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Saltwater Geopolitics in North America

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The world's oceans cover close to three quarters of the surface of the globe, representing 99 percent of the planet's living space by volume (Kundis Craig, 2012). With half of the world's population living within fifty miles of the ocean's edge these swathes of saltwater provide a theatre for interactions between local subsistence, international trade and the global climate. They provide economic arenas for diverse industries, such as offshore oil development, fisheries and tourism, and provide deep reservoirs of biodiversity, with 43 of the 70 recognized phyla of life found in the oceans – compared to the 28 found on land (Kundis Craig, 2010). Society has taken this materiality of these spaces and transformed it. The levels of these oceans are rising due to climatic change. Society's industrial and economic activity has resulted in increased levels of nitrogen, phosphorous and iron within the world's waterscapes.) Increasing ocean acidification is placing the life of the planet's coral reefs at risk. Anthropogenic change has also impacted on levels of marine diversity – through ecosystem stressors such as habitat destruction, over-fishing and marine pollution (Kundis Craig, 2012).

Humans have extracted an extensive, ever-expanding amount of resources from the oceans of the world - from halibut to gravel, and kelp to crude oil - resulting in the oceans pollution, degradation and depletion. Yet, maritime characteristics have also influenced how humans have used the sea, and interacted with each other, for millennia. Questions of geography and oceanography have influenced the differential impacts of maritime security both between and within nations and regions. From the conflicts of pre-European Oceania (Keeley, 1996) to the series of *Cod Wars* between the United Kingdom and Iceland (Guðmundsson, 2006), the ocean space has both facilitated and forced international interaction over the resources (both physical and political) that it provides.

United States Navy Admiral, Alfred Thayer Mahan (1890) wrote that international power, and with it national prominence, can be found in the control of the sea. Although history is populated with exceptions, maritime transportation routes have provided an important canvas on which international relations are played out. From the voyages of Christopher Columbus and Ferdinand Magellan shifting the trade routes away from land and towards the New World, sea lanes have reflected the globe's composition and concentration of wealth and power. The world's oceans have often provided a fulcrum for a state's military and commercial power - from the strong role of the Royal Navy providing an important factor in the emergence of the British Empire and the related *Pax Britannica* to the militarised shipping lanes, defence areas and strategic choke points of the Cold War,

Close to one hundred years on from Mahan's assertions, his words continue to possess an impressive degree of relevance. Chris Parry (2014) has recently written that geopolitical competition over oceans and sea power will likely feed into an atmosphere that defines the coming decades, and it is not hard to find an ever-growing number of other scholars supporting such a statement – with a particular focus on the Indian Ocean (Mohan, 2012; Bouchard & Crumplin, 2010; Hastings, 2011; Kaplan, 2010; Dombrowski & Winner, 2015; Wirth, 2016) and the South China Sea (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2014; Kaplan, 2015; Chan, 2016). Within this literature, 'maritime security' has become the point of focus, with the oceans increasingly understood as a potential flashpoint in future global insecurity.

This chapter explores this location of the oceans within global security and geopolitics via the analysis of the oceans of North America (and the relations between the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico). In doing so, it will argue that contemporary geopolitics appears to be returning to the work of Mahan (1920) by focusing on a characterisation of the maritime space as an arena of *flows* – of goods traded, of energy supplied, and of population movement. The result is the increasing importance of a number of Mahan's chokepoints within these flows. It is this significance that has resulted in the significant scholarly focus on the Indian Ocean – home to a large number of such bottlenecks. As will be explored, the presence of such chokepoints, coupled with the economic interests of China, India and the United States, has resulted in the increasing construction of the region as an arena of security and geopolitics. Such a political construction has not been evident in the oceans of North America – although, there are the beginnings of such a discourse regarding the Arctic sea routes at the north of the continent. Despite flashpoints of territoriality, the relative harmony of the oceans of North America often outlasts hotspots of dissent and competition. This directly contrasts to the increasingly-conflictual nature of the land borders shared across the continent. It is here that provides the geopolitics of North America with its primary arena, rather than the saltwater that surrounds it.

These assertions will be explored in a number of stages. First, the chapter will explore the wider study of the geopolitics of the oceans, with the case of the Indian Ocean briefly profiled. The central case of the oceans of North America will be explored, via a selected historical case study for each relationship, provided as means to understand how the territorialisation of these maritime spaces has occurred and becomes contested between the nations involved. Finally, conclusions will be drawn - with a particular reference to how these cases provide an understanding that, whilst the politics of the oceans may represent a terrain of inter-state competition in the Indian Ocean, the saltwater relations between the states of North America are characterised by an important degree of collaboration.

