

Middle Powers and the Antarctic Treaty System

Programme & Abstracts

18 November 2026

Yong Pung How School of Law

Singapore Management University, Singapore



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Programme

Morning

09:00

Welcome Session

Dean of SMU Yong Pung How School of Law (tbc)

Ambassador, the Republic of Korea to the Republic of Singapore (tbc)

Workshop Convenor: Prof. Nengye Liu

09:30 – 10:00

Introductory Paper The Republic of Korea, Asian Middle Powers and the Antarctic Treaty System

Nengye Liu, Hyoung Chul Shin, Cassandra Brooks & Jiliang Chen

10:00 – 10:30

Coffee Break

10:30 – 12:30

Session I When we talk about Middle Powers, What are we talking about?

Chair: Cassandra Brooks

Can the Construct of ‘Middle Powers’ be Operationalised Amongst Decision-Making States within the ATS?

Prof. Alan Hemmings · Gateway Antarctica Centre for Antarctic Studies & Research, University of Canterbury

How Middle Powers Have Contributed to Developing an Antarctic Tourism Framework

Prof. Timo Koivurova · Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland

Polarized and Pluralized? Middle Powers in the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Vito De Lucia · Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, UiT/Arctic University of Norway

Middle Powers and the Emergence of the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Shirley V. Scott · School of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNSW Canberra

Middle Powers and Environmental Norms in the ATS

Prof. Tim Stephens · University of Sydney Law School

12:30

Lunch

Programme

Afternoon

13:30 – 17:30 **Session II Various Approaches to “middlepowerhumanship”**

Chair: Jiliang Chen

From Treaty Outsider to Bridge-Builder: Indonesia’s Middle-Power Diplomacy and the Future of the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Arie Afriansyah · Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia

How can middle powers uphold the Antarctic Treaty System? The paradox of polar science diplomacy and the ICCE

Prof. Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau · International Relations Institute, University of Brasilia and INCT da Criosfera, Brazil

Between Aspiration and Enactment: Malaysia’s Long Road Towards an Antarctic Act

Prof. Hong Ching Goh · National Antarctic Research Centre, Universiti Malaya

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

Why Did South Korea Ratify the BBNJ Agreement So Quickly? Domestic Drivers of a Middle Power’s Rapid Ratification and Their Implications for Ocean and Polar Governance

Prof. Hyun Jung Kim · Department of Political Science and International Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

Sciences as a Covenant - Law and State Practice of India, the Rule of Law and the Future of Antarctic Cooperation

Prof. Bimal N. Patel · Rashtriya Raksha University and Judge Elect, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

The Concept of ‘Middle Power’ and ‘Small State’ in Relation to New Zealand and the Antarctic Context

Prof. Karen N Scott · Faculty of Law, University of Canterbury

The UK as middle power and the awkward geopolitics of Antarctica (online)

Prof. Klaus Dodds · Faculty of Science and Technology, Middlesex University

17:30 **Closing Remarks** · Hyoung Chul Shin & Nengye Liu

18:00 **Conference Dinner**

The Republic of Korea, Asian Middle Powers and the Antarctic Treaty System

09:30 – 10:00

Upholding the Antarctic Treaty System in a changing world order, The Republic of Korea as an Asian Middle Power

Nengye Liu, Hyoung Chul Shin, Cassandra Brooks & Jiliang Chen

Abstract

The ROK has been consistently supporting the post-Cold War liberal international order. As it emerged as a middle power after the Cold War, its “middlepowerhumanship” has been extensively discussed. Nonetheless, the application of such identity in its Antarctic diplomacy remains to be examined, especially in a time when American leadership is absent or downgraded. The paper aims to answer one big question: how could the ROK, as an Asian middle power and an important Antarctic State, uphold the ATS in a changing world order? This Paper applies conceptual framework of middle power theory in international relations. It first explains different approaches to the middle power concept in this paper. Because the threshold for becoming a consultative party of the Antarctic Treaty is high, most ATCPs can be seen as middle powers in terms of their capacity. This made the study of middle powers in the ATS a special case compared to most other international organizations and treaties. The paper then retrospects active roles middle powers played in the ATS. Thirdly, it reviews the ROK as a middle power on global stage and in the ATS. Finally, the paper proposes strategy and policy options available to the ROK that could uphold and advance purposes and objectives of the ATS in a challenging time.

