

ARESSA THEME V: The History, Sociology and Politics of Antarctic Exploration and Research

South Africa's involvement in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: A historical and geo-political, perspective

Jan Glazewski

Faculty of Law, University of Cape Town

This talk examines South Africa's involvement in the Southern Ocean and the Antarctic continent since the days of the early European explorers to present, with the view to considering what future policy South Africa should adopt towards the Area. It firstly describes the colonisation of the various islands in the Southern Ocean paying particular attention to the events leading up to South Africa's annexation of the Prince Edward Islands. It then explores possible reasons why South Africa did not lodge a claim to Antarctic territory. Finally it describes South Africa's adoption of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty when it became one of the 12 founding members of the Antarctic Treaty and subsequent involvement in a number of Antarctic treaties which collectively make up the Antarctic Treaty System. This was despite South Africa's exclusion from most other international for a during the apartheid isolationist years. It is suggested that South Africa's active and world renown scientific community played a crucial role in this regard. In conclusion the article makes some suggestions for the new democratic South Africa's role in this regard.