



Russia and China in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: Implications for the Five Eyes



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Cover image

LIEUTENANT Wade Lamberth is a meteorologist his job is to ensure that he gives the people working in the Antarctica the best possible indication of what the upcoming weather will be. The weather can change quickly, so whether it's field parties, scientific research or aviation, it's critical they all know what the weather will do.

Russia and China in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: Implications for the Five Eyes

Just like in the Arctic, the Antarctic is no longer insulated from geopolitical tension or the spillover of mistrust in the international community.¹ Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are no longer exceptional in terms of 'low tension' governance and consensus-based decisions. And if the Arctic is any harbinger of the future of Antarctic affairs, then things may yet get worse.

Increasingly, China and Russia are acting as disruptors to good governance within the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). For the past few years, Beijing and Moscow have become challenges – if not threats – to regional stability and have required the Five Eyes intelligence community to pool more resources and efforts into tracking their activity.

However, geopolitical tensions in the Antarctic are not a new notion, nor is the ATS about to crumble. Nevertheless, the region is slowly shaping to become a “*contested space*”² in the presence of Russia and China. Taken individually and together, Moscow’s and Beijing’s postures and actions in Antarctic affairs are reshuffling the cards of good governance and consensus-based decisions in the ATS. Of particular interest is the relationship both countries have towards Antarctic affairs and the challenge they represent individually and jointly for the Five Eyes intelligence community.

The Five Eyes countries – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) – are Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs) given they are original signatory members of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. It is in their interest to protect the ATS and defend the increasingly contested rules-based norms and governance system in the Antarctic. At home, the Five Eyes are also often on the frontline of dealing with the wider threats that Russia and China represent for national interests.

Russia’s and China’s policy in the Antarctic is symptomatic of long-term issues in the region. The first set of issues relates to suspected dual-purpose activities and risks linked to the militarization of the continent and the Southern Ocean. Under the ATS, Antarctica is a demilitarized continent where military activity is limited to “*peaceful purposes only*”.³

¹ See, for instance, the support for Ukraine shown by most of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs) during the Berlin Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in May-June 2022. <http://uac.gov.ua/en/25-antarctic-countries-supported-ukraine-and-staged-a-demarche-to-the-representative-of-the-russian-federation-during-the-antarctic-treaty-consultative-meeting/>

² Marigold Black and Peter Dortmans (2022), *Not So Quiet on the Southern Front*, The RAND Blog, February 17, 2022

³ See Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, *Peaceful use and Inspections*

The main problem is that the ATS is silent on defining the perimeter of said purposes, which leaves room for interpretation. This is especially true since ATS provisions do not cover space or naval activities which might be military operations under the pretense of 'scientific research'.

Furthermore, provisions written in the context of the 1960s – when the ATS came into existence – hardly apply to modern military technology anymore.⁴ Suspicions abound regarding intentions by Russia and China to employ dual-use technologies for military purposes.⁵ Dual-use activities also increase the risk of miscalculation and tactical errors during accidents.

Another set of issues relates to governance in the Antarctic regarding the future of the ATS and potential territorial claims by consultative parties to the ATS.⁶ In the context of China's aggressive policy in the South China Sea and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, there is a spillover of mistrust in Antarctic governance. Elizabeth Buchanan summarized the issue by remarking that it will be difficult for parties of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) to "*deliver consensus when two of its consultative parties are at war with each other*".⁷

The consensus-based nature of decision-making in Antarctic affairs is disconnected from current geopolitical realities, with Russia and China acting as systemic disruptors instrumentalising (if not abusing) the system to their advantage. This situation leaves the door open to the ATS being high jacked by both countries to display political opposition and potentially reshape regional governance structures.

A final set of issues is the balance between protecting the region and exploiting its resources, notably fishing stocks and hydrocarbon and mineral resources (namely 'protect vs. use'). Both Russia and China are seeking to impose their views regarding fishing quotas and the future of resource exploitation in the Antarctic – both visions being at odds with the current established balance.

Fishing regulations with the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) are already taken hostage by Moscow and Beijing's opposition to new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). While the Protocol on Environmental Protection (Madrid Protocol) is unlikely to be

⁴ Alan D. Hemmings (2020), Challenges to Substantive Demilitarisation in the Antarctic Treaty Area, Yearbook of Polar Law, XII 2020.

⁵ Evan T Bloom (2022), Meeting Antarctica's diplomatic challenges, Joint approaches for Australia and the United States, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, February 2022.

⁶ See Klaus Dodds *et al.*, *Post-colonial Antarctica* in Dodds *et al.* (2017), Handbook on the Politics of Antarctica, and Marcus Haward (2017), Contemporary challenges to the Antarctic Treaty and Antarctic Treaty System: Australian interests, interplay and the evolution of a regime complex, Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs, 9:1, 21-24

⁷ Elizabeth Buchanan (2022), *The end of Antarctic exceptionalism?*, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 18 March 2022.

opened for a review conference, when this opportunity arises from 2048, Russia and China are already blurring the lines between exploration and exploitation of regional resources in terms of presence, overt and covert activities, and posture.

This paper assesses Russian and Chinese Antarctic postures individually, outlining that Russia acts as a spoiler to the ATS while China is actively contesting governance and norms. It also offers a critical assessment of their relationship in the Antarctic: together, Moscow and Beijing leverage their ability to act as a force multiplier to disrupt the ATS. Finally, the paper presents key recommendations for the Five Eyes regarding Russian and Chinese efforts in undermining the ATS.

Russia's posture in the Antarctic

A securitised understanding of Antarctic politics

Russia possesses a securitised understanding of Antarctic dynamics:⁸ the Kremlin sees a space for geo-economic and geo-technological competition between major powers. Like elsewhere, Moscow feels that its perceived national interests must be protected by all means necessary – including military power and dual-purpose activities.

