p.25.

⁵⁹ Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty. On the "Parties." Available at: <https://www.ats.aq/devAS/Parties?lang=e>

Lawyer Luis V. Ferrada, a specialist in Antarctic issues, stated that this increase in membership, heterogeneity and asymmetry of the states that are part of it, including the seven claimants, has produced substantial changes in the political equilibrium of this international regime.⁶⁰ Therefore, the pressure to internationalise Antarctic governance puts stress on the relationship between “traditional” and “new” Antarctic countries. Changes in the balance of the international regime operating in the area are therefore to be expected.

However, for some, the price of being a claimant state is “modest,”⁶¹ since they do not inspire rejection from other members, and this allows them to include sovereign claims within their respective national definitions. In the case of those who also enjoy proximity and thus advantageous logistical capabilities, their influence and importance should certainly be even greater than assumed in public discourse. Through the supervision of ports and airstrips, they maintain control of the best access routes to the continent. Therefore, they should be the ones called upon, first and foremost, to lead the inspections.

While the Antarctic Treaty is set to be opened for revision in 2048, provided that 75% of members deem it appropriate, nothing prevents revisionist powers from challenging it much sooner, as they have done with unilateral actions that overrule international law. The validity of the ATS should not be in doubt for the time being, and for Chile, the current structure serves its interests. However, scenarios in which the current legal framework is weakened or loses relevance must be identified and evaluated. Faced with greater

uncertainty, the State must explore which alliances or joint endeavours with other countries are best—and which are not—and invest in those relationships now, since a collective approach will be more powerful than an individual venture. In any case, the defence of national interests, including the already delimited Chilean Antarctic territory, must be a priority.

It is true that some Antarctic law experts and scientists try to avoid the word “geopolitics” when referring to the white continent, but it is a well-established discipline that has acquired full relevance in this regard. In fact, Antarctic governance is the product of geopolitical calculations made at a certain point in time, and these calculations need to be updated.

TERRITORY, SOVEREIGNTY AND CLAIMS BY OTHER STATES

A review of the background for Chile's position on Antarctica reveals some very positive aspects, as well as others that are not so positive. First, the ground station scenario is worth reviewing. As mentioned in the previous chapter, its permanent presence in Antarctica dates back to 1947, with the establishment of the station initially referred to as “Soberanía”. This presence has increased over time, and currently Chile has a total of 10 stations: 5 permanent, 4 seasonal (summer), and one under construction; in addition to 2 shelters. This makes Chile one of the most present countries on the continent (see Table 2 and Map 4).

There is no doubt about the effort involved in operating in an environment as hostile and extreme as the Antarctic continent, but a state that considers itself part of it and aspires to become an Antarctic power must face this reality. To achieve this, Chile should venture into the southern hinterland, as it has done with the Union Glacier Joint Scientific Polar Station, but on a more permanent basis. Currently, the Amundsen–Scott South Pole Station (US) is the only one active year-round within the Antarctic Circle. The remaining facilities, including Chile's, are seasonal (summer) or are located far from that latitude. China's Kunlun Base, the second

60 Ferrada, L.V. (2018). Five factors that will decide the future of Antarctica. *The Polar Journal*, 8(1), pp.84–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2018.1468623>

61 Dodds, K. *The Antarctic: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.131.

TABLE 2: CHILEAN STATIONS AND SHELTERS IN ANTARCTICA

Source: "Bases Chilenas en Antártica". Instituto Chileno Antártico (INACH). Accessed 26 June 2024.

Available at: <https://www.inach.cl/expedicion-antartica/bases-chilenas-en-antartica-2>

Nº	NAME	CORRESPONDING INSTITUTION	LOCATION	TYPE
1.	Professor Julio Escudero Base	INACH	Fildes Peninsula, King George Island. 62º 12' 57" S 58º 57' 35" W	Permanent
2.	Yelcho Base	INACH	South Bay, on Doumer Island. 64º 52' 55" S 63º 35' 03" W	Summer
3.	Lt. Luis Carvajal Base	FACH	Adelaide Island. 67º 46' S 68º 55' W	Under Construction
4.	Union Glacier Scientific Station	Joint	Union Glacier, Ellsworth Land. 79º 45' S 82º 30' W	Summer
5.	Luis Risopatrón Base	INACH	Coppermine Cove on Robert Island, South Shetland Islands. 62º 22' 55" S 59º 39' 50" W	Summer
6.	General Bernardo O'Higgins Base	Army	Antarctic Peninsula. 63º 19' 15" S 57º 53' 59" W	Permanent
7.	Captain Arturo Prat Base	Navy	Greenwich Island, South Shetland Islands. 62º 28' 43" S 59º 39' 48" W	Permanent
8.	President Eduardo Frei M. Base	FACH	Fildes Peninsula, King George Island. 62º 12' 00" S 58º 57' 48" W	Permanent
9.	President G. González tV. Base	FACH	Coast of the Gerlache Strait, Paradise Harbour, Danco Coast, Antarctic Peninsula. 64º 49' 25" S 62º 51' 26" W	Summer
10.	Dr. Guillermo Mann Base	INACH	Antarctic Peninsula. 63º 19' 15" S 57º 53' 59" W	Permanent
11.	Collins Shelter	INACH	Collins Harbour, King George Island, South Shetland Islands. 62º 10' S 8º 51' W	Summer
12.	Ripamonti Shelter	INACH	Ardley Peninsula, King George Island, South Shetland. 62º 12' S 58º 53' W	Summer

Source: Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the Chilean Navy.

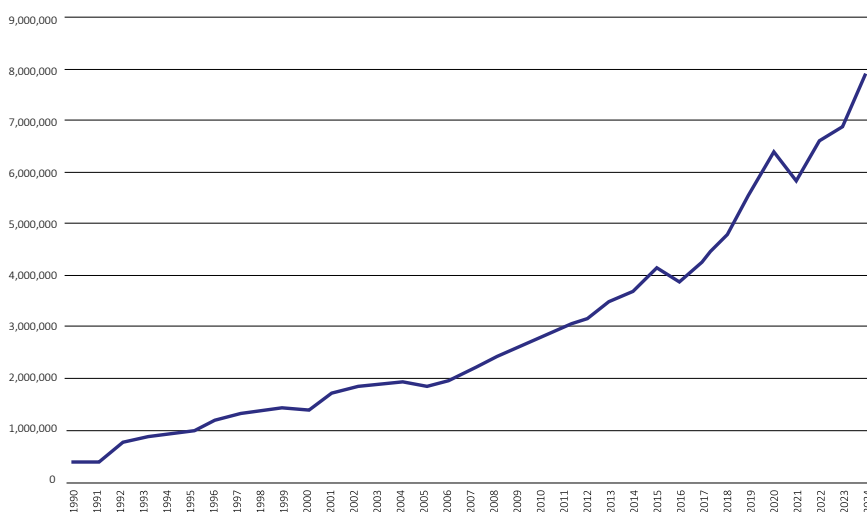


southernmost station, operates during the summer, and Russia's Vostok Base, located at latitude 78°27' S, is the second southernmost year-round station. Meanwhile, Chile's permanent bases reach up to 63° S latitude, leaving its territory within the nearly 3,000 kilometres that separate them from the South Pole unoccupied.

