



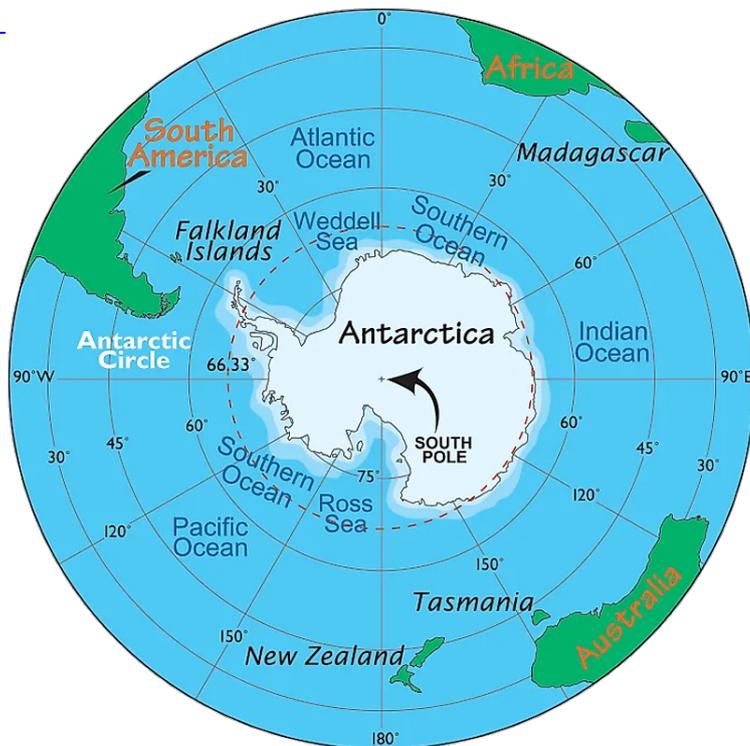
Antarctic Treaty

Why in News

Recently, the **60th anniversary** of the [Antarctic Treaty](#) was celebrated.

- The Antarctic treaty remains the only example of a **single treaty that governs a whole continent**.
- It is also the foundation of a **rules-based international order for a continent without a permanent population**.

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Key Points

▪ About:

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed between **12 countries in Washington on 1st December 1959** for making the **Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone to be preserved for scientific research only**.
- **The twelve original signatories** are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- It **entered into force in 1961** and has since been acceded by many other nations.
- Antarctica is defined as all of the **land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude**.

- Recently, an enormous [iceberg 'A-76'](#) has calved from the **western side of the Ronne Ice Shelf, lying in the Weddell Sea, in [Antarctica](#).**

- **Members:**

- Currently it has 54 parties. **India became a member of this treaty in 1983.**

- **Headquarters:**

- Buenos Aires, Argentina.

- **Major Provisions:**

- Promoting the **freedom of scientific research.**
- Countries can use the continent only for **peaceful purposes.**
- Prohibition of **military activities, nuclear tests** and the **disposal of radioactive waste.**
- Neutralising **territorial sovereignty**, this means a limit was placed on making any new claim or enlargement of an existing claim.
- It put a **freeze on any disputes between claimants** over their territories on the continent.

- **Dispute & Resolution:**

- There have been tensions from time to time. **Argentina and the UK, for instance, have overlapping claims to territory on the continent.**
- However, a key reason why the treaty has been able to survive has been its **ability to evolve through a number of additional conventions** and other legal protocols.

- These have **dealt with the conservation of marine living resources, prohibitions on mining, and the adoption of comprehensive environmental protection mechanisms.**

- As disputes have arisen over the years, many have been addressed through the expansion of the treaty framework with these agreements. This framework is now referred to as the [Antarctic Treaty System](#).

- **Antarctic Treaty System:**

- **About:**

- It is the whole **complex of arrangements** made for the purpose of **regulating relations among states in the Antarctic.**
- Its purpose is to **ensure in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes** and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.

- It is a **global achievement** and has been a hallmark of **international cooperation for more than 50 years.**

- These agreements are **legally binding and purpose-built for the unique geographical, environmental and political characteristics** of the Antarctic and form a robust international governance framework for the region.

- **Major International Agreements of the Treaty System:**

- The 1959 **Antarctic Treaty.**
- The 1972 **Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals.**
- The 1980 **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.**
- The 1991 **Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.**

Indian Antarctic Programme

- **About:**

- It is a **scientific research and exploration program** under the [National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research \(NCPOR\)](#). It started in **1981** when the **first Indian expedition to Antarctica was made**.
- **NCPOR** is the **nodal agency for planning, promotion, coordination and execution** of the entire gamut of polar and **southern ocean scientific research** in the country as well as for the associated logistics activities.
 - It was **established in 1998**.
- **Dakshin Gangotri:**
 - Dakshin Gangotri was the **first Indian scientific research base station established in Antarctica**, as a part of the Indian Antarctic Program.
 - It has weakened and become just a supply base.
- **Maitri:**
 - **Maitri is India's second permanent research station in Antarctica**. It was built and finished in **1989**.
 - Maitri is **situated on the rocky mountainous region** called Schirmacher Oasis. India also built a freshwater lake around Maitri known as Lake Priyadarshini.
- **Bharti:**
 - Bharti, **India's latest research station operation since 2012**. It has been constructed to help researchers work in safety despite the harsh weather.
 - It is India's first committed research facility and is **located about 3000 km east of Maitri**.
- **Other Research Facilities:**
 - **Sagar Nidhi:**
 - In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi, for research.
 - An ice-class vessel, it can cut through the thin ice of 40 cm depth and is **the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters**.

Way Forward

- While the Antarctic Treaty has been able to successfully respond to a range of challenges, **circumstances are radically different in the 2020s compared to the 1950s**. Antarctica is much **more accessible**, partly due to **technology** but also [climate change](#).
 - **More countries now have substantive interests in the continent** than the original 12. Some global resources are becoming scarce, especially oil.
- There is considerable speculation as to **China's interests in Antarctic resources, especially fisheries and minerals**, and whether China may seek to exploit weaknesses in the treaty system to secure access to those resources.
- Therefore, all of the treaty signatories, but especially those with significant stakes in the continent, **need to give the future of the treaty more attention**.

Source: DTE