Specific to the Antarctic, Moscow has shaped policy around the perception of being marginalised by claimant states and regularly denounces foreign efforts at 'geo-politicizing' the ATS against Russian interests, where Moscow deems it has been unfairly treated.⁹ Self-inflicted victimisation regularly comes back in bombastic official statements: for instance, that Russians "*do not need visas to fly to Antarctica*"¹⁰ or that Western countries seek to "*capture the continent*".¹¹

Such a posture is reflected in various strategic documents. Russia's new Antarctic action plan, adopted in June 2021, sets out ambitious national priorities until 2030¹² - notably the creation of

⁸ Mathieu Boulegue (2022), *The militarisation of Russian polar politics*, Chatham House, June 2022,

⁹ Ria Novosti (2020), 'Медведев рассказал о стратегических интересах России в Антарктиде' [Medvedev spoke about Russia's strategic interests in Antarctica], 29 January 2020, <https://ria.ru/20200129/1564025091.html>.

¹⁰ TASS (2020), Lavrov: any modifications of Antarctic Treaty must be approached carefully, 1 February 2020, <https://tass.com/politics/1115439>

¹¹ Military Industrial Courier (2019), 'Пентагон назвал дату начала войны за Антарктиду' [The Pentagon has announced the start date of the war for Antarctica], 19 August 2019, https://vpk.name/news/314173_pentagon_nazval_datu_nachala_voiny_za_antarktidu.html.

¹² Официальный интернет-портал правовой информации [Official Internet portal of legal information] (2021), 'Распоряжение Правительства РФ от 30.06.2021 N 1767-р Об утверждении плана мероприятий по реализации Стратегии развития деятельности Российской Федерации в Антарктике до 2030 года' [Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1767-r dated June 30, 2021 on approval of the action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of the Activities of the Russian Federation in Antarctica until 2030],

a *'geo-information system of Antarctica'*. The document has strong views on what Moscow considers attempts by other treaty members at 'geo-politicizing' the ATS. It also reflects a form of contingency planning in terms of Russia's future foothold and presence in the Southern Ocean and on the continent, for example regarding the development of local infrastructure.

Russia's updated Maritime Doctrine in 2022 mentions strategic priorities for the Antarctic.¹³ It calls for increased scientific and climate research as well as more investments to extend Russia's regional presence at sea and on the continent through *'new generation equipment, machinery and technological means'* and permanent stations and field bases. Finally, the 2021 National Security Strategy mentions the Antarctic for the first time in a high-level federal document,¹⁴ with a similar aim to extending presence on the continent.

Like during Soviet times, Moscow's Antarctic policy is equally informed by the willingness to be recognised as a polar power. Prestige seeking was visible in 2020 in the context of the 200th anniversary of Bellingshausen's first Russian Antarctic Expedition and the campaign around the Russian 'discovery' of the continent. Status must be contrasted, however, by the notorious scarcity of public investment in Antarctic affairs, especially for scientific research and fishing. However, the chronic underfunding of Russia's Antarctic policy limits the realisation of its strategic goals.

Russia's dual-purpose presence in the Antarctic

In security terms, official Russian strategic documents aim to provide Moscow with unhampered access to the Southern Ocean, the continent, and resources. To achieve so, Moscow believes it must strengthen its presence there, which often comes with suspicions of military and intelligence-gathering activities.

Russia maintains a limited presence on the continent, with only five of its ten research bases operational year-round.¹⁵ Most of them suffering from infrastructure issues and are unfit for operation.¹⁶ Plans to modernise the Novolazarevskaya, Mirny, and Vostok bases will be impacted by limited funding.

http://www.mnr.gov.ru/press/news/podgotovlen_plan_realizatsii_strategii_razvitiya_deyatelnosti_rossii_v_antarktik_e/

¹³ Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2022),

<http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/xBBH7DL0RicfdtdWPoI32UekiLMTAycW.pdf>

¹⁴ Elizabeth Buchanan (2021), *Russia's 2021 National Security Strategy: Cool Change Forecasted for the Polar Regions*, RUSI, 14 July 2021.

¹⁵ Year-round bases are Bellingshausen, Mirny, Novolazarevskaya, Progress, and Vostok.

¹⁶ Alexandra Sivtsova (2020), 'Trouble at the Vostok Station', *Meduza*, 22 December 2020 and Elena Berezina (2020), 'Rossiya sozdast sovremennuyu bazu v Antarktide' [Russia will create a modern base in Antarctica], 13 January 2020, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, <https://rg.ru/2020/01/13/rossiia-sozdast-sovremennuiu-bazu-v-antarktide.html>.

The main challenge for the Five Eyes regarding dual-purpose activities relates to ground-based space research, with the Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) as the main culprit. There are now reportedly ground-based GLONASS installations deployed at all Russia year-round bases,¹⁷ alongside remote-sensing capabilities and satellite relays.¹⁸ Key facilities are located at the Bellingshausen, Novolazarevskaya, and Progress bases. GLONASS installations are also supposed to open at the refurbished Russkaya station.

Roscosmos, the state corporation supporting Russia's space policy, has lofty plans to modernise GLONASS facilities in Antarctica. In 2019, Russia announced the creation of the National Center for Remote Earth Sensing from Space: the centre will not officially be operational until 2025 in Moscow,¹⁹ at best, but will reportedly help streamline data processing. The "*expansion and modernization*" of GLONASS ground facilities in Antarctica is a key priority of the 2022 Maritime Doctrine.

Russian Antarctic activities with GLONASS, a fundamentally dual-purpose system, are concerning as they are suspicions that the ground relays could be used for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and for military communications. A probable use is to track missiles and other objects in space, military remote sensing activities, and to help improve Russian command and control (C2) capabilities. A telling sign of military use would be the covert deployment of electronic warfare or anti-satellite capabilities at Russian Antarctic stations.²⁰

Interestingly, in his March 2018 announcement to the Federal Assembly, President Putin mentioned that some of Russia's 'super weapons' could "*attack targets through the North and South poles.*"²¹ In what would be a clear violation of the ATS, it seems Russia envisions using the skies of the Antarctic to avoid missile detection, including for nuclear-capable systems.²²

¹⁷ Natalia Mikhailchenko (2019), 'На связи Антарктида: зачем РФ расконсервирует станцию «Русская»' [Antarctica is in touch: why the Russian Federation will reopen the Russkaya station], Izvestia, 25 October 2019, <https://iz.ru/935967/nataliia-mikhailchenko/na-sviasi-antarktida-zachem-rf-raskonserviruet-stantciiu-ruskaia>.