This represents a large-scale project and should constitute a permanent, long-term challenge for the State, involving not only the four traditional Antarctic operators (the Armed Forces and INACH), but also the academic and private sectors. Likewise, Chile should explore the feasibility of installing such a facility with like-minded nations that are also present in

GRAPH 1: INACH BUDGET EVOLUTION

Source: Budget Act, 1990-2024
Instituto Antártico Chileno
(Nominal value, thousands of CLP)
Source: DIPRES



Antarctica, but without claims that overlap the Chilean Antarctic territory.

A negative aspect of the occupation of Antarctic territory was the closure of the Villa Las Estrellas school in 2019 and the departure of the Chilean families who had lived in the units located at the President Eduardo Frei Base. This relevant facility represented a true act of colonisation of the national territory, as it not only included the school but also multiple services consistent with a sovereign state, such as a post office, bank, and electoral service. Ultimately, the progressive deterioration of the facilities, coupled with a lack of resources necessary for their maintenance and upgrading, forced the Chilean Air Force to close it. This was undoubtedly a serious mistake on the part of the Chilean State, one that must be corrected.

Another reality that underlies the occupation of Antarctic territory is the limited number of national operators in the area. According to INACH records, there are currently four operators⁶²: the Chilean Army, the Chilean Navy, the Chilean Air Force, and INACH itself. Similarly,

the institute identifies two companies from the Magallanes Region as service providers: Grupo DAP and Antártica XXI. In economic terms, the nominal budget allocated to INACH has grown since 1990, as shown in Graph 1.⁶³ As an example, also according to INACH, in 2016 the resources of its National Antarctic Science Program included 91 projects involving 31 universities and institutes in the country, with the participation of "240 scientists and logisticians moving in different polar zones." The total cost of these projects was "\$1.9 billion pesos, considering: infrastructure investment, logistics and transportation services, food and supplies", among others, plus "budget allocations to the Armed Forces, in a variable annual investment that may exceed \$17 billion pesos."⁶⁴

Another element to consider is the work to consolidate Punta Arenas as the main global access point to Antarctica. Whether due to its geographic proximity or its characteristics and capabilities, this city must organise to offer

⁶² Instituto Chileno Antártico. "Maritime and Air Transport." Accessed 26 June 2024. Available at: <https://www.inach.cl/expedicion-antartica/bases-chilenas-en-antartica-2/transporte-antartico/>

⁶³ Budget Directorate, Ministry of Finance of Chile. Access to information for the preparation of the graph between 26 June and 14 July 2024. Available at www.dipres.gob.cl

⁶⁴ Ferrer, Cristián. How much does Chile invest in Antarctica? Instituto Chileno Antártico. Accessed 26 June 2024. Available at: <https://www.inach.cl/cuanto-invierte-chile-en-la-antartica>

unbeatable conditions, both for private activities and for geographically distant countries. Other cities that serve as a departure base for Antarctic expeditions are: Cape Town, South Africa; Ushuaia, Argentina; Christchurch, New Zealand; and Hobart, Australia. In this sense, the competition is high, and some countries have already taken advantage. Its complement with Puerto Williams, capital of the Chilean Antarctica province, must become a differentiator for the Chilean option. AthenaLab's visit to the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica Region, and the interviews with its authorities, such as the regional governor, Dr. Jorge Flies Añón, and the city's mayor, attorney Claudio Radonich Jiménez, promptly demonstrated concern and patriotic enthusiasm for Antarctic issues, such as funding scientific activities, strengthening INACH, and developing airport infrastructure.

However, this should be a national issue and a concern for the State, not just local authorities. It is true that the current government administration has a special connection with Magallanes and Antarctica, given the head of state's origins. However, this should be established as a long-term national policy and not a matter of personal affinity for the authorities, however welcome this current situation may be.

Another relevant issue when analysing Chile's Antarctic territory is its overlap with claims by Argentina and the United Kingdom. Although the ATS froze these claims, it should not be overlooked that they remain unresolved. In fact, both countries continue to consider these geographic spaces part of their sovereign territory, which contravenes Chile's national interest (see Map 3). Given this fact, the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs has referred exclusively to the provisions of the ATS, without exploring other manifestations or actions that would assert Chile's sovereign rights. And the problem does not end there: we must also consider Argentina's claims to a significant portion of Chile's sovereign spaces, under the interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. According to academic Jorge Guzmán, Argentina claims submarine rights to the continental shelf east of the meridian corresponding to Cape Horn

as its own, "invoking the dispute settlement system of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship" (1984).⁶⁵ Again, in the face of these contentions, the action of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems late and rather modest, since the neighbouring country began to build the case in 2009 and Chilean responses have intensified only in recent years.

ANTARCTIC NATIONAL PRIORITY

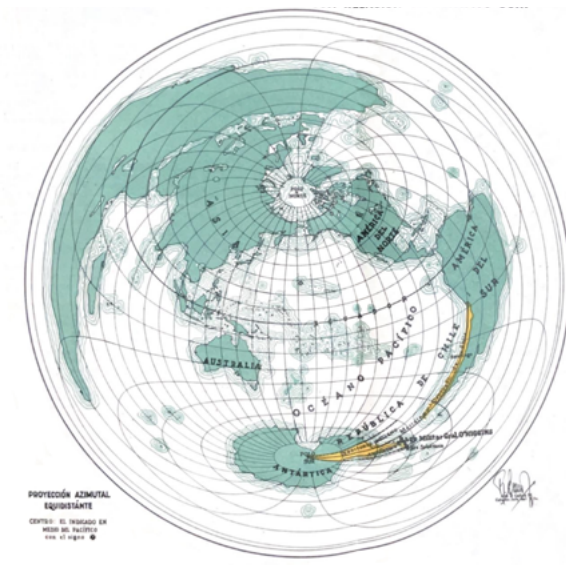
Antarctic issues must be among the State's top priorities, at least that is what the authorities claim. First, it represents more than 60% of its territory. Furthermore, it contains natural and mineral resources, known and unknown, which at some point in the future will be a topic of discussion and, possibly, of conflict and exploitation. Chile's sovereign portion of Antarctica also offers significant coastlines along the Pacific, which, along with the Drake Passage, constitute one of the three interoceanic passages dominated by Chile.⁶⁶

Despite the above, such relevance is not necessarily reflected in practice. First, although organisations such as INACH make efforts, there is no consistent strategy to generate a national Antarctic culture. If national authorities refer to Chile as a "claimant" to Antarctic territory and a signatory to the ATS, it means they do not assume Chilean ownership between 53° and 90° W, given that a "claimant" does not have the claimed property secured, something Chile already settled in 1940 through Supreme Decree No. 1,747. Furthermore, anyone claiming sovereignty should assume the conviction of its grounds, at least if they have already carried out the legal act of territorial delimitation.

