PREFACE

Geopolitics aims to combine geography with politics. It attempts to assess the state’s political interests and concerns in the world on the basis of geography. According to the dictionary of geopolitics, “geopolitics represents a subjective interpretation of political, geographic and other important factors aimed at spreading the national, state or bloc interests, especially in the sense of the realisation of direct or indirect control of the influence and enforcement, establishment and conformation of political, economic and military power. Geopolitics sets out to examine the interrelationship between political actors and their spatial environments. It provides a scientific approach to the understanding of global relationships. As no two states have identical geographical conditions, no two states have identical geopolitics. Similarly, each state develops its own geopolitics based on its knowledge of geography and political conditions. In this context, the geopolitics of Antarctica is not only unique but also interesting.

Antarctica is the last frontier on earth. At the bottom of the globe, it is isolated from all the other continents. Its remoteness is further accentuated by the stormy waters of the Southern Seas, which reflect the extremely inhospitable nature of the continent. Antarctica can only be described with superlatives and extremes. It is the coldest place on earth, almost entirely covered by with a thick layer of ice. Still, it is also the
driest, the windiest, the highest, the remotest, the least accessible, the
most desolate and the most unpleasant region. Antarctica had been
ignored mainly because of its geography and its physical characteristics.
However, in the beginning of the last century, the interests in the
Antarctic Region increased significantly due to various political, strategic,
economic and ecological reasons. This brought Antarctica on the
geopolitical map of the world. Some of the factors responsible for it are:

1. *Diverse nature of players in the Antarctic Region.*

It is reflected in the membership of the Antarctic Treaty System.
The members of the System include developed as well as the developing
countries. They represent more than three-fourth of the world population.
However, their interest in the Antarctic region is guided by different
ideologies.

2. *Limited knowledge of the geographical condition.*

Despite considerable research that has taken place in the Antarctic
Region in the last century, the region still holds many of the secrets of the
earth. For example, its profound effect on the global atmospheric and
oceanic pattern has been found only in the last two decades.


With the fast depletion of the resources in the mainland, there has
been a thrust for finding alternative sources of these resources. The
prospect of such resources in Antarctica has been a major cause of interest.

4. The issue of sovereignty.

At the end of the Second World War the continent of Antarctica faced a unique problem. There were seven countries that had territorial claims over different parts of the continent. These claims were being disputed not only by other countries but also by the claimants themselves. Further, about one fifth of the continent was not claimed by any state as sovereign territory.

5. The environmental impact.

As the research in the region progressed, it became clear that the Antarctic region nurtures the most fragile and pristine environment on earth. It was also realised that any adverse impact on the region would have spill over across the globe, as the global environmental patterns cannot be confined within the political boundaries. As a result, the Antarctic environment has become a concern for the entire world community and has attracted attention of many other countries, United Nations as well as Non-Governmental Organisations. Several studies have been done to understand the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Antarctic Region. These studies have reflected upon the Antarctic Treaty System and its role in shaping the Antarctic geopolitics. They also highlight the dynamic nature of the Antarctic
geopolitics. The geopolitical focus has changed with the shifts in the global concerns. Earlier, the stress was on avoiding the spill over of the cold war in the region and to ensure that it becomes international land of scientific research and a continent of peace. The present concern is mainly to preserve the environment of the region and the Madrid Protocol within the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) was signed for this purpose. Thus, the affairs of the Antarctic region are decided by the ATS. So to understand the Antarctic geopolitics it is necessary to critically analyse the ATS. Different approaches have been used to study the ATS. Some of the important studies with their approaches are discussed below:

R. Tucker Scully, former director of the office of oceans and polar affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington has suggested that the Antarctic Treaty System can be viewed as an inter linked network of substantive agreements, which include the Antarctic Treaty itself and that body of agreed measures, and additional instruments which have been concluded pursuant to the Antarctic Treaty. This system can be analysed on the basis of two perspectives:-

1) The first perspective is that of looking at the system as a body of provisions, a body of measures that have been developed, beginning with the Treaty itself, to deal with the human activities in the Antarctic region.
2) The second approach is to look at the ATS as a System of governance, as an evolving set of political institutions which provide a means for identifying and responding to issues/activities/situations which require some form of common action among those active in Antarctica.

However, the limitation of this approach is that it does not examine the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty regime.

Olav Scharam Strokke and Davor Vidas have examined the ATS on the basis of the effectiveness and legitimacy. The effectiveness of a regime is understood as the impact it has on certain basic problems that it addresses. These problems may be conceived in economic, environmental or any other terms.

As regimes are social institutions and work through social agents, to state that a regime has had an impact implies that it has affected the behaviour of actors. While assessing the effectiveness, there is an element of evaluation. It is done by raising key questions like what kind of behavioural adaptation should qualify as relevant to effectiveness, and how much adaptation should be required before the regime can be judged effective.

Legitimacy of an international regime can be defined as the persuasive force of its norms, procedures and role assignments. As
such, legitimacy is manifested in a degree of positive attitude to the regime. A regime is legitimate when specific rules are accepted by various actors because they recognise the normative basis, the procedure through which they are adopted and implemented, and the positions of actors in terms of rights and obligation.

The legitimacy has been examined on the basis of:-

1) Applicability- which examines whether the rule of the regime are conducive to the solution of the problem addressed and internally consistent.

2) Acceptance- it should be accepted not only by the parties but also by the other non-parties in the international community.

Kees Bastmeijer, examines the regime under the assumption that the protection of Antarctic depends on the collective efforts of the 29 Contracting Parties to the Protocol. In his book "The Antarctic Environmental Protocol and its Domestic Legal Implementation" (2003), he has examined it on the basis of two perspectives: -

1) Does all Contracting Parties adequately implement the relevant requirements of the Protocol in their domestic legal orders;

2) Does the complex of all these domestic legal system together ensure the protection of Antarctica in accordance with the content and spirit of the Protocol?
He has looked into the Protocol at two levels - The international level and the domestic level. At the international level he has looked into cooperation, reporting, international inspection, and initiatives by Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) and Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM) etc. At the domestic level he has examined both the legal implementation and the practical implementation.

However, all the three frameworks for the analysis of the ATS suffer from a common lacuna. They fail to bring the issue of environment as a central theme in the analysis. Considering the fact that the protection of the Antarctic environment is the main focus of all the debates that are taking place within the ATS or outside, since it has ramification on the global ecological security, it cannot be ignored. The present study is an endeavour to analyse the ATS in general and the Madrid Protocol in particular in a geographical framework, where the ecology has been taken as the central theme. A schematic representation of the study has been presented in the next page.
The Antarctic Region

Geographical Settings

Physical Features

Continental - geological - ice, etc.

Oceanic - geological - current - salinity - bottom relief - oceanic deposit etc.

Living - fishes - krill - birds - animals etc.

Non-Living - coal - mineral oil - ferrus - non-ferrus etc.

Political Process

(any policy of any dimension scientific observation or any other thereof comprising of economic, cultural & security aspects).

Political Processes

Intra-regional (Antarctic Treaty System)

evolution - A.T. - agreed measures - seal convention - whale convention - CCAMLR etc.

emergence of environment as central issue

Regime on the protection of Antarctic environment.

effectiveness limitations

A.T. - Antarctic Treaty