¹⁸ JSC Russian Space Systems (2018), 'Россия создаст в Антарктиде центр приема космической информации' [Russia will create a centre for receiving space information in Antarctica], 21 February 2018, https://vpk.name/news/207259_rossiya_sozdast_v_antarktide_centra_priema_kosmicheskoi_informacii.html.

¹⁹ VPK (2021), 'Roscosmos: The National Remote Sensing Center will begin its work in 2035', 29 November 2021, https://vpk.name/en/560809_roscosmos-the-national-remote-sensing-center-will-begin-its-work-in-2025.html.

²⁰ Sergey Sukhankin (2020), 'Is Russia Preparing to Challenge the Status Quo in Antarctica? (Part Two)', Eurasia Daily Monitor, 24 June 2020, 17(91),

²¹ Vladimir Putin (2018), 'Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию' [Address of the President to the Federal Assembly], President of Russia, 1 March 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957> and Advanced military technology in Russia (2021), Chatham House, 22 September 2021.

²² Alan D. Hemmings (2020), *op. cit.*

Finally, there are lingering doubts about Russia's dual-use activities during scientific expeditions, notably at sea, for naval intelligence and surveillance purposes. Oceanographic research trips and hydrographic surveys organised by the Russian Navy – such as the Admiral Vladimirsky expedition in 2015-2016²³ – could be equally used for ISR purposes and Maritime Domain Awareness (notably to track submarine activities) but also for energy exploration. The Russian military industry is developing extreme weather technologies – notably aerial drones²⁴ - that could be used on the continent, where facilities at Vostok and Mirny could potentially be hosting cold weather military training.

A telling example of suspicious Russian activities took place during the 'Novo incident' in 2018. Russia blocked the access to the Perseus runway during an official Norwegian inspection of the Novo and Perseus runways located at the Novolazarevskaya base.²⁵ ATS members became concerned that Russia might have been trying to hide the nature of its operations there – notably military intelligence and logistics activities. The aerial observation of the runways Novolazarevskaya did not catch Russia red-handed but noted "*considerable activity*" at the base. Doubts therefore remain regarding Russia's interpretation of 'peaceful purposes' of military activity in the region.

Russian activities in Antarctic resource exploration

Regardless of Russia's potential dual-purpose activities, Moscow has been slowly weaponising 'civilian' endeavours such as fishing and natural resource exploration in the Antarctic. This situation requires the intelligence community of the Five Eyes to track and monitor all Russian regional activities.

Considering the poor state of Russia's distant-water fishing fleet, fishing is a secondary concern for Moscow in the Southern Ocean and adjacent waters. However, the Kremlin intends to increase national seafood production – notably, krill – by the mid-2020s, with the prospect of building several ships.²⁶ More Russian presence in regional fishing will require further surveillance from the Five Eyes to track potential illegal activities.

²³ The Maritime Executive (2015), 'Russian Navy Research Ship Heads to Antarctica', 6 November 2015.

²⁴ Military Industrial Courier (2021), 'Наши беспилотники летают и при минус 52' [Our drones even fly at minus 52], 15 April 2021, <https://vpk-news.ru/news/61729>; and TASS (2021), 'Российские беспилотники ZALA испытали в Антарктиде' [Russian ZALA drones tested in Antarctica], 16 April 2021, https://vpk.name/news/500625_rossiiskie_bespilotniki_zala_ispytali_v_antarktide.html.

²⁵ Report Of The Norwegian Antarctic Inspection Under Article VII Of The Antarctic Treaty And Article 14 Of The Environmental Protocol, February 2018.

²⁶ Ivan Stupachenko, (2019), 'Russia wants to double revenues from seafood exports by 2024', Sea Food Source, 12 February 2019.

Moscow has been using fishing as an excuse to impose Russia's views on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean. The Kremlin fundamentally believes MPAs are instrumentalised by other ATS members to decrease Russia's influence in the ATS and within the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).²⁷ Russia has a self-serving approach to MPAs: it believes stronger regulations must be in place to avoid unfounded '*discriminatory decisions*' against Russia's access to regional bio-resources.²⁸ Furthermore, because of a misguided but unchallengeable fear of being left out, Moscow wants to ensure that MPAs and the CCAMLR are not used by other ATS claimant states to extend territorial claims over the continent – especially Australia and New Zealand.

A similar logic applies to mineral exploration in the Antarctic. Successive Russian scientific expeditions from Rosgeologia²⁹ could prepare the ground for potential hydrocarbon and mineral extraction, notably oil and gas deposits³⁰ but also uranium, rare earths, and fresh water. Russian regional scientific activities (notably seismic and hydrographic surveys) are already disruptive and borderline compliant with the provisions of the Protocol on Environmental Protection (Madrid Protocol) regarding permanent mining ban.³¹

Pre-emptive activities in mineral exploration allow Russia to be potentially ready to act, if and when the time comes. Although a distant prospect, there are concerns that the Kremlin would seek to extract resources in Antarctica after 2048, when the Madrid Protocol comes up for potential review.³² However, fears that Russia alone would seek a renegotiation of the Protocol remain unfounded at this stage as it is not in the Kremlin's interest to renege on the ATS.

Russia's view on the future of the ATS

Even though a stable normative structure plays in Russia's favour in the Antarctic, this does not mean that the Kremlin is not seeking to disrupt the ATS to fit its perceived national interest. This much already happened on many occasions – and more recently when Moscow called out the UK on fishing catch limits for Patagonian tooth fish in subarea 48.3 with the CCAMLR. The situation

²⁷ Russian Analytical Digest (2016), *Russia and the Oceans*, ETH Zurich, RAD 190, October 2016.

²⁸ Federation Council of the Russian Federation (2019), Проблемы И Перспективы Освоения Биоресурсов Мирового Океана В Интерессах Российской Экономики [Problems And Prospects For The Development Of The Bioresources Of The World Ocean In The Interests Of The Russian Economy], Analytical Bulletin No. 25 (739), <http://council.gov.ru/media/files/qZTAeU9uBSltxsGxgutA0KJZyo8p47Nm.pdf>

²⁹ S&P Global (2020), 'Russia stokes political tensions with hunt for Antarctic oil', 21 February 2020.