Furthermore, in this intent to raise and strengthen Antarctic national awareness, it would

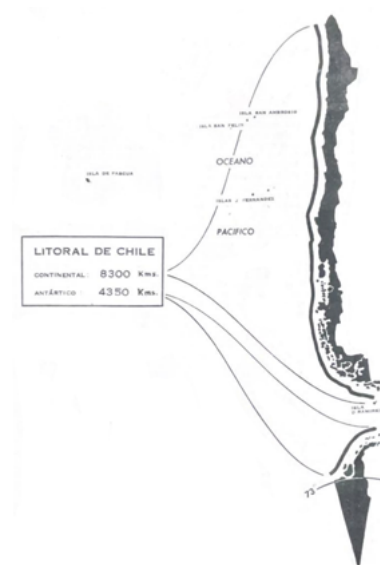
65 Budget Directorate, Ministry of Finance of Chile. Access to information for the preparation of the graph between 26 June and 14 July 2024. Available at www.dipres.gob.cl

66 Ferrer, Cristián. How much does Chile invest in Antarctica? Instituto Chileno Antártico. Accessed 26 June 2024. Available at: <https://www.inach.cl/cuanto-invierte-chile-en-la-antartica>



MAP 5: GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF CHILE IN RELATION TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Source: “Reflexiones geopolíticas sobre el presente y el futuro de América y de Chile”, by General Ramón Cañas Montalva, *ibid.*, p.365.



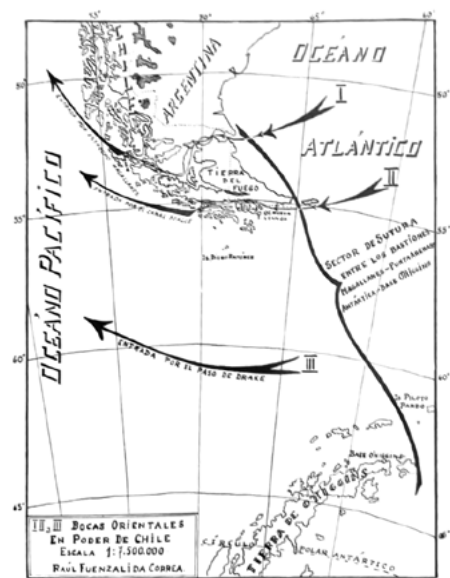
MAP 6: CHILEAN COAST

Source: “Reflexiones geopolíticas sobre el presente y el futuro de América y de Chile”, by General Ramón Cañas Montalva, *ibid.*, p.365.



MAP 7: GEOSTRATEGIC LOCATION OF ANTARCTICA

Source: “Reflexiones geopolíticas sobre el presente y el futuro de América y de Chile”, by General Ramón Cañas Montalva, *ibid.*, p.365.



MAP 8: ENTRY TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN THROUGH THE SOUTHERN PASSAGES

Source: “Reflexiones geopolíticas sobre el presente y el futuro de América y de Chile”, by General Ramón Cañas Montalva, *ibid.*, p.365.

be expected that all representations of Chilean territory on maps include the Antarctic Triangle and not just the area located on the South American continent. This is relevant, as it is difficult to find representations that do include Chilean Antarctica.

Along the same lines, Chilean spaces on the white continent should be addressed geographically with the same emphasis as the continental and Rapa Nui territories. However, school curriculum on the Ministry of Education website reflect that Antarctic topics are not a priority or are of very low importance (see Table 3). General Ramón Cañas Montalva, commander-in-chief of the Army in the 1940s and geopolitical advisor to the Partido Radical governments, emphasised the obligation to understand national geography in order to protect and defend it.⁶⁷ Indeed, when reviewing information about provinces and municipalities of Chile on the Chilean National Congress Library's official website, it was not possible to access information on the Chilean Antarctic Province, whose capital is Puerto Williams. Perhaps this is a coincidence, but it is nevertheless regrettable.⁶⁸

One aspect that Chile should review is the administrative dependence of Chilean Antarctica. As mentioned, it represents more than 60% of the national territory, but it is administratively located within one of the regions, namely, the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica Region. This situation calls for reflection, as every region has its own problems (social, logistical, security, economic, etc.), and Magallanes is no exception. Consequently, issues affecting such a significant portion of the territory should perhaps be addressed and handled not by local but rather by

national authorities.

From an administrative perspective, Chilean Antarctica is part of the Magallanes Region, and – more specifically – the Cabo de Hornos Municipality. Given that Chile is a unitary central state, Chilean Antarctica has not been considered a special overseas territory. While the Chilean bases are registered with the Punta Arenas Real Estate Registry, current laws are considered to apply for all purposes.

Indeed, the Chilean Antarctic Statute establishes the powers of the Regional Presidential Delegate of the Magallanes Region and Chilean Antarctica in Antarctic matters, and specifies that he or she must exert his or her powers in coordination with national authorities.

Although the Chilean Antarctic Statute establishes that Antarctic Policy must be approved by the President of the Republic after a Supreme Decree issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it also requires that it be endorsed by six other ministries. From an operational perspective, the current consensus is that the Armed Forces and the INACH are the institutions designated to materialise State presence. This is a sovereign political decision; many countries operate through purely civilian institutions, such as the British Antarctic Survey.

67 Cañas Montalva Ramón. “Conciencia geopolítica - Unidad nacional - Objetivos”. John Griffiths and Marcelo Masalleras. General Ramón Cañas Montalva: Pionero de la Geopolítica en Chile. Ediciones AthenaLab, Santiago de Chile, 2024, p.294.

68 National Library of Congress. Accessed August 12, 2024. Available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/siit/nuestropais/region12> and <https://www.bcn.cl/siit/reportescomunales/comunal.html?unidad=Comunales&anno=2023>

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF ANTARCTICA-RELATED CONTENT IN THE CHILEAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Source: Curriculum and Evaluation Unit, Chilean Ministry of Education. "Update of Curricular Priorities - for the Comprehensive Reactivation of Learning in Primary and Secondary Education." March 2023.

