

## Policy Memo (299 words)

### Team 7

Antarctica, peacefully governed since 1959 by the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), is subject to the dual pressure of decreasing cost of entry, making resource extraction easier<sup>1</sup> and increasing global interest in the untapped wealth of the continent.<sup>2</sup>

Mineral resource exploitation is prohibited by the ATS until 2048, but the confrontational rhetoric of China and Russia raise concerns about illegal and aggressive actions.<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Buchanan, visiting researcher at West Point, warns that "the era of Antarctic exceptionalism as we know it could soon end."<sup>4</sup>

Sino-Russian collaboration on developing polar-capable equipment,<sup>5</sup> strategic prioritization of the polar regions,<sup>6</sup> and continued violation of international norms raises the specter of conflict and further environmental degradation.<sup>7</sup> Beijing and Moscow have demonstrated interest in:

- Antarctic marine fisheries,<sup>8</sup> threatening oceanic food-chains;<sup>9</sup>
- Minerals,<sup>10</sup> compounding Antarctica's already-threatened environment and creating a potential monopoly;<sup>11</sup>
- Hydrocarbons,<sup>12</sup> diminishing the security of the planet through rising sea levels.<sup>13</sup>

Using the spirit of collaboration built-up by the Russo-Ukrainian War, the EU-US alliance should harness the momentum to tackle a clearly emerging risk from the southern pole, using the POLARIS framework.

#### **POLARIS: Polar Ocean-Land Agreement for Regional and International Security:**

To protect the ATS, and prevent the destruction of Antarctic ecosystems, we propose a joint EU-US policy agenda grounded in economic deterrence, multilateral environmental measures, and a reinvestment in diplomatic actions.

- I. Leveraging economic heft, the US and the EU will introduce national legislation that sanctions entities which engage with ATS violators.
- II. Reaffirming the shared EU-US commitments, the framework will advocate for amendments to the ATS that establish enforceable environmental safeguards alongside new joint mechanisms for monitoring and upholding these standards.
- III. Building on common historic, cultural and economic ties, the US and EU will reinvigorate relationships with geographically-proximate parties in the region, such as South Africa and Argentina<sup>14</sup> with the goal of countering the Sino-Russian threat.

## Sources

- 1 Haward, M. and Jeffrey McGee. (2021, February 3). Antarctic Geopolitics: Emerging Cracks in the Ice? *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*.  
<https://gija.georgetown.edu/2021/02/03/antarctic-geopolitics-emerging-cracks-in-the-ice/>
- 2 Rüttinger, Lukas; Raquel Munayer, Pia van Ackern, and Florian Titze: The nature of conflict and peace. The links between environment, security and peace and their importance for the United Nations. Gland: WWF International; Berlin: 2022.
- 3 Sacks, B. J., Black, M., & Dortmans, P. (2022, December 7). *Arctic Governance Is in Trouble. The Antarctic Could Be Next*. RAND Corporation.  
<https://www.rand.org/blog/2022/12/arctic-governance-is-in-trouble-the-antarctic-could.html>
- 4 Buchanan, E. (2022, March 18). *The end of Antarctic exceptionalism?* Lowy Institute.  
<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/end-antarctic-exceptionalism>.
- 5 Boulègue, M. (2022). The militarization of Russian polar Politics. *Chatham House*.  
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/militarization-russian-polar-politics>.
- 6 Harvey, C. H., E&E. (n.d.). *China and Russia Continue to Block Protections for Antarctica*. Scientific American. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from  
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/china-and-russia-continue-to-block-protections-for-antarctica/>.
- Burke, R., & Matisek, J. (2021). The Polar Trap: China, Russia, and American Power in the Arctic and Antarctica. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*.  
<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2820739/the-polar-trap-china-russia-and-american-power-in-the-arctic-and-antarctica/>.
- 7 Brown, E. (2022, May 23). *Despite Mining Ban, Russia Scours Antarctica for Fossil Fuel Deposits*. Daily Maverick via PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/peril-and-promise/2022/05/gentlemans-agreement-despite-mining-ban-russia-scours-antarctica-for-massive-fossil-fuel-deposits/>.
- 8 孙松, 孙晓霞. 2020. 对生物海洋学内涵的理解[J]. 海洋与湖沼, 51(4): 684-694. [SUN Song, SUN Xiao-Xia. 2020. *Oceanologia et Limnologia Sinica*, 51(4): 684-694.] <http://qdhys.ijournal.cn/html/hyyhz/2020/4/20200404.html>.
- 9 Atkinson, A., Siegel, V., Pakhomov, E. et al. Long-term decline in krill stock and increase in salps within the Southern Ocean. *Nature* **432**, 100–103 (2004).  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/nature02996>.
- 10 Polar Marine Geosurvey Expedition. (2012). 12 октября 2012 года ФГУ НПП «Полярная морская геологоразведочная экспедиция» отмечает 50-летний юбилей! [October 12, 2012 FGU NPP "Polar marine exploration expedition" celebrates its 50th anniversary!] PMGE.  
<http://www.pmge.ru/index.php?id=118&lang=RUS>.

- 11 Talalay, P. G., & Zhang, N. (2022). Antarctic mineral resources: Looking to the future of the Environmental Protocol. *Earth-Science Reviews*, 232, 104142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.earscirev.2022.104142>.
- 12 Perkins, R., & Griffin, R. (2020, February 21). *Russia stokes political tensions with hunt for Antarctic oil*. S&P Global Marketplace. <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/022120-russia-stokes-political-tensions-with-hunt-for-antarctic-oil>.
- 13 European Parliamentary Research Service. Climate change considerations for EU security and defence policy. *European Union*.
- 14 Kubny, H. (2023, February 26). *China's port plan in Ushuaia and satellite station in Antarctica*. Polar Journal. <https://polarjournal.ch/en/2023/02/06/china-plans-a-gateway-to-antarctica-in-argentina/>.