³⁰ Simon Watkins (2020), 'Russia Makes Move On Antarctica's 513 Billion Barrels Of Oil, Oil Price', 16 March 2020.

³¹ Klaus Dodds and Mathieu Boulegue (2022), Ukraine: The impact on international collaboration in the Antarctic, Council on Geostrategy, 6 July 2022.

³² Jeffrey McGee, David Edmiston, Marcus Haward (2022), *The Future of Antarctica : Scenarios From Classical Geopolitics*. Springer, 2022.

led to unnecessary diplomatic tension between the UK, Argentina, and the United States about fishing licenses and quotas.³³

Russia is conducting third-party outreach activities with South Africa – as many Russian Antarctic activities depart from Cape Town³⁴ – to defend its interpretation of ATS regulations. It is interesting to note that South Africa did not condemn Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine at the 2022 ATCM. Moscow might also be courting South American ATS member countries (such as Brazil and Ecuador) for similar reasons.

The most pressing issue, however, relates to the risk of miscalculation and potential escalation of accidents – especially as Russia becomes more assertive in the region. For instance, the 'Novo incident' of 2018 showed that the risk of aerial incidents during inspections is real. Similarly, the incident with the Russian fishing vessel Palmer is telling. In January 2020, the Palmer was singled out by a New Zealand patrol aircraft as conducting illegal fishing.³⁵

It was later reported that the crew of the Palmer falsified its vessel monitoring system (VMS) to fish in protected waters in the Ross Sea. After several ATS members considered reporting the Palmer to the list of Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) vessels, Moscow threatened to use its veto power at the 2020 CCAMLR. The Palmer eventually kept its fishing license – this absence of accountability represents Russia's main strength in exploiting the ATS.

The number and frequency of such incidents, leading to potential miscalculation and escalation, are bound to increase in the coming years. Overall, Moscow acts as a spoiler within the ATS, where systematic normative contestation is part and parcel of Russia's posture. Furthermore, in link with Russia's 'victimisation' policy, Moscow fears claimant states would seek to make pre-emptive extended claims over Antarctica, therefore undermining Russian perceived national interests in the region.

Beyond being an active spoiler, the question is whether Russia might become a complete revisionist party to the ATS, should it consider its national interests in jeopardy. Such a scenario remains a distant prospect: the ATS still plays in Russia's favour and Moscow is unlikely to act unilaterally to break the system. In the longer term, however, Moscow leaves the possibility to act

³³ The Guardian (2022), 'US accuses UK of exploiting Russia tensions to fish highly prized species', 24 June 2022.

³⁴ Tiara Walters (2021), 'Using Cape Town as a launchpad, Russia boasts of supergiant oil fields in Antarctic wilderness', Daily Maverick, 25 October 2021.

³⁵ Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (2020), Report of the Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the Commission, Virtual Meeting, 27–30 October 2020, <https://www.ccamlr.org/en/system/files/e-cc-39-rep.pdf>.

on its reserved claimant status and abandon the ATS, should the governance architecture show signs of disunity.³⁶

Within Five Eyes countries, keeping unity and coherence within the ATS is the best way to contain Russia's regional ambitions – provided necessary measures are in place to keep track of Russian activities there.

China's posture in the Antarctic

A full-fledged Antarctic actor

China is not a newcomer to the Antarctic and has been strengthening its regional footprint in the past few years. Beijing ratified the Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and became a consultative party to the ATCM in 1985. Being a consultative party gives China veto powers and the right to make a territorial claim. Beijing ratified the Madrid Protocol in 1998 and became a member of the CCAMLR in 2007.

China's Antarctic policy was first unveiled in the May 2017 'Antarctic White Paper',³⁷ where it officially commits to "*safeguarding the stability of the ATS*". Regional activities also sit within the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) and as part of the 'Polar Silk Road'.³⁸ Since 2017, China has been adopting a number of legislative pieces for the region.³⁹ It is relevant to note that polar policy in China is generally understood as part of maritime affairs, and therefore key to China's maritime and naval strategies.⁴⁰

Despite official claims, China has a specific understanding of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: Beijing views the region as global commons that must be approached on a '*first come, first serve*' basis.⁴¹ Furthermore, Beijing considers polar regions as 'strategic frontiers' where a pragmatic balance must be found between protection of the Antarctic and 'rational use' - understand exploitation - of regional resources.

³⁶ Aleksey Kupriyanov (2019), 'России пора начинать готовиться к борьбе за ресурсы Антарктиды' [It's time for Russia to start preparing for the fight for the resources of Antarctica], Profil, 2 September 2019, <https://profil.ru/politics/rossii-pora-nachinat-gotovitsya-k-borbe-za-resursy-antarktidy-171502>.

³⁷ White Paper (2017), China's Antarctic activities, State Oceanic Administration.

³⁸ Nenguye Liu (2019), 'What Are China's Intentions in Antarctica?', The Diplomat, 16 June 2019.

³⁹ Nong Hong (2021), China and the Antarctic: Presence, policy, perception, and public diplomacy, *Marine Policy* 134 (2021).

⁴⁰ Anthony Bergin and Tony Press (2020), Eyes wide open: Managing the Australia–China Antarctic relationship, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, April 2020.

⁴¹ Anne-Marie Brady (2017), *China as a Polar Great Power*, Cambridge University Press

China seeks to equally protect and use the region, which is at odds with the more responsible approach of 'protect first' from other ATS members. The way Beijing has been shaping discussions around 'peaceful exploitation' and 'rational use' of the Antarctic represents a potential danger for the normative future of the ATS.⁴²

As a consultative party, China's interests in the Antarctic are like that of Russia. Beijing seeks access to regional resources (notably fish stocks and hydrocarbon and mineral resources), bioprospecting, and transport routes to fulfil national ambitions in the region.⁴³ Similar to Moscow, Beijing wants to ensure it will not be left out of future Antarctic governance and potential resource exploitation.