Available at: https://www.curriculumnacional.cl/614/articles-331226_recurso_pdf.pdf

Year	Antarctic themes in the school curriculum	Contribution
First Grade (eq. Year 2)	Identify Chile on maps, including the Andes Mountains, the Pacific Ocean, the city of Santiago, your region, its capital, and your locality.	Not observed / Not stated.
Second Grade (eq. Year 3)	Locate Chile, Santiago, your region, and its capital on the globe or on maps, and describe the relative location of neighbouring countries and other South American countries, using the cardinal points. Classify and characterise some Chilean landscapes according to their location in the north, centre, and south of the country, observing images, and using various sources and appropriate geographical vocabulary.	Not observed / Not stated.
Third Grade (eq. Year 4)	None.	Null.
Fourth Grade (eq. Year 5)	None.	Null.
Fifth Grade (eq. Year 6)	Characterise the major areas of Chile and their landscapes (North, North, Central, South, and Austral), considering location, climate (temperature and precipitation), relief, hydrography, population, and natural resources, among others.	Not observed / Not stated.
Sixth Grade (eq. Year 7)	Compare diverse natural environments in Chile (desert, Andean, Andean plateau, coastal, Mediterranean, cold and rainy, Patagonian, and polar), considering the opportunities and difficulties they present and how people have taken advantage of and overcome them to live and develop. Maps. Student readings: The Endurance expedition. Reading about the Endurance expedition in Antarctica. History, Geography, and Social Sciences.	Low.
Seventh Grade (eq. Year 8)	Student readings: Global warming threatens marine species in the Chilean Antarctic. Reading about the effects of global warming in Antarctica. History, Geography and Social Sciences.	High.
Eight Grade (eq. Year 9)	Student readings: Global warming threatens marine species in the Chilean Antarctic.	High.

Chile should evaluate whether to maintain the administration of Antarctic matters under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least as an academic exercise. This observation does not imply a belief that such a relationship is flawed, but merely that it should be analysed. It is based on the idea that the Chilean Antarctic Territory is considered an inherent part of Chile and, therefore, is not a part of foreign policy. Consequently, the advisability of having these matters instead be under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior should be studied. Such a change could strengthen Antarctic issues, given that the budget allocated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has traditionally been small, and therefore the resources allocated

to Antarctica are also small. Although the presidential decree defining the boundaries dates back to 1940, the Antarctic Division was only established in 2011, has three staff members and reports to the Undersecretariat of Foreign Affairs. It is understandable that, given the relevance of the ATS to the Chilean Antarctic Territory, the administrative division in charge of these matters is under Foreign Affairs, but the need to reevaluate this remains.

The formal incorporation of the Chilean Antarctic Territory into the Constitution of the Republic is another pending issue. As stated by Luis Valentín Ferrada, Catalina Sepúlveda, and Giovannina

Sutherland in an article published in the journal "Derecho y Política Antártica", the Chilean Antarctic Territory—they propose—should be included in the Constitution given that "it would constitute a particularly relevant legal precedent in favour of our sovereign rights." The authors assert that "Chile must be extremely careful and proactive, in order to reaffirm its sovereign rights over the Southern Continent at all times and provide appropriate political and legal signals."⁶⁹ Although these statements referred to the time when the second referendum-driven constitutional proposal was being drafted, their words remain fully valid today.

It is worth reiterating that Chile does have national policies on the matter, as reviewed in the first part of this study. The first Antarctic Policy was published in 1984, which represented a major step forward for the State. This document was updated in 2000, 2017, 2021 and 2024. Another two important documents are "Chile in Antarctica: Strategic Vision to 2035"⁷⁰ and "Antarctic Strategic Plan 2021-2025",⁷¹ which include concrete objectives, but fall short of the magnitude of the task required, or have not had the expected impact (to represent a national strategy for the white continent), especially because they are largely limited to current operators. In short, Chile does have a national policy, but lacks a comprehensive and adequate strategy to address Antarctic challenges.

69 Luis Valentín Ferrada, Catalina Sepúlveda and Giovanna Sutherland. "El territorio chileno antártico en la nueva constitución". *Derecho y Política Antártica journal*. Universidad de Chile, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2023, p.36.

70 Available at: https://www.minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/docs/20190906/20190906113642/6a_vision_estrategica_antartica_al_2035.pdf

71 Available at: https://www.minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/docs/20190906/20190906113642/5a_plan_estrategico_antartico_2021_2025_aprobado_30_6_2021.pdf

Conclusions of a geopolitical situation

STATUS QUO AT RISK AND SOVEREIGNTY IN QUESTION

It is true that Chile is a relevant player in Antarctica due to its membership in the ATS and its periodical state-level action, but the question is how this status can be maintained or amplified in a more competitive environment, where the arrival of new actors only increases pressures to internationalise the continent's governance. An initial response is to avoid separating the national sphere from the international, and instead balance the two to improve the country's possibilities. An overly territorialist approach would make no sense, as it would reveal the gap between aspirations and real capabilities. But overexploiting the internationalist angle is also inconvenient; this is not a global common good, given that Chile defined its Antarctic territory more than 80 years ago. There are current claims that conflict with the national interest, as well as others that could arise later. All of this occurs in a context where there is no hegemonic power to impose a common or consensual vision.

The ATS has served Chile and the Antarctic community for decades, but its future is not guaranteed, especially given increasing international interest in the region. Chile needs a strategy to address these scenarios of competition and confrontation, because the belief that Antarctica will forever remain free of conflict or confrontation is not guaranteed (though hopefully it will), and the State must be prepared for these scenarios. The development of strategic Antarctic capabilities, where the private sector can play a relevant role, presents attractive and necessary opportunities. Without any intention of militarizing the continent, Chile's current and future Antarctic operators must develop more and better capabilities.

The ATS must be strengthened, but it shouldn't be the only option available. There must be a realistic long-term strategy that prepares the State for different possible scenarios in which Chile can assert its interests, either individually or through alliances.

The State must anticipate the challenges it faces in the Antarctic sphere and, if unable to anticipate them, react more firmly to foreign visions that affect national interests, starting with those of a territorial and maritime nature. A starting point would be a security architecture capable of visualizing risks, threats, and opportunities—which currently does not exist—along with a proactive Foreign Ministry to defend the country's own interests and a State and civil society aware of its status as an Antarctic power.

It is true that there are many challenges in strengthening Chile's presence in the Antarctic hinterland. Some of them are tangible, related to the allocation of greater public resources and the effects of climate change; and others are intangible, such as positioning Antarctica as part of our national identity, a task in which the social sciences must play a role as prominent as the natural sciences do in this area. Undoubtedly, the State has a key role to play in this, but so does the dynamic private sector, as demonstrated by Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions, a US company that organises tourist expeditions and provides supplies and logistical solutions to bases in several countries, including Chile.

LACK OF ANTARCTIC AWARENESS AND STRATEGIC VISION

Ever since Chile permanently established itself in Antarctica, the country has managed to consolidate its presence thanks to a consensus that Antarctica is important as a territory, although not all administrations have assigned it the same political and budgetary priority. In fact, the annual survey conducted by AthenaLab and Ipsos shows that neither experts nor the general public consider strengthening the national position in Antarctica a priority for foreign policy. This is certainly complex, as it reveals an issue of leadership and commitment among the Chilean elite regarding how to best project itself in the claimed area, in addition to a lack of sensitivity among society regarding a strategic issue. In short, a clear lack of geographic and Antarctic awareness.