The Geopolitics of the Oceans

Geopolitics has traditionally studied the state as a dynamic *living* organism (see: Hagan, 1942). It observes the interaction of geography and politics, as well as any consequential changes... Physical conditions become scrutinised, as a means to understand how those phenomena became related to human-political events (Østerud, 1988). From Alfred Thayer Mahan's (1920) focus on strategic chokepoints and strategic power and Sir Halford Mackinder's (1904) Heartland Theory, to the 'chessboard' metaphors of Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998); scholarship has asserted the unavoidability of

grand strategies and the 'great game' of global power. Analysis is often focused on power at the macro-level, about how this is organised politically (division into states, alliances, regions, etc.), and about questions of who rules over others. This focus has often resulted in analysis of the presence of competition between great powers, and the strategic arenas in which this authority or contest can be found.

A traditional reading of climate change and geopolitics may invoke the political dangers from increased sea level, natural catastrophes and resource scarcity at the international level – with assertions of anarchy, conflict and insecurity often providing the etymological lens for these readings (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Klare, 2001; Kaplan, 2012). However, the entrance of climate security into the political equation has resulted in the need for a reconsideration (Dalby, 2014). Rather than environmental factors, such as geography, driving global politics, the causal route must turn on itself. We must understand how environmental factors – and, specifically, climatic changes – are increasingly directed by international patterns of interaction. Human society's role in the spectre of climate change has led to the necessity of recalibrating both how security is understood and how geopolitics is conceptualised. Simon Dalby's (2014: 1) own words are useful here: "Climate security in the long run is not a matter of environmental change causing political difficulties, but rather a matter of contemporary political difficulties causing accelerating climate change. Climate change is a production problem... security thinking needs to focus on the implications of this rethinking of traditional geopolitical assumptions."

It has become increasingly important to understand the contemporary world as through the lens of the 'three Geos': namely, the geopolitical, the geo-economical and the geophysical (Paskal: 2014: 110). It is the interactions between these three faces that create the increasingly complex atmosphere of decision-making, as well as the intersecting policy choices available. Following from this, Simon Dalby (2014) has argued for a transfer of scholarly analytical focus from the military activity of the great powers to figures of energy consumption and the strategic plans for securing the necessary energy supplies. It is within this turn to energy and trade that this chapter's focus casts on to the oceans of North America, and beyond.

The Indian Ocean

This turn to *flows* allows for a return to the work of Alfred Mahan (1920), and his emphasis on the importance of strategic 'chokepoints' in the creation and maintenance of naval power. A chokepoint can be understood as a narrow passage – or bottleneck - that must be passed for an actor to reach their objective. Cape Horn, the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Gibraltar have all provided historical and contemporary chokepoints in global, maritime trade. For over 500 years, global and regional powers have competed over the control of these chokepoints and their presence continues to be essential in the analysis of the geopolitics of the oceans. For example: with the oceans carrying close to 90 percent of US imports and export (Borgerson, 2009), the United States 2007 Maritime Strategy has asserted the importance of protection "our vital interests...and dissuade potential adversaries and peer competitors" (US Marine Corps et al. 2007: 9).

It is significant that, when discussing the geopolitical nature of the oceans, much of scholarship's focus is on the Indian Ocean – and the wider area of the Indo-Pacific - rather than the Atlantic and Pacific of North America (see: Kaplan, 2010; Hastings, 2011; Scott, 2013; Dombrowski & Winner, 2015; Wirth, 2016). A key part of this centrality can be found in the growing energy flows occurring across the maritime region. It has been estimated that 60 percent of all global commerce and petroleum trade occurs across the Indian Ocean (SSN, 2015). Mohan Malik (2014: 5) has argued that both China and India, growing increasingly dependent on energy flows from the Middle East, are both “actively seeking to forge closer defence and security ties with resource supplier nations and to develop appropriate naval capabilities to control the sea lanes through which the bulk of commerce flows.”

The Indian Ocean is accessed, and dominated, by ten maritime chokepoints: The Cape of Good Hope, The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, The Strait of Hormuz, Dondra Head, Six Degree Channel (feeding into the Strait of Malacca), The Malacca Strait, The Sunda Strait, The Lombok Straits, The Makassar Straits, and The Luzon Strait (SSN, 2015). It is these 10 maritime bottlenecks that provide the strategic context in which the saltwater geopolitics of the Indian Ocean is played out. Their importance cannot be understated: 3.3 million barrels of oil pass through The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb per day; 40 percent of globally ocean-traded oil visits the Strait of Hormuz; and four million containers transit the Cape of Good Hope on an annual basis (SSN, 2015).