China's presence has increased under scientific research and prestige-seeking endeavours. The tourism market is also an important part of China's Antarctic outreach. China is leading in the number of tourists and Antarctic expeditions every year with the United States.⁴⁴ The absence of regulation in regional tourism will undoubtedly become an issue if Beijing forces a form of mass tourism on the continent and in the Southern Ocean in the coming years.

China's dual-purpose presence in the Antarctic

China's physical presence in Antarctica has been growing exponentially in the past years. Beijing operates two year-round research stations, Great Wall on King George Island and Zhongshan on Larsmann Hill, as well as two summer camps - Kunlun on Dome A in East Antarctica and Taishan on Princess Elizabeth Land. Although the quality of construction is in doubt,⁴⁵ the two year-round stations have undergone recent renovation⁴⁶ (notably permanent airstrips). A third year-round research base is expected to open soon on Inexpressible Island in Terra Nova Bay. It is interesting to note that most of China's Antarctic stations are located within the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT).⁴⁷

⁴² Anne Michelle Davis (2021), Resurgent geopolitics in Antarctica: the nexus between science and diplomacy in Antarctic policy making, Parliament of Australia, October 2021.

⁴³ Anne-Marie Brady (2017), China's expanding Antarctic interests: implications for New Zealand, Policy brief no. 2, June 3, 2017.

⁴⁴ Anthony J. Press & Anthony Bergin (2022), Coming into the Cold: China's interests in the Antarctic, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 76:3, 340-358.

⁴⁵ Craig Hooper, 'With New Gear And Bases, China Is Beginning To Make A Play For Dominance In Antarctica', Forbes, 23 December 2020.

⁴⁶ Mengzhu Zhang and Marcus Howard (2022), The Chinese Antarctic science programme: origins and development, *Antarctic Science* 34(2), 191-204.

⁴⁷ Anne-Marie Brady (2017), China's expanding Antarctic interests - Implications for Australia, Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Just like with Russia, there are suspicions that China may be conducting dual-purpose activities that could go against the ATS. In security terms, Antarctica is key to military intelligence activities and ground-based space observation. This relates to the dual-use nature of the BeiDou satellite receiving stations, China's GPS equivalent. BeiDou stations were installed at Great Wall and Zhongshan bases in 2010, and at Kunlun (Dome A) in 2013.⁴⁸

There are suspicions that BeiDou stations could be used for military purposes, notably remote sensing capabilities for missile and space object tracking, intelligence gathering against foreign satellites, and for military C4ISR. Data collected at ground-based research stations such as weather data, terrain mapping, upper atmosphere research, etc. could also be used for military intelligence gathering. According to Anne-Marie Brady, Chinese experts are reporting that *"in a future US-China conflict, China's Antarctic bases could be targeted in order to disrupt the BeiDou system"*.⁴⁹

The PLA Navy (PLAN) is actively involved in Antarctic affairs, notably through the Xue Long icebreaker program, which is improving China's overall polar capacity.⁵⁰ Chinese icebreakers are now equipped with BeiDou satellite system to enhance positioning and overall MDA in the Southern Ocean and along regional shipping routes.⁵¹ The PLAN is represented in the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) and it is important to note that at wartime, *"China's polar scientific vessels and bases would fall under PLAN command."*⁵²

Other potential dual-use activities of concern are linked to high-frequency radar equipment that could jam foreign polar satellites (notably at the Zhongshan station) – although a distant prospect.⁵³ Finally, airfields located at Chinese stations on the continent will help the PLA Air Force create an Antarctic transit corridor.⁵⁴

Another important example of China's potential dual-purpose presence in Antarctica and concern for the Five Eyes relates to Beijing's proposed creation of an Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA) around the Kunlun Station within Dome A in the AAT. Dome A is the highest point on the

⁴⁸ Anne-Marie Brady (2017), *China as a Polar Great Power*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Anne-Marie Brady (2017), China's expanding Antarctic interests - Implications for Australia, Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

⁵⁰ Nengye Liu (2019), The rise of China and the Antarctic Treaty System?, *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*, 11:2, 120-131.

⁵¹ Jeffrey McGee, David Edmiston, Marcus Haward (2022), *The Future of Antarctica : Scenarios From Classical Geopolitics*. Springer; 2022.

⁵² Anne-Marie Brady (2017), China's expanding Antarctic interests - Implications for Australia, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Claire Young (2021), Eyes on the prize: Australia, China, and the Antarctic Treaty, Lowy Institute.

⁵⁴ Anne-Marie Brady (2019), Antarctica as a Site of Strategic Competition: Optimal Responses for Australia and New Zealand in Antarctica 2050: Strategic Challenges and Responses, Academic Opinion Papers, Australian Government.

continent,⁵⁵ making it key to ground-based space observation. China's proposed ASMA plan, which has been rejected so far, envisions to closing off around 20,000 square kilometers⁵⁶ to foreign presence, including overflights.

The proposed ASMA on Dome A is at the forefront of suspected dual-use activities. Indeed, an exclusion zone there would allow Beijing to use installations for military purposes, especially for satellite tracking, military intelligence, and communications.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the ASMA would allow China to potentially open training grounds for troops as part of extreme weather operations. The Dome A ASMA has been called a form of “*soft control*” over this part of the continent.⁵⁸

Chinese activities in Antarctic resource exploration

As mentioned, Beijing has a unique interpretation of the balance between the protection and the exploitation of Antarctic resources – and increasingly seeks to impose its views on the matter. It is therefore creating tension with other ATS members and forcing Five Eyes countries to closely monitor regional Chinese activities. ‘Resource security’ represents a large part of China’s Antarctic approach, notably when it comes to fishing, hydrocarbon and mineral exploration, and bioprospecting.

Beijing has been strengthening its regional footprint in fishing and access to marine resources. China operates the largest distant-water fishing fleet in the world⁵⁹ and is rebuilding and modernising its fleet.⁶⁰ The development of the krill fishing industry (krill-harvesting vessels, facilities, processing equipment, etc.) is a priority for Beijing, with fishing volumes growing every year.