Prof. Nengye Liu

Associate Professor, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University



Associate Professor LIU Nengye is an internationally recognized authority in polar, ocean and environmental law and governance. Prof LIU has taken the lead to edit four books: “*The European Union and the Arctic*” (Brill, 2017), “*Governing Marine Living Resources in the Polar Regions*” (Edward Elgar, 2019); “*The Law of the Sea and the Planetary Crisis*” (Routledge, 2025); “*Asian Cities and the International Legal Order*” (Hart, 2027); produced 130+ publications, which include 60+ refereed journal articles (e.g., *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, *Transnational Environmental Law*, *Review of European Comparative and International Environmental Law*) and book chapters; and delivered presentations about his research findings across five continents. Prof LIU’s

expertise is regularly sought by international media and high-level forums, such as *BBC*, *ABC News*, *The Atlantic*, *the European Parliament* and *ASEAN Maritime Forum*. He sits on the editorial board of *Marine Policy* (Elsevier), *Ocean Development and International Law* (Taylor & Francis), *Polar Record* (Cambridge University Press), *The Yearbook of Polar Law* (Brill) and *Indonesian Journal of International Law*. Prof Liu is the Founding Chair of Steering Committee of Asia Pacific Research Alliance on Law and Sustainability (2024 – present) and Founding Director of Singapore Sustainability Futures Initiative (2025 – present) at SMU’s Centre for Commercial Law in Asia. He also serves as Co-Chair of the Law of the Sea Interest Group, American Society of International Law (2025 – 2028).

Dr. Hyoung Chul Shin

President of Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI), Republic of Korea



Dr. Hyoung Chul Shin, a biological oceanographer by training, participated in and coordinated numerous expeditions to the Antarctic and the Arctic. On top of Antarctic krill biology, his works and interests include the management of marine living resources in polar waters. Hyoung Chul dedicated much of his time to supporting science and connecting science and policy. He served on the Korean delegation during the negotiation leading up to the signing of the International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, and also to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) in past years. Dr. Shin is currently the President of KOPRI, and is ex-officio the chief scientist of the institute. He has previously served as the

Director of KOPRI’s Division of Strategy and Cooperation, where he took charge of strategic planning and developing partnerships in support of the Korean national polar program.

Prof. Cassandra Brooks

Associate Professor in Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder



Cassandra Brooks is an Associate Professor in Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder. An interdisciplinary engaged scholar, she works across marine science, environmental policy, and science communication largely focused on Antarctic conservation. This includes research on life history and connectivity of Antarctic toothfish and silverfish. Cassandra is also an accomplished science communicator, and was a core member of The Last Ocean, a grand-scale media project focused on protecting the Ross Sea, Antarctica.

To pursue expertise in the policy realm, Cassandra completed a PhD at Stanford University, studying Antarctic marine protection. She serves as science faculty for Homeward Bound, a ground-breaking global women's leadership initiative. Since 2012, Cassandra participates in meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), currently on the SCAR delegation as the Deputy Chief Officer of SCAR's Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System.

Dr. Jiliang Chen

Lecturer, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), University of Tasmania, Australia



Jiliang Chen is a lecturer of Antarctic law and governance at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He also currently serves as a senior advisor to Greenovation Hub, a Beijing-based environmental think tank. His research interest is the governance of the global commons, with a focus on conserving marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including the Antarctic Ocean. Besides his recently completed PhD in environmental policy at Macquarie University, he holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science and a master's in environmental management. Before his academic career, he worked on international environmental policies for the Heinrich Böll Foundation (China Desk) and the Institute for Environment and Development.

Since 2007, as a civil society representative, he has regularly participated in international environmental negotiations, including the UN climate negotiations, Antarctic Treaty-related meetings, and the UN negotiations on the BBNJ Agreement. In the last decade, his work has focused on consensus-building within international institutions on conservation policies, such as marine protected areas.

When we talk about Middle Powers, What are we talking about?

10:30 – 12:30 • Chair: Cassandra Brooks

Prof. Alan Hemmings

Adjunct Professor, Gateway Antarctica Centre for Antarctic Studies & Research, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand



Dr. Alan D. Hemmings is a specialist on Antarctic governance based in North Canterbury, and an Adjunct Professor at Gateway Antarctica, University of Canterbury in Christchurch. His Antarctic operational experience includes time with the British, French and New Zealand national programmes, Greenpeace, and as a government observer of Antarctic tourism, and multiple visits to various locations around the Antarctic and across the sub-Antarctic. He participated in dozens of Antarctic Treaty System meetings between 1989 and 2010, and has published some 125 articles and chapters, and eight books, addressing Antarctic issues.