As far back as the mid-20th century, General Ramón Cañas Montalva insisted on the need to develop a nationwide geographic awareness that compelled the population to value and defend their country, sovereignty and territory of all kinds—continental, maritime, insular, and Antarctic—from any foreign threat or pressure. Administrations, but particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have a fundamental role to play.⁷² In this sense, the obligation lies in the defence of national interests, wherever they may be, above the notion of being a good neighbour or a good friend. The defence of one's own interests should not be confused with an aggressive attitude, nor should good friendship with national weakness.

To spark or strengthen such national awareness—in this case, regarding Chilean Antarctica—the responsibility falls primarily, but not exclusively, on the State. It is the State that must ensure that schoolchildren understand their territory and its virtues, including Antarctica, through explicit curricula; that national maps

ALWAYS include the Chilean Antarctic Triangle; that there is constant effort to disseminate Chile's position in the ATS; that national presence in the southern continent is strengthened, especially in its farthest reaches, through scientific research and settlement; and that the number of Antarctic operators is multiplied through public-private partnerships; to mention a few ideas.

All of the above, even if it is difficult for the national reality, should be achieved with a long-term vision. The series of geopolitical update studies promoted by AthenaLab has once again identified a troubling situation for the State that has dragged on for decades: the lack of strategic vision to address most of the problems affecting Chile. The absence of a critical mass with knowledge and experience in these matters, coupled with an elite that doesn't understand or doesn't want to understand the importance of long-term thinking, are conditions that condemn the country to a kind of catastrophic determinism in the political, security, diplomatic, and defence spheres.

For this reason, universities and educational centres in particular have an obligation to offer alternatives and solutions that address this problem, realising that this is a long-term undertaking, but one that will yield significant benefits for the country and its citizens.

At the end of this process, Antarctic affairs—for Chileans—must be an essential part of national identity and a source of social cohesion.

NATIONAL ANTARCTIC STRATEGY

Chile's authorities, scientific community, institutions such as INACH, and armed forces have been and will continue to be fundamental pillars of its Antarctic policy, demonstrating proven interest, enthusiasm, and professionalism in this delicate task. There is no doubt that the State has been an active agent in Antarctic matters, even if there have been periods of greater or lesser commitment. But it seems that this will not be enough to face looming challenges.

72 Cañas Montalva, Ramón. "Sobre la conciencia geográfica, posición de Chile, fronteras y defensa de la soberanía". John Griffiths and Marcelo Masalleras. *General Ramón Cañas Montalva: Pionero de la Geopolítica en Chile*. Ediciones AthenaLab, Santiago de Chile, 2024, pp.289-292.

In this regard, the State must encourage the participation of new Chilean actors from the academic and private sectors, who can contribute to the national challenge of inhabiting Antarctica and exercising sovereignty. New and challenging objectives must be defined for current Antarctic operators, both INACH and the armed forces. The Army is the organisation with the greatest capacity to sustain operations in extreme environments, so they will be able to further develop these capabilities, aiming to establish a presence in more southern areas. In this regard, the possibility of conducting long-distance motorised marches is one such capacity, as the United States mission does when it logistically supplies its base at the South Pole, from the largest facility in McMurdo, approximately 1,580 km away. In the case of the Navy, the commissioning of the new icebreaker ship "Almirante Viel" should be a starting point for developing this type of capability to operate at high latitudes and offer these possibilities to countries with which Antarctic interests are shared,⁷³ such as Canada. The Air Force must add capabilities, both in quantity and quality, to fly safely in polar territory, as this could be decisive for the deployment of other operators. The INACH, for its part, should continue with Antarctic activities, encouraging the incorporation of other national and foreign actors who not only contribute knowledge and experience, but also material and financial resources that contribute to the national effort.

The national strategy cannot ignore infrastructure development in Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams. Within this framework, the improvement of the airports and ports in both locations is paramount. Likewise, the completion of the road network is a necessity that cannot be postponed, one of the most essential being Route 8, which will connect the XI Region of Aysén (Pascua River) with Puerto Natales, and the Estancia Vicuña-Yendegaia road.

To carry out the above, it is certainly necessary to evaluate the current budget allocation and determine whether it is sufficient for the challenges and reflects the national reality. Current efforts—and those yet to be defined—need to be oriented toward common objectives to obtain maximum outcomes and transform Chile into an Antarctic power. This can be achieved by developing a national Antarctic strategy that becomes a state policy, transcending administrations and involving all sectors of society. The development of the aforementioned "national Antarctic strategy" must be a priority for the authorities, leveraging the progress made in Antarctic policies and more than 80 years' experience exercising sovereignty on the southernmost continent in the world.

⁷³ Among these shared interests, the following can be highlighted: effects of climate change, controlled access to Antarctica, actions by revisionist powers, scientific research, natural preservation, among others.

Final considerations

RISKS

In general terms, the following risks are perceived arising from the current situation:

- ✦ Increased interest from powers with objectives other than those protected by the ATS, which challenge, weaken, or breach it, with the potential for deterioration of this System and impact on the Antarctic regime.
- ✦ The scenario that climate change is imposing on the southern continent, in addition to having potential impacts on Chile, will cause problems for the ATS regime, potentially affecting national interests.
- ✦ Potential lag in the race to consolidate Chile as an Antarctic power compared to other States with similar interests, derived from the Antarctic administrative dependency of the XII Region (Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctica), which prevents the necessary investments and programs from being made at the national level, placing a State matter at a more local level. The administrative organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not empower the Antarctic Affairs Division, thereby hindering the development and implementation of administrative measures.
- ✦ Potential third parties exploiting the lack of geographic awareness, in this case particularly regarding Antarctica, which hinders the implementation of public policies and the defence of national interests in the region.

THREATS

Based on the geopolitical analysis carried out, the following threats to the State are perceived:

- ✦ Territorial claims overlapping with the Chilean Antarctic territory.
- ✦ Argentine claims regarding portions of the extended continental shelf belonging to Chile.

OPPORTUNITIES

The STA regime and its stability have been of great value, so its improvement and reinforcement should be a priority for Chile.

- ✦ Closely related to the above, there are opportunities to act in coordination with other countries and form alliances with States that have complementary interests in Antarctica.
- ✦ The development of new capabilities and the occupation of territory, both with the reopening of Villa Las Estrellas and the installation of bases at deeper latitudes, will be fundamental tools for exercising sovereignty.
- ✦ Strengthening Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams as Antarctic access platforms for other countries and companies, given the geographical conditions and proximity.
- ✦ Notwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the ATS on new territorial claims, Chile must not lose sight of the territory west of 90° W longitude, particularly that which coincides with the projection of overseas possessions such as Rapa Nui.