Recent years have witnessed the Chinese leadership turn its focus towards the politics of the oceans and, as Wirth (2016) has stated, the analysis of international politics through its maritime manifestation allows for the development of an understanding of how the ‘rise of China’ has altered the political order. Christopher Len (2015) has argued that this is the result of an increasing reliance on the seaborne trade and transit of energy resources. With the majority of those energy resources being imported via the Indian Ocean region and the South China Sea, Beijing has become increasingly aware of the strategic importance of the region (Len, 2015). With 70 percent of its oil flows arriving via the Strait of Malacca, a number of Chinese leaders have spoken of the ‘Malacca Dilemma’ – a concern of the security of such a supply if the chokepoint was controlled by the United States’ fleet (Pan, 2014). In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping – whilst on a visit to Indonesia – announced the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt initiative (commonly called the “Maritime Silk Road”). This concept provides a platform for economic cooperation across the Indian Ocean, with all nations along the sea-route approached for partnership with China in the venture. Khurana (2015) has argued that there are a number of significant convergences between the maritime policies of China and India – particularly in relation to the Maritime Silk Road. However, the divergences result in an important sensitivity. This can be seen in how, China’s ‘String of Pearls’ strategy for control of the Indian Ocean has provided a prominent narrative for Indian suspicion towards China’s intentions for the region (see: Maitra, 2005; Ramachandran, 2007) . Although the term has never been asserted in official Chinese documents, the narrative provides an important geopolitical articulation of how India views Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean – as well as the wider reaction to Chinese policies towards the South China Sea (Yahuda, 2013; Brewster, 2015; Chatuvedy, 2015).

In 2011, the Barack Obama administration issued a series of policy pronouncements, that have since been labelled the 'pivot to' the Asian continent (Lieberthal, 2011). The US has become more involved in pan-Asian institutions, such as the Association of South East Asian Nations and the East Asia Summit, deepening economic influence (as evident in the Trans-Pacific Partnership) and strengthening security agreements with a number of states (i.e. Japan, Australia, and the Philippines.) This shift of US foreign policy to the Indo-Pacific has been interpreted as a response to the material rise of China, and the potential threat of this to the global status quo (Logan, 2013; Swaine, 2012). In doing so, these assertions draw on the familiar theories of realism in International Relations in which *rising power / dominant power* relationships become increasingly hostile (see Mearsheimer, 2010; Nye, 2004). Francis Fukuyama (2005) wrote that the rise of China was the biggest geopolitical development in a generation. Then US Deputy Secretary of State (2005-2006) and later President of the World Bank (2007-2012), Robert Zoellick (2005) spoke of 'a cauldron of anxiety' in the USA, generated by this resurgence. Within this reading, Chinese development poses a threat to the United States, and as Kaplan (2010: xiv) has argued, "The Indian Ocean may be the essential place to contemplate the future of US power."

Turner (2016) has succinctly argued that this assumption neglects the rise of other nations – such as India – and their conspicuous absence from US security discourse. India is the third largest economy in the world, a nuclear power, and possesses extensive armed and naval resources. Furthermore, as Brewster (2015) has argued, it is India – not China – that is succeeding in the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean region – having developed more security relationships in the region. For example, India's naval exercises in 2014 involved representatives from the authorities of 16 nations, from Kenya in the west, to New Zealand in the east (Brewster, 2015). The success of Turner's (2016) analysis is the development of an understanding that these narratives are tied to popular understandings on who to perceive as a threat, and who to invade, and who not to becoming discursively produced and sedimented (see: Doty, 1993). It is this construction of the *Other* that differentiates the saltwater relations of the Indian Ocean from those of North America. As Turner (2016: 6) argues, "While it could have captured (and still could capture) some or all of Canada for example, this was precluded by discursive regulations of mainstream debate" and that "Naturalised discourses of the United States and its place in the world ensure that US power remains contingent upon understandings of who to invade, contain and pacify and who not." In doing so, the words of Ó Tuathail (1996: 2) are evoked: that geography is, "a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organise, occupy and administer space." Recent work by Pan (2014) echoes these assertions, with the turn to the Indo-Pacific instead articulated as the product of a geopolitical imagination surrounding the 'rise of China'.