His research is orientated around 'Antarctic Geopolitics', understood as including both traditional IR geopolitics, and the newer discipline of 'Critical Geopolitics'. It includes understandings, analyses and critiques of international legal obligations, state practice, normative framings of Antarctic governance including the underlying philosophical-legal norms and doctrines, and the situation of Antarctica (as both place and geopolitical issue) within a transforming contemporary global geopolitics. Thus, his research necessarily attends to the consequences of a diverse range of issues such as anthropogenic climate change, trends in technology, shifts in global and regional power (including, but not limited to, the 'Rise of China' / 'Decline of The West' rubrics) and the roles of science. Particular areas of attention are: 'Antarctic Territorial Sovereignty', 'Nationalism in Antarctica', 'Antarctic Securitization' and 'COVID-19 and Antarctica'.

Can the Construct of 'Middle Powers' be Operationalised Amongst Decision-Making States within the ATS?

Prof. Alan Hemmings

Abstract

Recent enthusiasm for a balancing against Great Power excesses by Middle Powers is a progressive development, and warrants critical examination in the Antarctic context too. If the construct of 'Middle Powers' informing present international discourse at the global level is essentially the G20, minus the three current Great Powers of China, Russia and the United States, then it is comprised of 16 states plus the European Union and the African Union. In the context of the ATS, the three Great Powers are also objectively the three strongest Antarctic states. But only 11 of the other G20 states are decision-making states within the ATS (plus the EU in relation to CCAMLR only). These 11 are in a minority even in relation to the non-Great Power decision-making states (11/26 under the Antarctic Treaty; and 12/23 under CCAMLR). The 11 include only 4 of the 7 claimants, do not include other states that view themselves as significant polar actors, and are even more skewed against Global South representation than the ATS as a whole. So, some expansion of the class of state construed as Middle Powers in the Antarctic context may be necessary. On what basis might this expansion occur, and what sensibly would be its upper limit? With or without expansion, is the putative Middle Powers class here – focused on a much narrower set of issues than in a global context – likely to have sufficient commonality of purpose to provide an effective mechanism within the ATS? Would, e.g., any existing bloc-solidarity (BRICS, EU, NATO etc), or existing Antarctic (or polar) collaborations or dependencies, be likely to be breached in relation to positions adopted 'against' any or all of the three Great Powers? The critical question may be, are any of the recent, current, or foreseeable impediments to a fully functioning ATS due to one or more of the three Great Powers, amenable to balancing by the sort of Middle Powers coalition theoretically realisable?

Prof. Timo Koivurova

Research Professor and Director of the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland



Prof. Timo Koivurova is Research Professor and Director of the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland. He has worked as the Director of the Northern Institute of Environmental and Minority Law at the Arctic Centre since 2004.

Recently, Koivurova served as Chair of the Lapland Arctic Council Host Committee, Advisor to the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and Chair of the Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group within the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) of the Arctic Council. He is also a Docent of International Law at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Business Administration at the University of Eastern Finland and at the Faculty of Law at the University of Turku.

Koivurova has specialised in various aspects of international law applicable in the Arctic and Antarctic region. His research work addresses the interplay between different levels of environmental law, legal status of indigenous peoples, law of the sea in the Arctic waters, integrated maritime policy in the EU, the role of law in mitigating/adapting to climate change, the function and role of the Arctic Council in view of its future challenges and the possibilities for an Arctic treaty.

Koivurova is the chair of the University of the Arctic's Arctic Law Thematic Network, a board member in the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (ARCUS) and a member of the Advisory Board at Polar Research and Policy Initiative.

How Middle Powers Have Contributed to Developing an Antarctic Tourism Framework

Prof. Timo Koivurova

Abstract

Finland has actively participated in the process of developing a tourism framework for Antarctica. The process started at the Helsinki ATCM in 2023 and has gradually developed into a more intensive negotiation process. Tourism is not only a sectoral issue, but it interacts with many key governance questions in Antarctica, including environmental protection, scientific research, logistics, safety, infrastructure development, cumulative impacts and compliance. Therefore, debates on tourism governance are also debates on the future regulatory capacity of the ATS itself.

In this presentation, I examine the roles of different actors in these negotiations, with a particular focus on the role of middle powers in comparison with great powers. I have been involved in the process from its beginning, and the analysis is therefore based on participant observation. I also examine the reasons behind the negotiation strategies of middle powers. As the development of a tourism framework is one of the few recent examples of an ambitious governance process within the ATCM, it also provides an interesting case for reflecting on the broader strategies of middle powers in this process.

Prof. Vito De Lucia

Professor at the Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, UiT Arctic University of Norway



Dr. Vito de Lucia is a Professor at the Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, UiT Arctic University of Norway. His research interests are located at the intersection of critical theory, law and ecology in genealogy as a method of critical legal analysis, and in biopolitics as a theoretical register. His current projects focus on BBNJ on Arctic governance. He has recently been awarded the Annual Richard Macrory Prize for best article in the Journal of Environmental Law 2015.

