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History Expert Group and Humanities and Social Sciences Expert Group

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ABSTRACTS

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The presence of the past: Antarctica in China's national narrative

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National narratives have an important role in state-building and creating national identities. They also have a flow on effect to foreign policy. China's predominant historical national narrative on Antarctica is one of being initially excluded and having experienced inferior status in Antarctic affairs; tropes that resonate with the wider national narrative on China's modern history of foreign exploitation and victimisation. The logical response to such a historical narrative is Beijing's present-day emphasis on the "right to speak up" (*huayu quan*) on Antarctica affairs and assertion of China's "rights and interests" (*quanyi*) in Antarctica. China is rapidly expanding its Antarctic capacity and assessing the opportunities it can derive from increased Antarctic engagement. In the process, as many other leading Antarctic players such as the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, and Australia have done (and continue to do); China is now incorporating Antarctica into its meta narrative on national identity, national interests, and the nation's global rise as an economic and political power. As a state where the media, culture, education, and historiography are under strict control from the ruling political party, this process is relatively obvious to observe in China compared to societies with a more open political environment. This paper explores "the presence of the past" in China's current Antarctic policy and overall foreign policy; locating this enquiry within a consideration of the part historical narratives have played, and are playing, in other leading states' Antarctic engagement.

Gaussberg – An island in ice

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At the beginning of the 20th century, four expeditions joined an international meteorological and magnetic cooperation (1901-1903) to solve the question whether Antarctica is a continent or a frozen ocean. The first German South Polar Expedition

was in good hope to make discoveries in the Southern Indian Ocean at 90° W south of Kerguelen, a starting point promoted by Georg von Neumayer since the 1870es. Oceanographer Otto Krümmel even proposed the possibility that in this area a ship frozen in like the “Fram” in the Arctic Ocean might drift to the South Pole pulled along by an underlying ocean current and then reach open water in the Weddell Sea. However, instead of the wishful thinking of highly recognized German scholars, Erich von Drygalski's ship “Gauss” was beset by ice at the Polar Circle and did not move for a whole year. The only discovery within the white desert was an extinct volcano of 366 m height sitting exactly at the border where sea ice met inland ice 80 km south of the overwintering station aboard “Gauss”. This island surrounded by ice called Gaussberg was representing Antarctica for the German expedition. A base station was established at the foothill of the volcano for meteorological and magnetic observations and a detailed geological and photogrammetric survey was performed. Besides, the movement of the inland ice towards the coast was measured also. The paper explains the meaning of the discovery of Gaussberg at the time of imperialism. Today the mountain waits for being used as marker to investigate the actual height of the inland ice cap as indicator for climate change within more than 110 years.

Lewander Lecture

The Macquarie Island penguin-harvesting controversy: Science, celebrity and media in a subantarctic wildlife campaign

Elizabeth Leane, University of Tasmania, Australia

In 1901, Edward Wilson visited some abandoned sealers' huts at Lusitania Bay, Macquarie Island, while en route to the Ross Sea as a member of the British National Antarctic Expedition led by Robert F. Scott. In both his personal diary and his ornithological notes, Wilson expressed horror at what he saw: “the putrid remains of penguins ... the refuse of poor birds which had been boiled down for their oil.” Railing against the “havoc made by these Penguin butchers,” on his return he set about

alerting scientists to this issue, addressing the 1905 International Ornithological Congress and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Over the next fifteen years, the cause was taken up by a diverse group of internationally famous men, including the explorers Douglas Mawson, Frank Hurley, and Apsley Cherry-Garrard; the wealthy and eccentric zoological collector Walter Rothschild; and the novelist H.G. Wells. Largely through their efforts, penguin harvesting ceased in 1920, and the island was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1933.

While disquiet about commercial activities on the island had been expressed locally since the 1890s, it took a global media campaign to put an official stop to the subantarctic “Penguin butchers.”

Drawing on diaries, published accounts and media reports, this paper looks at the factors leading to the banning of penguin-harvesting on Macquarie at a time when whales were being uncontroversially slaughtered in great numbers in the subantarctic.

While arguments presented to scientific societies focused on ecological concerns, they were combined with claims of animal cruelty, and it was the latter that seem to have mobilized action. Many of the media campaigns focused on what we would now term animal rights, using highly emotive language to arouse readers’ indignation at the treatment of the birds. The penguin-harvesting campaign might be seen as an early case of the celebrity animal rights activism, enacted through print media and public addresses. We show how difficult it is to disentangle science and emotion in this controversy.