Beijing’s opposition to the creation of MPAs in the Southern Ocean and adjacent waters is a telling sign of China’s self-serving behaviour about fishing in the region. China has systemically opposed the creation of MPAs, arguing the lack of sufficient scientific and legal data to support them. It approved the creation of the Ross Sea MPA in 2015 only after direct negotiations with the United States over Antarctic affairs as well as after securing the inclusion of a Krill Research Zone.⁶¹ Once again, Beijing managed to tip the ‘protect vs. use’ balance in its favour.

⁵⁵ Nengye Liu (2019), ‘The heights of China’s ambition in Antarctica’, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 11 July 2019.

⁵⁶ Proposed map of the ASMA on Dome A, ATCM 42 https://documents.ats.aq/ATCM42/att/ATCM42_att059_e.jpg

⁵⁷ Sakiko Hatakya, (2020), Legal Implications of China’s Proposal for an Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA) at Kunlun Station at Dome A, The Yearbook of Polar Law Online, 12(1), pp. 75–86,

⁵⁸ Anthony Bergin and Tony Press (2020), *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ Zhou Chen (2021), ‘Will ranking China’s distant-water fishing firms encourage sustainable practices?’, China Dialogue Ocean, 10 September 2021.

⁶⁰ Zhang Zizhu (2020), ‘Decision Time for China on Fishing Subsidies’, The Maritime Executive, 28 August 2020.

⁶¹ Nong Hong (2021), *op. cit.*

China has also been using its leverage to block consensus-based decisions with regards fishing.⁶² At the CCAMLR, China is pushing to obtain unhampered access to fishing quotas and increased catch limits, notably off the East Antarctic sector.⁶³

Regarding access to hydrocarbon and mineral resources, it is likely Beijing is interested in seabed mining.⁶⁴ Such activities would go against rational use and fall into the category of active resource prospection, and no longer exploration. This growing number of Chinese scientific expeditions in the Southern Ocean is a testament to national interests in the region, although Beijing is unlikely to overturn the ATS or seek a renegotiation of the Madrid Protocol alone.

China's view on the future of the ATS

Like Russia, stability in the ATS largely plays in Beijing's favour, at least for the time being. But unlike the Kremlin, China is acting as an active contestant of Antarctic governance as its presence grows. Beijing is projecting itself as a polar power in the long term and weighs in to alter the regional decision-making process. China is slowly seeking to impose its view on regional governance and normative structure, notably by blocking consensus and imposing its interpretation of rules and processes.⁶⁵

China is conducting a form of 'lawfare' (legal warfare) against ATS normative arrangements by reinterpreting customary international law. China's opposition is aggressive and judging by its efforts, successful. This was recently made clear, for instance, when China blocked efforts to strengthen the protection of Emperor penguins during the 2022 ATCM.⁶⁶

There are interesting parallels to draw from Chinese activities in the South China Sea and what Beijing might be willing to replicate in an Antarctic context to impose its national view on regional governance.⁶⁷ China is facilitating conditions to impose and protect its perceived national interests in the Antarctic region against other member states. Just like Russia, Beijing fears it could be left out of the future of the ATS and therefore wants to ensure it sits front and centre of normative evolutions. National views on global commons with "*no attribution of sovereignty*" are at odds with the majority of ATS members.⁶⁸

⁶² Anne Michelle Davis (2021), *op. cit.*

⁶³ Jeffrey McGee, David Edmiston, Marcus Haward (2022), *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ Nengye Liu and Chen Jillian (2021), China and the future of the Antarctic mining ban, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 8 October 2021.

⁶⁵ Anthony J. Press & Anthony Bergin (2022), *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ Frank Jordans (2022), 'China blocks moves to increase protection of emperor penguins', PBS News Hour, 3 June 2022.

⁶⁷ Evan T Bloom (2022), *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ Nong Hong (2021), *op. cit.*

As Claire Young puts it, Beijing seeks “*international acquiescence to China’s preferences in the ATS*”.⁶⁹ This essentially means Beijing is conducting third-party outreach activities to impose its views on the future of the ATS, notably with South American and South Pacific countries. For instance, Beijing has increased investments in the infrastructure sector in many regional countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, etc.), thus deepening their dependence on Chinese subsidies. Chile is an interesting case, where China is using the Punta Arenas port for Antarctic resupply operations.⁷⁰ China is also active in Papua New Guinea (especially Daru Island) and Vanuatu with infrastructure support, ports, and fishing facilities.⁷¹

In the long term, China might use its economic and financial leverage over South American claimants like Argentina⁷² or Chile: Beijing may exchange influence to obtain potential concessions over the management of the ATS.⁷³

Upholding unity and safeguarding a stable ATS structure under China’s slow-burning revisionism will likely be a key challenge to the Five Eyes community in the coming years. This is especially worrying since China’s long-term plans for the region do not match the values and norms of the ATS.⁷⁴

Beijing is biding for time: exploring while preparing to extract and abiding by ATS rules while contesting the system from within. Over time, and with enough leverage over bilateral partners, Beijing would not need to make a territorial claim or achieve direct sovereignty over the continent to serve its national interests. All it would need is to tip the balance towards a Chinese interpretation of ‘rational use’ and global commons.

Disruptive force multiplier: Russia and China relations in the Antarctic

Russia and China are neither allies nor competitors in Antarctic affairs. Like elsewhere, their relationship is pragmatic and based on short-term calculated interests. Individually, Russia acts as a spoiler to the ATS while China is actively contesting governance and norms. Together, Moscow and Beijing leverage their ability to act as a force multiplier to disrupt the ATS.

⁶⁹ Claire Young (2021), *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Anthony Bergin and Tony Press (2020), *op. cit.*

⁷¹ Ryan Burke and Jahara “Franky” Matisek (2021), The Polar Trap - China, Russia, and American Power in the Arctic and Antarctica, *Journal Of Indo-Pacific Affairs Special Issue*, October 2021.

⁷² See PA Media (2022), ‘Truss says Falklands part of ‘British family’ after China backs Argentina’, *The Guardian*, 7 February 2022.

⁷³ Carlo Caro and Sasha Dov Bachmann (2020), ‘China in the Arctic and Antarctic: A Threat?’, *The National Interest*, 19 September 2020.

⁷⁴ Jiliang Chen (2021), China’s political narratives and Antarctic diplomacy, *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*, 13:1, 61-78.