The Oceans of North America

When in the post of US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton (2011) argued that "by virtue of our unique geography, the United States is both an Atlantic and a Pacific power." However, this exceptionality is overstated – with such a geography shared by Canada and Mexico, among others. The nations of Canada, Mexico and the United States face a variety of water resource management issues – from increasing demand versus decreasing supply of freshwater to pollution and ecosystem depletion (Brown, 2010). The management of these issues is complicated by numerous federal, national and international

management frameworks that have been devised to provide environmental considerations over the past twenty-five years (Kundis Craig, 2012). The economic importance of the maritime space can also be found in the oceans of North America. For example: in the United States in 2011, the ocean economy contributed more than \$282 billion to total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – as well providing 2.8 million jobs (US National Ocean Service, 2016). This *ocean economy* is larger than forest products in GDP provision and larger than both agriculture and mining in terms of employment numbers (Colgan, 2013).

Currently, under the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), states can claim rights to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that extends 200 miles (322 km) from their land territory. Historically, the North American states have possessed an influential role in the creation of this regime – with both Mexico and Canada being long standing proponents of EEZs and the United States generally favouring such territoriality (Bowen & Hennessey, 1985). Both Canada and Mexico have claimed such zones. Although, at the time of writing, the US has still not acceded to the UNCLOS treaties, it has historically favoured its own extended coastal jurisdiction – as illustrated in 1939 Declaration of Panama, the 1945 Truman Proclamation on Fisheries Conservation Zones, and the 1976 Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In March 1983, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed a 200 mile US EEZ – resulting in the creation of a maritime boundary, the area of which is greater than the combined area of all 50 US states (Kundis Craig, 2012). These claims have resulted in the coastal regions of the world becoming a patchwork of legally-secured claims to the oceans, the seabed – and, importantly, whatever is hidden within these submerged territories. The result is that, with many such disputes surrounding EEZs, they are deeply rooted in such declarations of territoriality over the oceans resources - as will now be illustrated in the two subsequent chosen case studies. As a member of the UN International Law Commission has previously stated, disputes over these territories “... only date from around the 1970s... [before then], states paid little attention to maritime boundaries”(in Griffiths, 2010).

Debating the Arctic: USA -Canada Relations

The 5,525 mile (8,891 km) US-Canadian border remains one of the most active international boundaries in the world – with no other nations engaging in as much trade with each other as these neighbours (Jesuale et al., 2015). The two nations are immediate *salt water neighbours* (McDorman, 2009) on three sides: the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. This section will now explore the relations on just one of these faces of interaction: that of the Arctic. In doing so, it will focus on the use of this region as an *area of flows*, and the role of the Northwest Passage.

A major obstacle in the development of such a patchwork of territoriality between Canada and the United States is hindered by uncertainty over the disputed Arctic maritime boundaries. Once a peripheral area, recent decades have witnessed a transformation of the Arctic region. Issues of climate change - such as the melting of the Arctic ice - have placed it at the top of multilateral political agendas and led to an increased geopolitics interest from the states within the region. The presence of oil and gas deposits in the region have increased such interest – with the melting sea ice potentially unveiling opportunities for extraction, such as in the Beaufort Sea (Baker & Byers, 2012). Five countries claim some form of jurisdiction over the Arctic ice – Canada, Denmark (by Greenland), Norway, Russia, and the

United States. Historically, despite the occasional conflict, relations between these states have been “relatively quiescent regarding their exact territorial boundaries... *But then the Arctic sea ice began to melt*” (Kundis Craig, 2012: 47 - emphasis added). In response to increased competition over this region, the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration – signed by United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark – declared that the challenges faced by the Arctic necessitate a cooperative form of governance and pledged for “the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims”.

The Northwest Passage of the Arctic Ocean has historically been open for twenty to thirty days each summer, resulting in a lack of significant commercial access. It is this limitation that has resulted in a relative fuzziness surrounding the jurisdiction of this region, in comparison with other marine areas. The United States has maintained a strategic interest in the route for a number of years, with the route perceived as an important route for the transportation of oil from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska to the markets of the East Coast. However, Canada claims that the waters of this route are part of its saltwater territory, as evident in various pieces of legislation – such as the 1970 Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

This legal claim was challenged in the summer of 1985, when the US Coast Guard ice-breaker *Polar Sea*, passed through the Northwest Passage as part of its journey to the Beaufort Sea and Alaska. Departing from Thule in Greenland, the traversal of the Northwest Passage saved the vessel from an arduous journey via the Panama Canal – saving 30 days and US\$500,000 in the process (McDorman, 1986). As previous voyages of US vessels in the region had raised concerns surrounding jurisdiction, a period of liaison occurred before the departure of the *Polar Sea*. During this period, it was agreed that the voyage would be ‘without prejudice’ and not tantamount to a contestation of Canadian claims (McDorman, 1986). Yet, it is important to note that the USA did not explicitly request permission to use these waters, as it saw no legal requirement to do so (due to its belief in the passage being an international strait). Instead, it was concerned of the setting of a legal precedent - as if such permission was sought, it would necessitate the repeat of such action in the future.