Polarized and Pluralized? Middle Powers in the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Vito De Lucia

Abstract

The concept of middle power has acquired contemporary relevance in the current context of changing world order. The concept tends to be deployed as an objective category grounded in attributes states are taken to possess independently of context, and is usually (though not always) linked to a normative vocation of good international citizenship and defense of multilateral arrangements. This paper problematizes this framing through an analysis of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Within the ATS, standing is conferred rather than held by right, as consultative status is conditional upon an assessment, undertaken by the sitting parties, of substantial scientific research activity. The paper examines Norway, Italy and Canada, as all three are middle powers under an objective reading, and yet occupy markedly different positions within the regime, as claimant, as non-claimant consultative party, and as an applicant that has been repeatedly refused consultative status. Drawing on the records of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings and of CCAMLR, the article suggests that position within the regime, rather than any attribute carried into it, accounts for the interests and strategies these states display, thus disarticulating a seemingly homogeneous category. It then reflects on what lessons can be drawn for the future of the Antarctic Treaty System, and the role of middle powers therein, in a changing world order.

Prof. Shirley V. Scott

Professor of International Law and International Relations in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNSW Canberra



Professor Scott's internationally-recognised research at the intersection of International Law and International Relations is especially relevant in light of current geopolitical and environmental challenges. One of her most significant contributions to scholarship has been her theory of international law as ideology. She has also contributed widely to scholarly understanding of theoretical questions arising in relation to the political operation of international law and of topics including the nature of US engagement with international law, the importance of international law to Australian security, Antarctic governance and non-militarization, international dispute resolution, and climate security governance.

Professor Scott is contributing to contemporary analysis of threats to the international rules based order, how that order operated in the past, and the nature and significance of change to international law at a systemic level. She is also at the forefront of international debate regarding what constructive role the UN Security Council could play in addressing climate insecurity.

Middle Powers and the Emergence of the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Shirley V. Scott

Abstract

With the world now apparently dominated by geostrategic competition amongst powerful states, there is considerable interest in the scope for middle powers to enhance prospects for cooperation. The role of middle powers is far from new, however. This paper will consider the role of middle powers in the emergence of the Antarctic Treaty in the context of the post World War II creation of the rules-based order, and how middle powers are positioned in the design of the treaty. The heart of the treaty is article IV, which is known colloquially for having 'frozen' the status quo in respect of claims, asserted rights, and asserted bases of claims, support for claims, and/or denials of claims in Antarctica. The paper will assess the extent to which this accommodation of interests was an accommodation between great and middle powers and whether the Treaty as a whole effectively provided for ongoing middle power influence within the Antarctic Treaty System.



Prof. Tim Stephens

Professor of International Law and Associate Dean (External Engagement) at the University of Sydney Law School



Dr. Tim Stephens is Professor of International Law and Associate Dean (External Engagement) at the University of Sydney Law School. He teaches and researches in public international law, with his published work focussing on the international law of the sea, international environmental law and international dispute settlement.

Tim is an author or editor of 12 books. His major publications include *The International Law of the Sea* (Hart/Bloomsbury, 2010, 2016, 2023) co-authored with Donald R Rothwell, and *International Courts and Environmental Protection* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). He was an Australian Research Council Future Fellow from 2015 to 2018.

He has been appointed, on the nomination of the Australian Government, to the List of Arbitrators under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, and to the List of Experts under the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. He served as President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law from 2015 to 2019.

Middle Powers and Environmental Norms in the ATS

Prof. Tim Stephens

Abstract

The transformation of the ATS into an environmentally-focussed regime was in large part the result of successful diplomacy by middle powers, most notably Australia and France in the late 1980s which led to the adoption of the Environmental Protocol. Since the minerals debate, the number and diversity of parties to the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol have expanded and middle powers now constitute a central membership group and driving force within the ATS. Middle power ATCPs have tended to be the most active on environmental issues, as reflected in the volume and topics addressed in working documents submitted to the ATCM. However, they have faced increasing opposition or ambivalence to environmental initiatives from more powerful parties. Middle powers are now operating in a different geopolitical context from that which applied in the last 30 years, such that the possibilities for advancing environmental objectives have been substantially limited. This paper considers the opportunities for middle powers in this new era of great power competition to achieve key environmental goals in the ATS.

