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## **Border Drift: Norwegian Antarctic Territorial Expansion 1939-2017**

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### **Abstract**

A national map created by a government should be considered the primary source for understanding the territorial extend of a sovereign's control. However, due to the difficult task of negotiating the limits of sovereign power in conflict or remote regions, these borders can drift away from what would be considered their internationally recognized limits. Examples of these kind of disputed borders include the breakaway provinces and annexations in eastern Ukraine & Crimea, the decades long dispute over the Kashmiri region, and the many unrecognized or partially recognized states of the Caucasus and eastern Europe. Another lesser known example of border drift can be found in the southern continent of Antarctica where the final scramble for unclaimed territory carries on into the present day.

In 1939, King Haakon VII proclaimed that the coast and sea between the British and Australian Antarctic claims will be brought under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Norway. This new territory, called Dronning Maud Land, differed from its neighbors by not conforming to the common practice of claiming an entire sector of the continent from the coast to the South Pole. Instead, unclaimed "land lying within this coast and the environing sea" that "none but Norwegians have explored and mapped" encompassed the new Norwegian claim. This deliberate vagueness on the extent of Dronning Maud Land was due to the Norwegian government's rejection of sector theory, a proposed method of dividing the Arctic that was later used in the Antarctic.

As the sole claimant in the Atlantic sector of the Antarctic, defining the territory's southern limits was never given priority and was never challenged by the other Antarctic territorial claimants. Even to the present day, precise north and south boundaries have never been legally

defined for Dronning Maud Land. In a rare statement on the question of the extent of the Norwegian claim, the government stated in 2015 that, “Norwegian authorities have not opposed any interpretation of the Norwegian claim as extending all the way to, and including the pole itself.” This admission of a policy of intentional ambiguity was preceded by decades of cartographic border drift on official maps produced by Norway.

This paper will examine political maps of the Antarctic continent created by Norwegian government agencies and maps used by Norwegian media to analyze how the government & people of Norway visualized their Antarctic claim over time. Particular attention will be paid to maps in the Norwegian Polar Institute’s digital archive that best represent the Norwegian government’s view on the extent of their claim as well as maps used by the public broadcaster NRK to report Antarctic news to the citizens of Norway. The findings of this study provide a view into how the Kingdom of Norway’s own interpretation of the extent of Dronning Maud Land evolved over time and how its extent has expanded over the past thirty years.

The core of Antarctic territorial law is Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty which states that claims cannot be enlarged by their claimants. This paper’s research shows that Norway’s cartographic interpretation of Dronning Maud Land has changed since both its annexation in 1939 and the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. This expansion from a primarily coastal claim to a full sector claim shows a disregard for the spirit of Article IV. But from a purely legal standpoint, Norway has not formally violated the Antarctic Treaty since no official annexation of additional territory has occurred. Nonetheless, this challenge to the ATS by the Kingdom of Norway makes for an interesting case study to examine the effectiveness of Antarctic law and its ability to react against those that stretch its bounds since this is the only case of a border drift on the Antarctic continent since the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959.

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