The influence of Soviet Antarctic expeditions on the future of Russia’s Southern Polar interests

Stuart Prior, Prior Group,

Russian interest in Antarctica is usually dated from the discovery of the continent by the expedition of Bellingshausen and Lazarev (27 January 1820). Russian involvement in Antarctic activities began over a century later. From the beginning Russia consistently opposed territorial division of the continent and argued for

management by special international regime. A foundation supporter of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, Russia has hewed to this policy since.

Pursuit of Russian national interests evolved over the decades, covering the continent and the surrounding Southern Ocean – through whaling and fisheries, and, under the Antarctic Treaty regime, through fisheries (fish and krill), science, and environmental management. These activities can be grouped into three distinct phases, which can be characterised as: reconnaissance, exploration and familiarisation (1955-1969); studying and mastering the resource potential of the continent and the Southern Ocean (1970-1991); and, the refocusing of Russian Antarctic efforts aimed at returning Russia to the status of a leading Southern Polar power, following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991 to the present).

The Soviet intellectual, policy and practical Antarctic and Southern Ocean heritage underpins Moscow's approach today. This paper examines how Russia's regional policy towards the Southern Polar region is developed in parallel to, but is distinct from, its policy towards its Northern Polar interests. Its aim is to demonstrate Russia's status as a global power with a right to be intimately involved in addressing the most important challenges faced by the global community. Russia's Antarctic policy programme is seen as one of a trio of programmes – the others are nuclear and space – which demonstrate to the global community Russia's ability, and right, to address matters of global importance which cannot be limited by territorial boundaries.

Listening in on Antarctic history: the verbatim records and sound recordings of Treaty diplomacy

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This paper is about listening in on Antarctic diplomacy. It is about two bodies of evidence. The first is a collection of documents created by the Conference on Antarctica in Washington, DC, in October and November 1959. Among other documents, this collection is composed of verbatim records of the words spoken by the delegates in the two committees that conducted the conference's work. The second is a collection of sound recordings made during the Canberra sessions (in

1978 and 1980) of the special consultative meetings to negotiate CCAMLR. Both of these sources have recently been released by the national archives of the US and Australia, respectively. This paper considers whether these verbatim records and sound recordings change the way we understand the history of Antarctic Treaty diplomacy. My argument is that these sources should make us reconsider the place of at least three issues in both Antarctic and diplomatic historiography. First, these sources emphasise the centrality of translation. Translation here has two registers: one is about translation between the four Treaty languages and the attendant issue of cross-cultural communication; and the other is the translation between science and scientists and the legal and formal language of international diplomacy. The second main issue these sources raise relates to rhetoric and the physical presence of the diplomat. How do these sources contribute to our understanding of the physical encounter and cultural forms of diplomacy? And the final issue is that these verbatim and sound records make us consider, once again, the specificity of language. Why were certain words and phrases chosen and not others? Both these sources offer new insights about the ways in which the national policies of each of the Treaty parties was articulated in the context of the conference room and the ways in which the divergent party views were negotiated into one text.

6Extreme environments and the shaping of scientific knowledge: The Royal Society expedition to Halley Bay

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During the 1957-58 International Geophysical Year, Antarctic research exploded at an international level. Throughout this period, many countries constructed research stations around the continent, most of which remain active today. However, the extreme, hostile, and alien environment of Antarctica greatly impacted the way that research scientists made observations, conducted their research, or even lived their daily lives. One of these research stations, at Halley Bay, was established by the Royal Society Expedition in 1956. Over the course of the next four years, this base produced a wealth of knowledge in the geophysical sciences, despite near constant

interruptions from the physical environment. However, according to both a published memoir by meteorologist Joseph MacDowall as well as the scientific papers produced by the Expedition, the scientists and support staff at this station constantly devised novel solutions and adaptations to their methods and equipment in order to continue their research despite the extreme conditions. This led to a culture of scientific improvisation where rather than following standardized methodology, they were free to devise technological and pragmatic solutions that could allow them to complete their work. In addition, they were forced to coordinate together in many of their tasks, polishing their own observational skills and adapting them to the environment. Though one could argue that equipment could break down and need repair in field research in any part of the world, I will focus on not basic repairs to broken technology, but rather technological adaptations and behavioural readjustments forced by the extreme environment of the Antarctic. In this paper, I use methods from science and technology studies (STS) and the history of science and the environment to show how the material environment of Antarctica contributed to the production of scientific knowledge, as well as the unique ways that scientists negotiated with these environmental factors.