Recommendations

For Chile to advance in materialising its claims, become an Antarctic power and remain an essential and fundamental partner in the southern continent, it is deemed necessary to undertake the following:

- ✦ Strengthen Chile's Antarctic identity through education and public and private campaigns, as well as encourage greater university participation in projects associated with the continent, not only in the natural sciences but also in the social, economic, military, and other sciences. By wholeheartedly assuming Chile's reality as an Antarctic country, based on knowledge and across-the-board national consensus, resources will plainly be available to enhance its presence, always guided by national interest.
- ✦ Strengthen the entities responsible for Antarctica within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This requires determining that the Antarctic Division be similar in status to the Directorate of Borders and Limits. Therefore, its director should be selected through the Senior Public Management process, which would also improve policy continuity by going beyond the current administrations. It is also important that it be administratively responsible for INACH, which currently reports directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, the possibility of having liaison officers from defence institutions should be evaluated, since these institutions represent 75% of Chilean Antarctic operators.
- ✦ Evaluate the advisability of changing the administrative dependence of the Chilean Antarctic Territory from the regional to national level.
- ✦ Strengthen operational and logistical capabilities in the subantarctic spaces of Magallanes, especially in Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams, to consolidate them as the main Antarctic access platforms. To this end, it is essential to complete the construction of the route linking the Strait of Magellan and the Beagle Channel. Punta Arenas, the capital of Region XII, must be the place where international scientific programs and tourist cruises begin their journey. Furthermore, enhancing the exploitation of green hydrogen in the region must be evaluated, as it could boost general infrastructure and attract national migration.
- ✦ Reopen Villa Las Estrellas and revert the depopulation of the Antarctic, so that Chilean territory will once again have a permanent civilian population, which also means exercising sovereignty. Iceland, for example, is at the same 64° latitude as Villa Las Estrellas, but in the northern hemisphere.
- ✦ Evaluate and strengthen Antarctic capabilities with a long-term vision, in terms of infrastructure, icebreakers, aircraft, and logistics to operate in that environment for extended periods, in addition to scientific research. For example, Chile could have had an icebreaker like "Óscar Viel" (currently operational) earlier, if the decision to build it had not been delayed. Frei Base and Villa Las Estrellas should be prioritised, while also considering that, due to climate change and the resulting rise in sea levels, the future of bases near the coast must be analysed.

- ✦ Project Chile's presence deep into Antarctic territory, at least during the summer. Certainly, gaining depth by approaching the South Pole must be an objective, beyond what has been achieved with the Union Glacier, a mass of ice that is in motion. It makes perfect sense to plan both the necessary long-term infrastructure and the means of transportation for the operation, maintenance, and logistical support of the deployed resources.
- ✦ Continue efforts to develop high-quality Antarctic science to gain a voice in decision-making processes and improve sovereignty. This involves allocating resources to strengthen disciplines such as glaciology at universities, through scholarships and other associated incentives. All of this should be geared toward national needs and interests, rather than international ones.
- ✦ Consolidate a national Antarctic policy and develop a clear national Antarctic strategy, both with a long-term vision and involving not only state actors, but Chilean society as a whole. In this regard, consider establishing alliances with countries with shared and/or complementary interests.
- ✦ Promote—in the tourism sector—the dissemination of attractions such as Mount Vinson, the highest peak in the entire Antarctic, in an area not claimed by any other country, taking advantage of the proximity of Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Annex 1:

Do opposites attract? A look at the Canadian Arctic⁷⁴



PHOTO: CANADA IN ANTARCTICA

Canada has a little-known presence in Antarctica, through scientific research and current day explorers, logistics and tourism operators, in addition to equipment (such as this Kenn Borek aircraft).

One is mostly a frozen ocean; the other is an ice-covered continent. One is home to indigenous peoples; the other was completely uninhabited when discovered. One is sovereignly divided among eight countries; the other is subject to claims by seven countries, which, for now, have decided not to pursue them.

However, when trying to predict Antarctica's possible futures, it is inevitable to look north, where the only other pole is located. Despite their unique characteristics, both regions are suffering similar impacts due to climate change and geopolitical competition.

The case of Canada is very useful to observe, since this liberal democracy, which controls 40% of the Arctic, respects the rules-based international order and promotes open markets, as does Chile. Hence, there is a prior understanding of the role of the poles in the framework of international geopolitics.

To begin with, it is a fundamental region for Canada's national identity, home to more than 200,000 people (more than half of whom are Indigenous) spread across three territories. The Arctic region represents 40% of the country and is rich in natural resources; it contains oil, gas, critical minerals, and rare earths.

Climate change, which is more pronounced at this pole than on other parts of the Earth, is opening up new opportunities for accessing and crossing the Arctic. This is reflected in ocean passages that are now open, reducing the distances for

⁷⁴ This article was prepared with input from the Canadian Ambassador to Chile, Michael Gort, during his visit to the South Pole with the AthenaLab team.

maritime traffic between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Furthermore, the tourism sector is expanding its operations. All this growing activity raises concerns for the maritime environment and other ecosystems, for navigation, and for search and rescue operations.

In turn, the intensification of geopolitical competition is reflected both in the increased presence of Arctic countries in their northernmost territories and in the emergence of new players.

This situation puts increased pressure on Canada, which advocates for an Antarctic that is secure (in the broadest sense) and well-defended.⁷⁵ Facing this scenario, it seeks to advance international cooperation in the region, improve the presence of its armed forces, maintain an optimal situational overview, and strengthen its capacity to handle emergencies and rescues.

The so-called Northwest Passage, the polar route between the Atlantic and the Pacific, in being used more frequently for navigation, has direct implications for Canadian sovereignty.

The polar region is governed by the Arctic Council,⁷⁶ founded in 1996, which represents eight states and six indigenous peoples. The member countries are Canada, Denmark, the United States, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. There are also 38 observer countries.

Cooperation prevails among members, including Russia, which tends to respect the rules and agreements, especially those related to environmental matters.⁷⁷ However, the invasion of Ukraine has complicated relations with that country, whose participation was suspended for two years.

In fact, Russia has the largest territory, possessing 50% of the Arctic, and therefore it has the most resources, so much so that 20% of its gross domestic product originates there. It is undoubtedly the military player with the greatest capabilities in the region, with bases, aircraft, ships, and troops, although it is currently concentrated on Ukraine. Despite this, cooperation in the Arctic is in its national interest.

The conflict in Ukraine has opened a wider door for China, its partner, to gain more space and influence, especially within the framework of the so-called "Polar Silk Road," which seeks to improve connectivity in the region. The alleged installation of buoys and the launching of observation balloons are a manifestation of Beijing's growing economic and scientific interest in the North Pole.

The military scenario is also peculiar, as seven of the eight members of the Arctic Council are now part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. With the recent incorporation of Finland and Sweden, the alliance's polar capabilities have been expanded.

In the face of climate change and intensifying geopolitical competition, Canada sees its participation in the Council as a way to support the rules-based international order, which is currently under multiple pressures. This forum works today because the number of members is limited, the operating environment is harsh, and the region's resources are concentrated in a few sectors and industries, where territorial ownership of these resources is not in dispute.⁷⁸

Both poles can learn from each other's differences and similarities as they face common challenges. Everything seems to indicate that maintaining rules-based governance is the best option so far, without hindering the constant and consistent improvement of national presence and infrastructure.