Various Approaches to “middlepowerhumanship”

13:30 – 17:30 · Chair: Jiliang Chen

Prof. Arie Afriansyah

Professor, Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia



Arie Afriansyah is a Professor at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia. He is also the editor-in-chief for the Indonesian Journal of International Law. Professionally, he is the president of the Indonesian Society of International Law Lecturers (ISILL). Arie teaches several international law courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The subjects, among others, are public international law, the law of treaties, international environmental law, the Law of the Sea, diplomatic law, and the law on international organisations. Arie's research interests are centred on the development of international law and focus more on the law of the sea, maritime security, international environmental law and fisheries law. Arie obtained his Bachelor of Laws (Sarjana Hukum/SH) in 2003 from the Faculty of Law, Universitas

Indonesia. In 2006, he received a Master of International Law (MIL) degree from the University of Sydney Law School, Australia. Finally, Arie obtained his doctorate degree in law at the Faculty of Law, University of Otago, New Zealand, in August 2013.

From Treaty Outsider to Bridge-BUILDER: Indonesia's Middle-Power Diplomacy and the Future of the Antarctic Treaty System

Prof. Arie Afriansyah

Abstract

The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) is increasingly tested by strategic rivalry, institutional paralysis, climate change, and competition over marine resources. Yet debates about its resilience remain dominated by existing Consultative Parties. This paper asks how Indonesia—an Indo-Pacific middle power and the world's largest archipelagic state, but not yet a party to the Antarctic Treaty—could help uphold the ATS while strengthening its legitimacy beyond the traditional Antarctic powers. Drawing on international legal analysis and middle-power coalition theory, the paper argues that Indonesia should pursue a two-track strategy. First, it should accede to the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol, develop a coordinated Antarctic science programme, and use scientific partnerships as a pathway toward consultative status. Accession would align Indonesia's climate, ocean, and biodiversity interests with the Treaty's principles of peaceful use, scientific cooperation, transparency, and the suspension of sovereignty disputes. Second, Indonesia should promote an issue-specific coalition linking established middle-power Consultative Parties—including Australia, New Zealand, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, and South Africa—with emerging Asian and Global South participants. Rather than creating a rival institution, this coalition would work through the ATS to defend science-based decision-making, environmental protection, and restraint in the face of great-power competition. The paper identifies three priority initiatives: cooperative research on Antarctic-driven sea-level rise and its consequences for vulnerable archipelagic states; stronger legal coordination between the ATS, international climate law, and ocean governance; and diplomatic support for conserving Antarctic marine ecosystems. Indonesia's distinctive contribution would be that of a bridge-builder: translating Antarctic governance from a geographically distant concern into an issue of climate security and intergenerational equity for the Global South. The paper concludes that middle powers best uphold the ATS not by strategic ambiguity alone, but by converting coalition diplomacy into legal commitment, sustained scientific presence, and practical stewardship within the existing treaty framework.

Prof. Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau

Associate Professor, International Relations Institute, University of Brasília and INCT da Criosfera, Brazil



Associate Professor at the Institute of International Relations since 2002. Director of the Brasília Research Center at Earth System Governance (Universiteit Utrecht) Senior Researcher at Earth System Governance (Ocean Taskforce) Researcher at the Center for Global Studies (IREL/UnB) Member of the International Studies Association (USA) Member of the board of the Brazilian Association of International Relations (ABRI)

Main research interests: Complex systems, global governance (biodiversity, climate, oceans, biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and Antarctica) and planetary health.

How can middle powers uphold the Antarctic Treaty System? The paradox of polar science diplomacy and the ICCE

Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau, Jefferson Cardia Simões (tbc), Carina Costa de Oliveira & Laura Urrejola

University of Brasília and INCT da Criosfera, Brazil · Corresponding author: anaflaviaplatau@gmail.com

Abstract

In polar regions, scientific research has historically contributed to diplomatic negotiations and the respective law-making processes. However, current geopolitical tensions pose serious threats to polar governance and exceptionalism, thereby affecting the Antarctic Treaty System. Recent ATCM meetings have been riven by rivalry and failed to adopt important decisions for the future of the white continent. Consequently, we are faced with the paradox of polar science diplomacy: in times when the decision-makers need scientific cooperation to understand climate events the most, polar science diplomacy is divided into two big loose groups. One is Western-led and has excluded Russia from meetings and cooperation projects because of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The other one, under Russian initiatives, has BRICS members and other countries, mostly the newcomers interested in the polar agenda. Not only this polar “bipolar order” increases the threat of the Arctic divisive geopolitics being reproduced in Antarctica, but also it undermines the middle powers’ capabilities to keep the ATS functioning effectively, as it is the case of Brazil. In this scenario, what can middle powers do? First, keep in mind that “what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic” because scientific research inexorably connects both poles. Second, invest heavily in polar science diplomacy as a strategy to assure that the preparation of the Fifth International Polar Year (2032-2033) will tackle the grand challenges related to the stability of the ATS. Third, cooperate to form a more robust group of science-led like-minded countries which reject bipolarization, so that decision-making processes are more based on science than on geopolitics. Combining a polar, science, and strategic dimensions of diplomacy, our analysis argues that middle powers share a common view for Antarctica as a continent of peace and science, but they did not build the necessary coalition to shape negotiations within the ATCM arenas yet. Exploring the case of the 2024 International Antarctic Coastal Circumnavigation Expedition (ICCE), this paper argues that if middle powers cooperate more, they can reduce asymmetries in access to polar knowledge and diplomatic voices. The scientific coordinator of ICCE was a Brazilian glaciologist, and teams from Argentina, Chile, China, Peru, India and Russia successfully worked together aboard the Russian research vessel Akademik Tryoshnikov. Scientific cooperation is the key to prevent both polar regimes from collapsing and floating as icebergs that threaten the other international regimes. ICCE is an example that middle powers may follow.