This passage aroused a significant degree of public concern within Canada – with the *Polar Sea's* route understood as a violation of the nation's jurisdiction of the Arctic. With the media reporting that the USA did not seek permission for the voyage, there was popular dismay at what was perceived as the weakness of Ottawa in standing up to the nation's *saltwater neighbours* in this undermining of jurisdiction (McDorman, 1986). In response to the *Polar Sea* and the public controversy surrounding it, the Canadian government announced a series of legislative actions to improve its legal claims to the waters of the Arctic archipelago as the internal waters of the Canadian state. The strength of this reaction can be seen in the words of Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, who stated to the House of Commons in official response that “Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic is indivisible. It embraces land, sea and *ice*” (in Zellen, 2010 – emphasis added).

With maritime trade routes possessing a pivotal importance in the contemporary world of globalised trade routes and energy networks, it is not only the closure of a pre-existing sea lane that could possess global consequences. With climate change potentially resulting in the passage's waters being ice-free during long periods of summer – extending the thirty day period of accessibility, as well as the

continued precariousness of existing trade chokepoints (such as the Suez Canal), the opening up on the Northwest Passage – and the related, Northern Sea Route, located in Russian waters - is an attractive prospect. Although Ottawa defines these waters as domestic and internal, such traversal of the passage has continued. In late 2005, the United States navy released photographs of the *USS Charlotte*, surfaced at the North Pole – prompting outrage in Canada, with it reported that this nuclear submarine would have travelled through the Northwest Passage to reach this destination. The details of the route taken remain classified by the US Navy.

The Canadian response to this use of its water as a passage has been a continued, politicised effort to assert its sovereignty over the waters. As Steinberg et al. (2015) have argued that this points to an important cultural and social role of the Arctic in the formation of a collective Canadian identity. In 2006, the Canadian military stopped referring to the areas as the 'Northwest Passage' – with the waters renamed the 'Canadian Internal Waters'¹. A year later, when announcing the construction of a deep water port in the Canadian Arctic, Prime Minister Stephen Harper asserted that “Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it. And make no mistake; this Government intends to use it. Because Canada’s Arctic is central to our national identity as a northern nation. It is part of our history. And it represents the tremendous potential of our future” (in Chase, 2014)

The assertions of sovereignty and their links to Canadian national identity take a legal issue of territory and transforms into a facet of Canadian identity. During his administration (2006-2015), Prime Minister Stephen Harper engaged in a series of annual trips into the Arctic Circle. Dubbed Harper's 'northern mission', these trips were political showmanship. As Hannigan (2015) has argued, the national-political motivations can be found in the occurrence of such trips at time when Harper's Conservative government was lagging behind in the polls. The presence of the Prime Minister, members of his Cabinet and members of the armed forces within the Canadian Arctic Circle provided an important reinforcement of Canada's claims to the region.

These *Sovereignty Games* (Hannigan, 2015) can also be seen in Harper’s government’s commitment to find *HMS Erebus* – a ship that disappeared in the Victoria Strait in 1848. The vessel had become embedded within Canadian socio-cultural memory, being the subject of numerous songs, novels and, Harper’s administration made the project a priority, perceiving the opportunity as a means to assert

¹ It is important to address a limitation present in these relations: that of a dangerous state-centrism. The renaming of the 'Canadian Internal Waters' described previously was the result of a successful military operation – dubbed Operation Nunavut (which can be translated for Inuktitut as 'the land is ours'). It is important to note that this use of Inuktitut – as well as this emphasis on the national and international levels – both appropriates and neglects the importance of the Arctic Circle as a cultural homeland. As Emma Norman (2015) has argued in her analysis of US-Canada freshwater relations, it is important that the role of the 600 indigenous communities (4.3 percent of the population in 2011) and the colonial history of the waterscape are included within analysis. Doing so allows us to question the focus on the international scale and to challenge the Westphalian notion of borders as fixed (Norman, 2015).

Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage." The 2014 discovery of the ship provided the political jackpot that Harper had been hoping for. Harper (2014) announced the rediscovery himself, stating that the ship is "an important part of Canadian history given that his expeditions, which took place nearly 200 years ago, laid the foundations of Canada's Arctic sovereignty." Within these words, the discovery of a lost shipwreck emboldened Canadian claims to the swathes of the Arctic region.