75 Government of Canada (2017). "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework". Available at: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>

76 The Arctic Council: <https://arctic-council.org/>

77 Buchanan, E. (2023). *Red Arctic: Russian Strategy Under Putin*. New York: Brookings Institution Press, p.65.

78 Dodds, K. and Woodward J. (2021). *The Arctic: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.141.

Annex 2:

What are countries' (official) stances on Antarctica?⁷⁹

GERMANY

- + Germany pledged in the Prague Declaration to adopt a peaceful and environmentally friendly approach to Antarctica, to which it has no territorial claims. "Protecting Antarctica as a habitat". German Federal Foreign Office. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/ausse npolitik/themen/KlimaEnergieantarctica-forei gn-policy/2233182>
- + As a centre for polar and marine research, the Alfred Wegener Institute is the only German scientific institution active in Antarctica.

ARGENTINA

- + International scientific cooperation, environmental protection, and maintaining peace on the continent—fundamental pillars of the Antarctic Treaty—are key to Argentina's interests, says the Argentine Antarctic Institute (2024). Retrieved 3 April 2024, from <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/iniciativas/dna/i nstituto-antartico-argentino>
- + Its work is to define, develop, direct, control, coordinate, and disseminate Argentine scientific and technological activity in Antarctica, with the aim of supporting Argentine interests in the region, in compliance with the Antarctic Treaty and in close communication with the national and international scientific communi-

ty and society. Argentine Antarctic Institute (2024). Retrieved 3 April 2024, from <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/iniciativas/dna/institu to-antartico-argentino>

AUSTRALIA

- + The Antarctic Treaty system maintains Antarctica's freedom from strategic or political confrontation, protects its unique environment, and safeguards our sovereignty over the Australian Antarctic Territory. Australia and the Antarctic Treaty System – Australian Antarctic Program (7 April 2016). <https://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/law-and-treaty/australia-and-antarctic-tr eaty-system/>
- + Australia works closely with fellow Antarctic Treaty parties to ensure the effective governance of the region, to undertake important scientific research, and to conserve and protect Antarctica's unique environment. Australia and the Antarctic Treaty System – Australian Antarctic Program (7 April 2016). <https://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/law-and-treaty/australia-and-antarctic-tr eaty-system/>

BRAZIL

- + Antarctica plays an essential role in global and regional natural systems, controlling atmospheric and oceanic circulations and influencing climate and living conditions worldwide, with an emphasis on the Southern Hemisphere. Due to its relative proximity to the Antarctic Continent, it is essential for Brazil to study the region, the origin of natural phenom-

⁷⁹ Este resumen sobre la postura de diferentes países sobre la Antártica, fue elaborado por Daniela Oyarzún E., estudiante en práctica en AthenaLab 2024, alumna de la Universidad del Desarrollo.

ena that affect the national territory and influence agricultural, livestock, and fishing activities. Brazilian Antarctic Program (PROANTAR). (n.d.). CIRM. <https://www.marinha.mil.br/secir m /pt-br/proantar/sobre>

- + According to PROANTAR Secretary, Captain Francisco Leonardo Maciel Machado, the country seeks to understand phenomena with global repercussions, particularly in Brazilian territory, and promotes, through the presence of a base and maritime visits, a strong interest in that region.

CANADA

- + "Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) is responsible for advancing Canada's knowledge of the Arctic, strengthening Canadian leadership in polar science and technology, and promoting the development and distribution of knowledge of other circumpolar regions, including Antarctica. POLAR operates the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) and conducts world-class cutting edge Arctic research out of this extraordinary facility." Polar Knowledge Canada (7 March 2024). <https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge.html>
- + "For Canada, research in the Antarctic also provides valuable comparative information relevant to the Arctic, given the extreme cold and remote environments of both regions." <https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge/advancingpolarknowledge/canada-and-the-antarctic.html>

CHINA

- + "Building a peaceful, stable, environmentally friendly, and fairly governed Antarctica is in the common interest of China and the international community. China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful use of Antarctica, resolutely maintain the stability of the Antarctic Treaty system, increase investment in Antarctic enterprises, and enhance its capacity to participate in global Antarctic

governance." https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-05/23/content_5196076.htm

- + "China is willing to work with the international community to jointly promote the establishment of a more just and reasonable international Antarctic order, work together to build an Antarctic 'community with a shared future for mankind,' and make new and greater contributions to peace, stability and sustainable development in Antarctica and the world." https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-05/23/content_5196076.htm

UNITED STATES

- + US Antarctic policy has developed steadily and consistently over the years. It is based on four principles:
 1. Non-recognition of territorial claims.
 2. Retention of the right to participate in any future uses of the region
 3. Use of Antarctica for peaceful purposes only
 4. Free access for scientific investigation and other peaceful pursuits.

US Policy for Antarctica | NSF - National Science Foundation. (n.d.). <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/antarct/uspolicy.jsp>

- + "We believe the U.S. Antarctic Program is well managed, involves high-quality science, and is important to the region as well as to the United States." US Antarctic External Panel Report | NSF - National Science Foundation. (nd-b). <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/antarct/uspolicy.jsp>

FRANCE

- + "France will take special care to ensure that no scientific activity is carried out for non-peaceful purposes. In the face of possible

attacks on the principles of the Antarctic Treaty and an explosion of uncontrolled tourism, its historical authority, political weight, and diplomatic and scientific reputation also give it a prominent place in the promotion and preservation of international law." https://climate-laws.org/documents/france-s-polar-strategy-by-2030_8c65

- ✦ "French scientists are building on the long history which has made France a scientifically, politically and diplomatically active polar nation. France remains attentive to the preservation of and compliance with provisions of the Antarctic Treaty and all agreements relating to the protection of its environment." Antarctica. France Diplomacy. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères / Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. (nd-b). <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/antarctica/>

INDIA

- ✦ "The Indian Antarctic Programme has made significant contributions to global scientific knowledge. Indian scientists have conducted studies on the impact of climate change on Antarctica's ice shelves, shedding light on the continent's vulnerability to rising temperatures." <https://www.atcm46india.in/indiainantarctica>
- ✦ "The Indian Antarctic Programme, managed by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), is a testament to India's commitment to scientific exploration and environmental stewardship." <https://www.atcm46india.in/indiainantarctica>
- ✦ "By 1983, India established its first research station, Dakshin Gangotri, marking its official presence in Antarctica." It currently has three stations, the latest of which was built in 2012. India in Antarctica | ATCM. (n.d.). <https://www.atcm46india.in/indiainantarctica>
- ✦ India has a "serious commitment to conduct research in Antarctica". India in Antarctica |

ATCM. (nd-b). <https://www.atcm46india.in/indiainantarctica>

- ✦ In 2022, India issued an Antarctic Directive to protect ecosystems and comply with the Treaty. This act outlines travel requirements, prohibitions, and the authorities responsible for this document, among other things (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2022). https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_parliament/2022/The%20Indian%20Antarctic%20Act,%202022.pdf