Prof. Hong Ching Goh

National Antarctic Research Centre, Universiti Malaya



Professor Dr. Goh Hong Ching is an interdisciplinary social scientist specialising in socio-ecological planning. Her research examines human-environment interactions to advance climate resilience, sustainable development, and community well-being through participatory planning and governance. Integrating natural and social sciences, her work spans urban and regional planning, tourism planning, coastal and marine governance, and nature-based solutions, bridging research, policy, and practice to address complex sustainability challenges. She is currently attached to Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Built Environment, Universiti Malaya and holds the position as the deputy director of National Antarctica Research Centre Malaysia. She is a registered corporate

member of Malaysia Institute of Planners and the Board of Town Planners Malaysia.

Between Aspiration and Enactment: Malaysia's Long Road Towards an Antarctic Act

Prof. Hong Ching Goh

Abstract

Malaysia's engagement with the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) spans more than three decades, yet the country has not established dedicated national Antarctic Bill. This paper traces Malaysia's journey from its early advocacy of the "Common Heritage of Mankind" principle in the 1980s and subsequent accession to the Antarctic Treaty, to the strengthening of national research capacity through the Long-term Research Grant Scheme (LRGS) and MOSTI Flagship Programme. This scientific and institutional development eventually led to a Draft Antarctic Bill addressing environmental protection, permitting and liability associated with Malaysian activities in Antarctica.

The talk examines why legislative enactment has taken considerably longer than anticipated, highlighting changes in government and policy priorities, restructuring of ministerial responsibilities, and difficulties in sustaining political and institutional attention to Antarctic governance. Malaysia's experience demonstrates that scientific capability and international engagement do not necessarily translate directly into domestic legal and institutional arrangements. As a non-consultative party within the ATS, the Malaysian case highlights the importance of institutional continuity, policy ownership and sustained science-policy engagement in translating scientific participation into effective national governance.

Prof. Hyun Jung Kim

Department of Political Science and International Studies at Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea



Dr. Hyun Jung Kim is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at Yonsei University, Republic of Korea. Her primary research areas include the law of the sea, climate change, and the intersections of international law and politics. She has published extensively in Korean, English, and French, contributing significantly to the field of international law. Dr. Kim's multicultural research expertise is underpinned by her diverse academic background. She holds a Doctorate in Law from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, two LL.M. degrees from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne and Korea University, and an LL.B. from Korea University. Her doctoral dissertation received the special mention (mention spéciale) in the 2013 Suzanne Bastid Ph.D. Thesis Competition by

the French Society of International Law, and she was awarded the Chief of Naval Operations Grand Prize in the 2012 Amiral Daveluy Ph.D. Thesis Competition in Maritime Strategy. Additionally, she served as a lecturer on the law of the sea at the United Nations Regional Course in International Law for Asia and the Pacific in 2018. Dr. Kim is actively engaged in both academic and public service activities in the field of international law and ocean governance. She has served as a member of the Executive Council of the Asian Society of International Law (AsianSIL) since 2021 and has been a Standing Committee Member of the Korean Society of International Law since 2022. She also serves as an advisory member to the Korea Coast Guard.

Why Did South Korea Ratify the BBNJ Agreement So Quickly?

Domestic Drivers of a Middle Power's Rapid Ratification and Their Implications for Ocean and Polar Governance

Kyungho Lee, Heesub Lee & Hyun Jung Kim*

Department of Political Science and International Studies, Yonsei University, Republic of Korea

Abstract

The Republic of Korea (South Korea) signed the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement) on 31 October 2023, following its adoption in June 2023. The National Assembly of Korea gave consent to the ratification on 13 March 2025, and South Korea officially deposited its instrument of ratification on 19 March 2025. This made South Korea the twenty-first country globally and the first in East Asia to ratify the Agreement. The BBNJ Agreement's interface with existing frameworks such as the Antarctic Treaty System and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) has received scholarly attention; however, this literature has treated such interactions as institutional questions rather than as drivers of states' ratification decisions, largely neglecting the domestic policy processes behind early ratification. This study explores why the South Korean government, as one of the middle powers, prioritized early ratification and how this goal was implemented domestically.