Although the discussed issues have been significant in the development of maritime relations between the two states, there have rarely caused any form of diplomatic turbulence between the two nations – with issues frequently reaching a natural conclusion of acquiescence or cooperation. As McDorman (2009: 8) has argued, "generally speaking, Canada and the United States ocean law relations are on an 'even keel'. There is no relationship crisis on ocean matters between the neighbours. There is an ethos of cooperation between the two states." Relations within the other maritime faces of interaction (the Atlantic and the Pacific) have remained friendly, characterised by cooperation over conflict and shared interests over overlapping territorial claims. Despite these constructions of nationalism and sovereignty by Harper, saltwater relations between the two states have continued to be amicable and "inexorably in the direction of increasing interdependence" (Cohen, 2015: 134). The shared environmental issues of the two nations provide a particularly important scene of cooperation – with President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently committing to protect the Arctic region from overfishing and development.

Miller and Broches (1985: 424) have argued that "The fact that the Canadian government's 1970 white paper on defense policy...did not contain an analysis of Canadian- U.S. relations underscores the integration of United States and Canadian policies." Over twenty years on, the 2016 Defense Policy Review's Public Consultation Document (Canadian Armed Forces, 2016) provides scant reference to the nation's southern neighbour. In fact, the central reference to the United States can be found in Canada's asserted 'Key Roles', with one of three reading: "Defending North America – *in partnership with the United States*" (p.5, emphasis added). This has continued with the signing of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) in 2004 and of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) in 2005. Despite disagreements surrounding navigation of the Arctic passages, the onus continues to remain on partnership and collaboration, rather than conflictual dialogue.

Furthermore, as shown in Harper's construction of the Arctic, the Canadian focus is firmly on Russian claims to the seabed within this region. In one particularly chest-thumping address, Harper warned of the threat of Russia within the region: "In Europe, we see the imperial ambitions of Vladimir Putin, who seems determined that, for Russia's neighbours, there shall be no peace..." (in Rennie, 2014). In doing so, Harper was tying the Arctic to a wider geopolitics of external threats. As Plouffe (2014: 1) has argued, this not only represents something "rhetorically different than anything we've [Canadians] seen before – a narrative based on fear of external threats to Canada's sovereignty and security that produces ideologically driven policy objectives" but also represents an important articulation of the threat to Canadian sovereignty of the Arctic coming from Russia, rather than the United States. The eyes of Ottawa are focusing over the Bering Straits, rather than the Great Lakes.

Disputed Fisheries: Mexico and the United States

Claims to territoriality leading to an international dispute can be found in the saltwater relations over fishing stocks between the United States and, its southern neighbour, Mexico. Prior to 1976, there had been limited Mexican fishing in US waters, in comparison to the significant involvement of US fishermen in a number of Mexican fisheries: including the tuna fisheries of the west coast and the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. In the early 1970's, US fishermen in this shrimp fishery alone caught an average shrimp, with an average value of close to \$16 million (Cicin-Sain, 1986).

The United States has argued that, due to their migratory nature, fish stocks (such as tuna) should be managed on a regional basis – rather than at the behest of independent states. Up to 1978, this had been the case – with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Association (IATTC) managing the shared tuna fisheries. In 1978, complaining of unfair treatment, Mexico withdrew its membership from the IATTC. These complaints found their root in the organisations principle of 'first-come, first-served' in the regulation of the catch – with the US, having the largest fishing fleets, possessing the advantage and regularly securing the largest catches. In its place, Mexico argued for autonomous sovereign rights over fish stocks and instituted a system of paid-for licenses for foreign vessels, fishing in Mexican borders (Bowen & Hennessey, 1985). This follows efforts, as early as 1951, by Latin American states, to enforce their claims to fisheries zones of their coasts – by seizing United States tuna boats that had entered their waters. Unlike the USA zone, the Mexican EEZ, declared in 1976, did not discriminate against which fisheries were subject to Mexican jurisdiction – with all fisheries included. This extension is the result of the Mexican plans to dramatically increase the fishing potential of the nation – with plans for a growth in the number of vessels and, with it, the total annual catch. This highly-ambitious plan resulted in the need to protect the state's marine resources.

