

**ANTARCTICA AND WORLD POLITICS:  
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL FACTORS IN  
ANTARCTIC AFFAIRS DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

by

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submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

at the University of Tasmania

December, 1986

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**DECLARATION**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

H. Robert Hall

December, 1986.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to thank Dr.B.W.Davis and Professor H.G.Gelber for their supervision and encouragement to complete this study. I also wish to express my appreciation to my wife, Trish, and to my colleagues and friends for their help and support.

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## ABSTRACT

This study is about Antarctic affairs during the twentieth century. The images most often associated with this subject throughout this period focus on science. Apart from a brief interlude in the 1940's and early 1950's, and again in the late 1970's and 1980's, political considerations have been portrayed in the background and of little account. These images also depict Antarctic affairs as unique - separated from events and forces arising elsewhere in the world. The view is put forward in this thesis that these images are in important respects deficient: political factors have been more significant than these dominant images suggest and Antarctic affairs have not occurred in isolation.

The study begins by examining Antarctic affairs during the first four decades of the twentieth century - a period commonly divided into the "heroic age" from around the turn of the century to the end of World War I and the "air age" during the interwar years. The dominant image associated with this period focuses on scientific activity and exploration in the region. The argument here is presented, however, that significant political and economic factors concerned with the partition of Antarctica, which occurred between 1908 and 1939 when five countries asserted claims to about 85 per cent of the region, must also be brought into

focus to achieve a more complete and accurate picture of Antarctic affairs. It is also argued that this partition was an expression and extension of two underlying structural forces of world politics which first became operative during the closing years of the nineteenth century: the Second Industrial Revolution and the New Imperialism.

The study continues in the 1940's and 1950's with an examination of the origins of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The dominant image associated with this era portrays a series of events connected with the International Geophysical Year which led directly to the signing of the Treaty. The picture presented is one of "the triumph of science over politics." The argument of this study is that this image is superficial and misleading. It overlooks the interplay of political and strategic considerations which were, in turn, consequences of basic structural changes in world politics which impacted on Antarctic affairs following the outbreak of World War II, such as the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union to superpower status and the intensification of rivalry between these countries after 1947 to become the Cold War.

The third period under review in this study is the two decades, or so, following the signing of the Antarctic Treaty and its entry into force in 1961. This period of Antarctic affairs is generally portrayed as a time of regional peace and order. The dominant image associated with this era sketches a picture of the Treaty providing a blueprint for science with the ensuing scientific

activity engendering Pax Antarctica. It is argued in this study that this image is one-sided. Left out of account is the continuing conflict-management function of the Treaty and its attendant arrangements - the central one of which is the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. This Meeting can be viewed as a form of international organization, and several mechanisms of it have played an important part in the management of conflict pertaining to Antarctica and thereby also contributed to regional peace and order. It is also shown how a structural change in world politics again began to impact on Antarctic affairs during the late 1970's and 1980's: as the world entered "the era of interdependence", Antarctica became entangled in a number of global issues concerned with resource scarcity, North-South relations and environmental conservation. ■

■ In sum, it is proposed that (i) political factors have played a significant part in Antarctic affairs throughout the twentieth century, and (ii) structural changes in world politics have impacted upon Antarctic affairs throughout the same period. On this view, it is concluded that Antarctic affairs have been an integral part of world politics. Accordingly, they must be considered in this way and not sui generis as commonly asserted. This means that Antarctic affairs cannot be assessed realistically unless they are ranged firmly against the past and analysed in the light of structural forces in world politics. ■

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