This study employs single-case process tracing to analyze South Korea's progression from signing to ratification. It features semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten individuals, including government officials, research institute experts, NGO practitioners, and academics involved in or closely observing the negotiation, ratification, and implementation of the Agreement. Rather than attributing South Korea's swift ratification solely to its middle-power role concept, the research explores the multilevel process whereby state-level role notions were translated into domestic ratification through bureaucratic actions, interministerial divisions, and participation from research institutes, NGOs, and academia. Initial interview analysis suggests that the policy preference for early ratification existed before the formal domestic process began. Notably, considerations specific to the Southern Ocean—such as the Agreement's interface with CCAMLR—do not appear to have figured prominently as drivers of the domestic decision; rather, support for a swift conclusion and the desire to meet international expectations linked to South Korea's status as a developed country - including expectations surrounding global environmental and climate commitments- seem to have granted political legitimacy for early ratification. The study concludes that understanding how international environmental norms are adopted domestically requires considering the combined influence of a country's perceived international role, bureaucratic reputation, expert networks, and domestic political factors.

Prof. Bimal N. Patel

Vice Chancellor, Rashtriya Raksha University and Judge Elect, ITLOS



Prof. Bimal N. Patel is an International Law Jurist, academician, administrator, and international relations scholar. He is also a Professor and the Vice-Chancellor of Rashtriya Raksha University. Before his election as a Judge at International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, he serves as India's member of the UN International Law Commission.

Patel has been serving as a Member of the National Security Advisory Board, an advisory board to the National Security Council headed by the Prime Minister of India. He is a member of the Financial Sector Regulatory Appointments Search Committee (FSRASC), headed by the Cabinet Secretary. Patel served as the Director of the Gujarat National Law University for two consecutive terms from 2008 to 2019. He was appointed by a high-level committee headed by the then Chief Justice of India, K G Balakrishnan, at the Supreme Court of India. He was also one of the Lead Academic Advisers to India during India's tenure as a member of the UN Security Council 2021-22. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the ICRC International Review of the Red Cross, Geneva. Patel is co-chair of the American Society of International Law Interest Group on Law of the Sea and a Member of Antarctica Environment Protection and Governance Committee, Government of India.

Sciences as a Covenant - Law and State Practice of India, the Rule of Law and the Future of Antarctic Cooperation

Prof. Bimal N. Patel

Abstract

Antarctica places a distinctive idea before international law with longstanding commitment as to how can a continent dedicated to peace and science sustain cooperation across generations, with knowledge required to protect it continually evolves. This paper will focus on India's contribution and understanding to the future of the Antarctic Treaty System by bringing scientific ambition into closer alignment with legal responsibility. It advances the proposition that middle-power leadership derives enduring authority from the capacity to translate shared knowledge into credible institutions and sustained cooperation.

Drawing on the Antarctic Treaty's provisions on scientific investigation, information exchange and inspection, alongside the Environmental Protocol, the paper conceptualises the rule of law as an enabling framework for scientific trust and international cooperation. Within this framework, transparency, environmental assessment and accountable national implementation create the conditions through which research can serve collective interests. India's Antarctic engagement under the Prime Minister's vision of MAHASAGAR [Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions], provides a valuable setting for this inquiry, connecting its scientific presence with wider interests in climate understanding and environmental stewardship.

Previously announced plan of the Indian government to establish Maitri-II station in Antarctic is part to its renewed polar strategy, envisaging expansion of facilities for multidisciplinary research and long-term environmental monitoring. Such developments invite consideration of how national commitment and innovation further strengthens the future international research partnerships and shared operational capabilities. Looking towards the next generation of Antarctic cooperation, the paper explores how India and other middle powers could advance interoperable scientific data, collaborative environmental observation, sharing of best practices and capacity building through wider participation by emerging research communities, including those of the Global South. Also, as to how such cooperation can deepen the relationship between scientific freedom and environmental responsibility while preserving the Treaty System's institutional coherence. The central argument is that India's future contribution can be understood as a commitment to continuity, enabling scientific discovery to strengthen legal compliance to protect and ensure safeguard to keep the peaceful continent 'Antarctic' future safe, secure and stable in the global maritime order.