It is important to recognise the strong symbolism that the creation of these zones, and the related degree of control, held within Mexican politics (Cicin-Sain, 1986). This development would have been tied to a Mexican consciousness that sought to move beyond acquiescence and towards a degree of sovereignty and control of its resources – as later made evident in NAFTA-era protests against US control of elements of Mexican production. With a growing population, the reaping of the protein from the seas also provided an important route for self-sufficiency (Rosendahl, 1984). This creation of exclusive fisheries zones would provide an important route for the growth of the Mexican fisheries and the associated rewards. The Mexican tuna catch grew by 156 percent between 1980 and 1985 - from 39,000 tonnes to 100,000 tonnes (Stockton, 1986). The Jose Lopez Portillo administration (1976 -1982) had made the increased potential and production of its fishing fleets a priority in its programme for economic growth. A statement by Portillo (in Cicin-Swain, 1986) symbolizes this desire:

“The future of Mexico lies in the sea. We see in the generous extension of our coastlines a source of inexhaustible riches, which we can use to meet the nutritional needs of our people. That is why our government has focused its attention on the development of the sea. Internally, we have been successful in making the fishery activity "take off"; the future is now wide open and promising. Internationally, today, as last year, we reiterate our position: our sovereignty over Mexico's fishery

resources is not negotiable. These resources belong to the Mexican people and are for the Mexican people, whatever the obstacles may be.”

Nevertheless, the United States refused to recognise this Mexican claim of territory, US ships continued to fish in Mexican waters, and the dispute grew. Over the next three years, the two nations met fifteen times to negotiate a solution to this problem. Yet, these negotiations eventually broke down. In 1980, in an effort to enforce the license fee for foreign vessels, the Mexican authorities began seizing, fining and confiscating the catches of US vessels that were fishing in Mexican waters. In 1983, fifty American vessels were seized by the Mexican authorities, for illegal fishing (Cicin-Sain, 1986). In response, the United States placed an embargo on all tuna imported from Mexico in 1980 – a trade worth some US\$20 million to the Mexican economy. Further to this, the administration of President Jimmy Carter refused to allocate Mexico a quota for squid-fishing off the New England coast, whilst Mexico terminated all fishing treaties with the United States in December 1980. This continued, becoming known as the 'tuna war', before the embargo was later lifted by President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

The breakdown of these relations had important effects for both nations. In the United States, fishing fleets in San Diego were cut off from the profitable fisheries in Mexican waters. As a result, vessels had to travel further – incurring both financial and time costs – which, in turn, caused price rises which forced a number of domestic canneries out of business. An estimated 12,500 tuna-related jobs were lost in southern California in the years 1980-1984 alone (Cicin-Sain, 1986). In Mexico, the economic consequences of the US tuna embargo resulted in a significant loss of export earnings. In 1980, 1.5 million cases of tinned tuna were held as surplus in the warehouses of Mexico (ibid.). As a result, new markets were found in both Canada and France (Stockton, 1986). However, this did not stop the flooding of the Mexican market with the surplus at subsidised prices, and a financial loss.

The lifting of this embargo did not result in the creation of harmony surrounding the tuna fisheries of the USA-Mexican maritime border. Instead, a second tuna war occurred in 1990 when the United States government imposed an embargo on Mexican tuna products, caught with a purse-seine method (infamous for its high levels of dolphin by-catch). Linked to the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act and the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act, the embargo was to be lifted after the Mexican fishing industry can demonstrate compliance to a number of stipulations, based around dolphin safety. The Mexican government refused to comply and the second embargo in 10 years started, the trade battle around it was to last 20 years. Following a 1992 precedent in which the Netherlands and European Union brought a case against the United States before a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) panel (this case is known as Tuna-Dolphin I), Mexico took the USA to a GATT panel (Tuna-Dolphin II) and claimed that the US conditions related to this embargo (mainly around dolphin-safe labelling) were discriminatory. The panel agreed that the trade rules applied were restrictive, and demonstrate a degree of overreach when compared to the associated goals.

It is perhaps a testament to the flexibility and permanence of US-Mexican relations that, during the period of this embargo, the two nations engaged in extensive cooperation on a large number of other issues – particularly surrounding their economic relations. This cooperation has found another outlet in

recent years, in relation of transboundary hydrocarbons within the Gulf of Mexico. The closely-entwined relations between the United States and Mexico can be understood from the words of former President of Mexico, Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-1982), who, in 1981, stated that “We are not only neighbors, but also representatives of two worlds in the literal geographical sense: we are the north and the south along 3,000 kilometers of border. As a result, we are faced with structural issues formed by our history and by our geography” (in Cicin-Swain, 1986). In his extensive *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*, Basil Germond has argued that relationship between the United States and Mexico is fixed upon a fulcrum of the shared issues of drug trafficking, migration and the increasing economic interdependence. The Mérida Initiative is an important example of such cooperation. This security cooperation agreement provides an important partnership between the nations in each state’s respective policies against drug trafficking and organised crime (Seelke & Finklea, 2016). The US-Mexican relationship extends beyond its simple, geographic border and into shared, bi-national interests.