JAPAN

- ✦ "Antarctica is an icy continent far from Japan, but its behaviour is deeply connected to our lives. That is why we must closely monitor what happens there." <https://www.nipr.ac.jp/pr/PDF/kansoku2022.pdf>
- ✦ "Japan is taking the lead in observation in this region, cooperating and sharing observations and research with other countries." <https://www.nipr.ac.jp/jare-backnumber/info/mirai-vision201905b.pdf>
- ✦ Japan has four stations (Syowa, Dome-Fuji, Mizuho, and Asuka), of which only Syowa Station is active. It conducts scientific observations and serves as a monitoring site for the global meteorological network. National Institute of Polar Research. Center for Antarctic Programs (n.d.). https://www.nipr.ac.jp/english/collaborative_research/antarctic.html
- ✦ The National Institute of Polar Research, as the central organisation for regional Antarctic research, is responsible for planning and implementing observation plans and operating research expeditions, as well as providing administrative and support services such as team building, training, supply transportation, maintenance and operation of base equipment, data and sample management, and public relations. https://www.nipr.ac.jp/english/collaborative_research/antarctic.html

NORWAY

- + “[The Government will] Use the right of inspection to strengthen cooperation under the Antarctic Treaty, and work to devise a good system within the framework of the annual consultative meetings for responding to the recommendations issued after inspections carried out by various participating states.” regjeringen.no. (n.d.). Meld. St. 32 (2014–2015). <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-32-20142015/id2415997/?ch=1>
- + “Norway has carried out inspections on four occasions, in January 1990, December 1996, January 2001 and February 2009. The inspections were conducted at research stations belonging to Germany, the United Kingdom, India, Russia, Belgium and South Africa.” <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-32-20142015/id2415997/?ch=1>
- + Norway, regarding the Antarctic Treaty, states: “It is quite clear that a continuation of the cooperation now taking place is the best way of securing Norway’s interests in these areas.’ That statement has remained standing as a concise expression of Norwegian Antarctic policy applicable for the long term.” <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-32-20142015/id2415997/?-q=antarctica&ch=3>
- + “[The Government will] Review legislation relating to Norway’s dependencies with a view to improving and updating rules and regulations and administrative matters.” regjeringen.no. (nd-b). Meld. St. 32 (2014–2015). <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-32-20142015/id2415997/?q=antarctica&ch=5>
- + The Government will [...] Ensure that Norway plays a central role in international efforts to establish multilateral cooperation on infrastructure and data sharing in the Antarctic. regjeringen.no. (nd-c). Meld. St. 32 (2014–2015). <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-32-20142015/id2415997/?q=antarctica&ch=6>

NEW ZEALAND

- + “Antarctica is an integral part of New Zealand’s heritage and plays a fundamental role in its future. New Zealand has been, and will continue to be, inextricably connected to Antarctica.”
- + “In a world where rules are contested, cooperation is more challenging, and relative power assumes greater importance, progress – or even maintaining the status quo – on issues New Zealand cares deeply about will be harder to achieve. These issues will include those related to: [...] the strength of the Antarctic Treaty System and environmental protections in Antarctica; and collective and coordinated action on biodiversity and climate change.” Strategic Foreign Policy Assessment, “Navigating a shifting world,” 2023. New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/MFATs-2023-Strategic-Foreign-Policy-Assessment-Navigating-a-shifting-world-June-2023.pdf>

UNITED KINGDOM

- + “Antarctica is also part of the UK’s extended neighbourhood through our Overseas Territories in the South Atlantic and Southern Ocean and, like the Arctic, is subject to increasing systemic competition.”
- + “The UK will continue to strengthen the Antarctic Treaty system, upholding the rights of all Parties and protecting the continent for science and peaceful cooperation.”
- + Integrated Review Refresh 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-refresh-2023-responding-to-a-more-contested-and-volatile-world>

RUSSIA

- + “The objectives of the Strategy are to advance the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Antarctic in line with the norms and principles of international law and Russian main domestic and foreign policies, and to prevent (mitigate the consequences of) potential threats that may be posed against these interests in the Antarctic.” https://documents.ats.aq/ATCM34/wp/ATCM34_wp055_e.doc
- + “Enhance the international prestige of the Russian Federation through large-scale political, social, scientific and environmental measures related to the activities of Russia in the Antarctic.” https://documents.ats.aq/ATCM34/wp/ATCM34_wp055_e.doc
- + In 2021, an action plan was approved to implement the strategy for the development of Russia's activities in Antarctica: modernisation of expedition infrastructure, comprehensive scientific research, environmental protection, and advanced training of expedition participants. <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/11818259>

SOUTH AFRICA

- + "South Africa, along with eleven other countries, is a founding member of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. This Treaty, now consisting of 53 Parties, establishes the legal framework for the management of the region. Signatories undertake to ensure that the Antarctic region will be used for peaceful and scientific purposes only and to protect and preserve the environment" states the South African National Antarctic Program (SANAP). <https://www.sanap.ac.za/about#history>
- + “SANAP plays a crucial role in conserving this living laboratory – the coldest, windiest and driest place on Earth. Studies done in the Antarctic are inextricably linked to our understanding of the entire Earth system and signals in Antarctica indicate past and future global changes. SANAP recognises the global and national importance of safeguarding the environment of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean and protecting the integrity of ecosystems, both marine and terrestrial, in the region.”

Authors

JOHN GRIFFITHS

Head of Studies, Security and Defence Area – AthenaLab

Former Chilean Army officer. Bachelor of Military Sciences. Master's degree in International Security from Georgetown University. PhD in American Studies with a minor in International Affairs (USACH). He has taught at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, ANEPE, and Adolfo Ibáñez University, specializing in Strategic Studies, Security, and National Defence. Additional studies in these fields at Harvard University, King's College, and the University of Antwerp (UFSIA). Distinguished Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

MARCELO MASALLERAS

AthenaLab Researcher

Former Chilean Army officer. Bachelor of Military Sciences. Graduated as a Staff Officer from the war academies of the Chilean Army, Chilean Air Force, and the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA. Master of Military Science from ACAGUE. MA in International Security from Georgetown University. He has taught at the Chilean Army War Academy and Air Force, as well as at the United States Military Academy at West Point, teaching in the departments of Military Instruction and Defence and Strategic Studies.

JUAN PABLO TORO

Executive Director of AthenaLab

Master's degree in Political Science and Bachelor of Social Information, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He holds a Diploma in National Security from Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, and a Diploma in Defense Strategy and Policy from the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. He holds a certificate from the Senior Executives on National and International Security course at Harvard University. Senior Associate Fellow at RUSI.

The AthenaLab team would like to thank Ms. Daniela Oyarzún, a student intern at Universidad del Desarrollo, who collaborated in gathering information for this analysis.

Av. El Bosque Norte 0177, office 1101, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile
www.athenalab.org | contacto@athenalab.org