Both countries are not newcomers to Antarctic politics and know precisely how to further their national interests, notably at the ATCM and at the CCAMLR. As Evan Bloom recently noted, China and Russia sometimes block consensus on certain decisions just for the sake of opposing them and not because of genuine concerns.⁷⁵ Both countries understand the Antarctic as a 'strategic frontier' where established norms are pliable and open for (re)interpretation.

As evidenced by recent events,⁷⁶ their systemic opposition to established norms and the consensus-based decision-making process within the ATS is slowly eroding overall trust in regional governance. Over time, such disruptions could create cracks in the ATS and divide the ATCP community based on alternative views of Antarctic governance – and notably based on a more Chinese or Russian definition of 'rational use' or 'peaceful exploitation' of regional resources. The situation is telling with regards joint opposition to the creation of MPAs in the Southern Ocean under the CCAMLR. Furthermore, Russia and China generally share a similar view about fishing and the exploitation of protein stocks.⁷⁷

Both countries largely agree that they have been left out of Antarctic affairs by other ATCPs, notably Western countries. Both mistakenly agree that claimant states could exploit the ATS to their advantage to strengthen potential territorial claims. Conversely, Moscow and Beijing are increasingly framed as the troublemakers within the ATS, therefore vindicating their position and giving them more ground to block consensus.

It is important to note that Moscow and Beijing have been cooperating in polar science:⁷⁸ research institutes have been working jointly since 2017.⁷⁹ Both countries also signed an agreement in 2019 to create a China-Russia Arctic Research Centre for joint Arctic scientific research, therefore showing interest in joint polar work.⁸⁰ However, the scope of bilateral cooperation remains limited, and it is unlikely that they would be sharing critical data regarding hydrocarbon and mineral resources surveying, fishing stocks, and bioprospecting.

Together, Russia and China achieve a force multiplier effect in the 'quality' of their obstructive behaviour. Standing together also means they will be less singled out than individually. Moscow

⁷⁵ Evan T Bloom (2022), *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ See the recent Russian opposition to Patagonian toothfish quotas in South Georgia and China's block against the protection of Emperor penguins.

⁷⁷ Claire Young (2021), *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Natalia Azarova (2021), Competition Among Russia, China, and United States Heats Up in Antarctic, Carnegie Moscow, 7 February 2021.

⁷⁹ TASS (2017), 'Россия и Китай подписали меморандум о сотрудничестве в Антарктике' [Russia and China signed a memorandum of cooperation in Antarctica], 25 May 2017.

⁸⁰ PR Newswire (2019), 'China and Russia Launch Scientific Cooperation in Arctic', 16 April 2019.

generally blocks decisions as part of its ongoing 'guerrilla lawfare' against the system to protect its perceived interests and exploits geopolitics to its advantage. Meanwhile, China seeks to create better options for itself in Antarctic governance and ensure Beijing's views are respected - notably regarding 'rational use', MPAs, and conservation.

The question remains whether their actions are coordinated or merely opportunistic. As evidenced by the pattern of obstructive behaviour at ATCMs and at the CCAMLR, there is indeed a form of concertation, if not direct coordination, between Russian and Chinese delegations. Both countries come prepared and support each other to achieve greater blockage against consensus-based decisions. Regarding MPAs and fishing regulations, it is regrettable that both countries seek to undermine science-based decisions⁸¹ – notably by arguing scientific data is unfounded or irrelevant and advocating 'scientific uncertainty'.

At best, Russia-China relations in Antarctica can be defined as geopolitical opportunism and systemic obstructionism. This does not mean, however, that there is an ongoing bilateral machination aimed at jointly undermining the ATS, or that their joint opposition is systematic. Overall, the 'force multiplier' effect of Russia and China siding against consensus-based decisions is rather limited to tactical movements on specific occasions.

If Russia's and China's purposes sometimes align, their long-term strategy and approach to the ATS tend to diverge, thus limiting the depth of their interaction. As both Beijing and Moscow have the unwarranted fear of being left out of future Antarctic affairs and want to 'be there first', it is unlikely their relationship will extend to the level of strategic cooperation.

Indeed, divergences are already visible when it comes to future regional presence. Moscow is concerned that Beijing's posture in the region will lead to Chinese pre-emptive commercial dominance in the Southern Ocean, notably regarding resource exploitation. The Kremlin is equally worried that increased Chinese presence over the continent allow Beijing to make territorial claims and achieve sovereign rights.⁸² This situation is compounded by China's behaviour in the Arctic, where Russia is equally concerned with China proclaiming itself a 'near-Arctic' state willing to change normative frameworks in the region.

Russia and China are unlikely to coordinate their actions about potential dual-purpose activities for intelligence gathering and military operations. Since 2015 at least, GLONASS and BeiDou have

⁸¹ Evan T. Bloom (2022), *Antarctic Treaty System shows resilience in the face of Ukraine war tensions*, Polar Points No. 16, Polar Institute, Wilson Center, 10 November 2022.

⁸² Mathieu Boulegue (2022), *op. cit.*

created partnerships in the civilian sector⁸³ but the relationship is not likely to extend to the military realm, let alone extend to intelligence gathering and sharing in the Antarctic.

Implications for the Five Eyes and policy recommendations

Taken individually, Russia and China are disrupting the current and future governance of Antarctica: Moscow spoils while Beijing contests. Together, their ability to force multiply the obstruction of consensus-based decisions and their active lawfare against the system is a threat to the ATS and regional stability. Such obstruction is bloating the system, with the risk that it will become inefficient at dealing with a rising number of challenges.

Much of the future of the ATS and regional governance rests on evolutions in international environmental governance. It is an area where Moscow and Beijing are already actively contesting existing norms and seeking to impose their view of a 'free for all', 'first come, first serve' regarding resource prospection and exploitation. Upholding a just balance between protecting and using Antarctica and the Southern Ocean is now the main challenge to the ATS.

It is paramount for the Five Eyes community to discuss what must be done to contain the threat, notably by through intelligence gathering and monitoring of Russian and Chinese activities in the region. The paper outlines a set of policy recommendations aimed at the intelligence and policy community of the Five Eyes countries.