Prof. Karen N Scott

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Karen N Scott is a Professor of International Law at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Ocean Development and International Law (ODIL). Karen is on the board of seven journals including the Brill Research Perspectives on the Law of the Sea and the Australian Yearbook of International Law. Karen has published over 100 edited books, journal articles and book chapters in the areas of the law of the sea, international environmental law and Polar law. She is the co-editor of the Oxford Handbook of the Law of the Sea (OUP, 2015), the Research Handbook on Polar Law (Edward Elgar, 2020) and the Research Handbook on International Environmental Law (Routledge, 2021). Recent projects have focused on a critical analysis of environmental impact assessment and the 'equivalence

exception' under the 2023 BBNJ Agreement (International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law, 2026) (with Neil Craik), the Antarctic Treaty System and the BBNJ Agreement (ICLQ, 2025). Karen was Head of the School of Law at the University of Canterbury from 2015 to 2018, Acting Executive Dean of Law 2023 – 2024, Associate Dean (Research) (2022 – 2025) and President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law (ANZSIL) (2019 – 2023).

The Concept of 'Middle Power' and 'Small State' in Relation to New Zealand and the Antarctic Context

Prof. Karen N Scott

Abstract

While New Zealand is not a 'middle power' in conventional international relations-terms, it arguably plays a middle power role within the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean region. This article will explore the concept of 'middle power' and 'small state' in relation to New Zealand and the Antarctic context.

New Zealand has a long-standing history of engagement with Antarctic governance as a claimant state, a sub-Antarctic state, a state with resource interests in the Southern Ocean and of course as a founding member of the Antarctic Treaty system. This article will critically assess New Zealand's contribution to the development of Antarctic governance within and beyond Antarctic institutions as well as at the domestic level. Specifically, it will explore New Zealand's contribution to Antarctic policy development (such as in relation to area-based protection and environmental impact assessment), leadership (for example, chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection and in relation to the minerals negotiations), and implementation of Antarctic rules and policies in its role as a so-called 'Antarctic gateway' state.

The article will examine whether New Zealand's status as a claimant state supports or undermines its influence within the Antarctic Treaty system and whether maintaining its claim to Antarctica – with its associated colonial history – is in the long-term interest of Antarctic governance in the context of an increasingly unstable international rules-based order.

Prof. Klaus Dodds

Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology at Middlesex University



Professor Klaus Dodds is the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology at Middlesex University and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. He completed his PhD at the University of Bristol in 1994, and thereafter took up a position at the University of Edinburgh and, thereafter, joined Royal Holloway. He has held a Visiting Erskine Fellowship at Gateway Antarctica, University of Canterbury (2002) and been a visiting Fellow at St Cross College, University of Oxford (2010-11) and St John's College, University of Oxford (2017-18). In 2005, he was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize for Geography, and in 2016 was awarded a Major Research Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust (2017-2020) for a project concerned with the 'Global Arctic'.

He has published many books and articles concerned with the geopolitics and governance of the Polar Regions, as well as the cultural politics of ice. These include: *The Scramble for the Poles* (2016), *Ice: Nature and Culture* and *The Arctic: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2019). He has served as a specialist adviser to two parliamentary select committees: the House of Lords Select Committee on the Arctic (2014-5) and the House of Commons Environment Audit Committee's Arctic enquiry (2018). In 2019, he was appointed the UK representative of the IASC's Social and Human Working Group. He has visited Antarctica on four separate occasions and travelled extensively in the Arctic region.

The UK as middle power and the awkward geopolitics of Antarctica

Prof. Klaus Dodds (online)

Abstract

The UK would not typically consider itself to be a middle power - it is a nuclear weapon state, a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the world's largest economies, with the highly influential City of London. In the Antarctic context, the UK is a claimant state, an original signatory to the Antarctic Treaty and would frame itself as a polar science superpower. As an original signatory, it has also acquired a great deal of knowledge and understanding of the governance system that prevails via the Antarctic Treaty System, arguably leading to the period of greatest influence in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, the UK has invested in a new polar vessel, upgraded facilities at Rothera and launched its Antarctic Strategy to 2035. And yet as the Strategy (the first for the UK) acknowledges the geopolitical dynamics associated with Antarctica are shifting - China is a genuine polar superpower; Russia is a bad faith actor, BRICS plus countries are showing more interest in the region, and there are public differences between those who wish to conserve and those who wish to exploit. The UK is no longer a member of the EU, moreover. Despite all of the above, the UK will need to work with partners, be wary of President Trump's support of Argentina (a key claimant to UK overseas territories including the Falklands, and consider how alliances and balance operational strains in the High North and elsewhere on its logistical, scientific and constabulary abilities. The paper will conclude with an audit of how the UK is likely to maintain its influence in the region: South Atlantic shielding; working with like-minded allies in the ATS including CCAMLR and beyond such as AUKUS; expand surveillance of British Antarctic Treaty including using autonomous technologies.