Increase intelligence gathering and streamline intelligence sharing

The Five Eyes community must step up its efforts at monitoring Russian and Chinese activities in the Antarctic individually and together. Intelligence sharing must happen across the board – not only about suspected dual-purpose activities but also about fishing (notably illegal fishing), resource exploration, and scientific presence.

The Five Eyes community should consider strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and surveillance in the region. This should take the form of systematic joint patrols and cooperation - initially to protect fisheries and stop illegal fishing, while expanding it to other sectors requiring active surveillance (for instance, scientific presence and resource exploration).

Increased surveillance of Russian and Chinese regional activities must go hand in hand with the development of technologies suited to the environment and distances in the Antarctic. Such technologies are autonomous aerial and underwater drones, remote sensing capabilities, and space-based capabilities.

⁸³ GLONASS cooperation with BeiDou, <https://www.glonass-iac.ru/en/committee/>.

Finally, as Claire Young proposed, it would be valuable to hold annual discussions within the Five Eyes specifically targeted at addressing the challenge posed by Russia and China in the region.⁸⁴

Monitor Russian and Chinese third-party outreach

Russian and Chinese attempts at disrupting the ATS also take place outside the Antarctic, and mostly under the form of third-party outreach. Through their engagement with South American and African countries interested in the Antarctic, Moscow and Beijing seek to impose their national interests within the ATS by proxy.

As more claimant and non-claimant states develop their presence and activities in the region, Moscow and Beijing are building multilateral relations and exerting their influence externally, notably in South Africa and India for Russia and Argentina and Chile for China. These countries represent important logistical gateways for Russian and Chinese access to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

Over time, either may try to impose their view on Antarctic governance. A worst-case scenario would be China or Russia forming a 'club' of like-minded countries contesting the ATS or collectively seeking a renegotiation of the Madrid Protocol. In the meantime, Beijing and Moscow are pre-emptively positioning themselves closer to external actors to prepare for the future of Antarctic governance – notably regarding MPAs and resource exploitation.

The Five Eyes community should therefore invest more resources in tracking and monitoring Russian and Chinese third-party outreach outside of the Antarctic and how their active lobbying will influence the future of the ATS.

Adapt inspection protocols to the challenge

Tracking the activities of Russia and China in the Antarctic requires regular inspections at the stations and bases they operate. However, the Consultative Party inspection regime under the ATS needs to be adapted to the evolving nature of the challenge, notably suspicions of dual-purpose activities. Inspections are notoriously difficult to conduct and generally have a limited scope. ATCPs and Five Eyes countries in particular should approach the inspection regime with more effective compliance in mind.

The Five Eyes community should take the lead in updating and strengthening the inspection and verification regime. For instance, this can be achieved by systematically calling out non-compliant activities and ensuring that there are consequences. Violations should have immediate repercussions, from increased international scrutiny to diplomatic or economic countermeasures.

⁸⁴ Claire Young (2021), *op. cit.*

Furthermore, the 'randomised' approach to Consultative Party inspections should be altered to focus specifically on countries failing to report their activities – reporting is something Russia and China are notoriously bad at. The situation is compounded by the fact that many bases and stations in Antarctica have never undergone inspections. If not randomised, physical inspections should be carried out by surprise to 'test' the transparency of ATCPs operating bases on the continent. It might be necessary to remove the advance notice obligation before inspections.

It is necessary to update the official guidance and checklists of the physical inspection regime under Article VII of the ATS to match developments in military technology, especially dual-purpose systems. If physical inspections are not possible because of timing or budget constraints, they should be systematically replaced with more aerial and satellite observations⁸⁵ - which can also apply to illegal fishing and resource exploration.

Rethink the nature of dual-purpose activities

One of the main challenges Russia and China pose to the stability of the ATS is linked to suspicions of dual-purpose activities in the Antarctic, and notably military intelligence operations. The Antarctic has not yet reached a period of militarisation, but it is no longer fully non-militarised and used solely for 'peaceful purposes'.

In link with the needed modernisation of the inspection and verification regime, the Five Eyes community should take the lead in rethinking the definition of what constitutes 'dual-use' technology and dual-purpose activities in the Antarctic. This must be achieved, however, without overblowing the nature of the threat.

As McGee *et al.* articulated, Antarctica is "*militarised by stealth*".⁸⁶ The issue is that every piece of technology deployed in the region can be used for military activities. Both Russia and China are developing capabilities that leave the door open for the future in terms of potential military use. The key question is therefore about the intentions to use dual-purpose capabilities for military or intelligence activities.

As mentioned, ground-based space activities (notably radio and infrared telescopes) can be easily used for military intelligence purposes, such as missile tracking and guidance and even for counter-space activities. Other systems such as autonomous vehicles and remote sensing equipment can be employed for military purposes and naval surveillance in the Southern Ocean.

⁸⁵ See Alan D. Hemmings (2020), *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ Jeffrey McGee, David Edmiston, Marcus Haward (2022), *op. cit.*

The Five Eyes should also lead in adapting the definition of dual-purpose to encompass the space and naval sectors as well as developments in military technology more accurately. The body of law written in the context of the 1950s is no longer adapted to 2020s technology. This is compounded by the fact that improved data-sharing and downlink capabilities will soon be deployed to Antarctica, notably with the use of undersea cables.

Monitor Russia and China without cornering them

While it is paramount to closely monitor activities and intentions of both Russia and China in and about the Antarctic, the Five Eyes should do so without exaggerating the threat they pose to the region. Indeed, singling out or cornering Moscow and Beijing could potentially lead to adverse effects – notably driving them closer together or creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of accelerating their nefarious behaviour against the ATS.

Finally, more internal discussions are necessary about how the Five Eyes and the ATCP policy community should engage Russia in the context of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine as well as China with its belligerent behaviour in the South China Sea. Individually and together, Beijing and Moscow will remain disruptors of Antarctic governance: the aim for the Five Eyes is to limit the impact of their hostile actions.

Within Five Eyes countries, keeping unity and coherence within the ATS is the best way to contain Russia's and China's regional ambitions – provided necessary measures are in place to keep track of their activities there.

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