Constructing the Land Border

The relations between these nations show an important degree of resilience. Yet, there is an important question of power to be answered. The United States continues to possess a tangible degree of power resources, both *hard* and *soft*, that result in continued authority over its neighbours. Janet Morchain (1973: 8) has previously observed that, "If the criterion is the ability to defend oneself without outside help, Canada has never been a sovereign state." In the centuries since the 1823 declaration of the Monroe Doctrine – based around the extension of US interests into the American continents – the United States has been an important *partner* in the protection of Canada from foreign aggression – as shown in the 1957 Distant Early Warning Line (financed by the United States) and the 1983 decision to use Canada’s Northwest Territories as a testing-site for US cruise missiles (Miller & Broches, 1985).

Furthermore, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has provided a number of scholars with an important example of a new space of US hegemony (see: Ciccantell, 2001). Events since the 1994 signing of the agreement have witnessed a number of examples of this institutionalised cooperation, such as President Bill Clinton’s provision of an investment plan to the Mexican state, facing the Mexican debt crisis in 1995. Cross-national collaboration has occurred on a number of additional bases – such as post-9/11 security, regional infrastructure, and crime enforcement. However, a number of episodes have prompted dissent and protest, such as the deindustrialisation of parts of the United States as manufacturing jobs move south; the impoverishment of rural Mexican *campesinos*, priced out of the market by the influx of cheap US corn; and accusations of cultural dominance by the United States. In recent years, these issues have – along with more populist discussions of issues of immigration and crime – resulted in an increasingly-politicised and complex issue of regional cooperation.

Although the focus of this chapter lies solely on the saltwater relations of these nations, it is important to note the central importance of the land borders within the international politics of North America. In 2008, Rudolph Giuliani, writing for the Manhattan Institute claimed that border security provided one of the most important political issues facing the United States in the contemporary world. With over 80 percent of the population of Canada living within 100 kilometres of the US-Canada land border, the

significance of this porous boundary provides an important linkage between the two states, as well as a central facet of the politics and discourse between the two states. However, as Salter & Piché (2011: 929) have argued, this border has become increasingly securitised and territorialised, transforming from “the longest undefended border in the world... to a smart border—and from a focus on facilitation to one of defense in depth.”

In December 1999, Ahmed Ressay was arrested whilst attempting to cross the US-Canada border, with explosives to be detonated at Los Angeles airport. This case highlighted a number of important flaws in the porous border between the two nations, resulting in significant political repercussions and changes to US-Canada border relations in the aftermath of Ressay’s apprehension (Andreas, 2005). Such changes were galvanized further in the post 9/11 context. The open border transformed into a policed, ‘smart’ boundary consisted of pre-clearance programmes, improved international cooperation regarding intelligence-sharing and increasing surveillance and identity-monitoring (Salter, 2007). A number of scholars have placed the cause of this transformation as US anxiety of the potential use of the border by terrorists to enter the USA through Canada (Andreas, 2005; Andreas & Biersteker, 2003). As Salter (2004: 83) has argued, the US-Canada border ceased to be understood as shared and ‘internal’ and has become ‘external’ and at risk. A profound shift occurred and this understanding has continued to the time of writing. This reading of risk can be found in contemporary discourse surrounding Canadian’s welcoming of refugees of the Syrian Civil War, with the land border becoming a site of media coverage, due to the potential of refugees posing a security risk to the United States (Telford, 2015).

Further south, the focus of US-Mexico relations is not dominated by the saltwater of the Gulf of Mexico or the fisheries of the West coast but instead focuses on the 3,201 km (1,989 miles) that runs between Tijuana and Imperial Beach in the West to Matamoros and Brownsville in the East. As Steinberg (2014) has argued, the Gulf of Mexico is often understood as a series of fragmented areas – from Florida to Texas. Importantly, these do not result in the construction of the Gulf of Mexico as a geographical area, inscribed with any particularly socio-cultural meanings. This can be understood as the fragmented role of this marine border within the national identity of the two nations. Instead, the US-Mexican border evokes images of desert and the American West (Steinberg, 2014). Rarely is this border represented as possessing an extensive marine element. The result is that the geopolitics of the two nations seldom becomes intertwined with oceans policy – instead the focus is on the politicisation of migration, the drugs trade and migrant labour (Cohen, 2015). It is the fluidity of these three factors that has resulted in the casting of the border between the two nations as being predominantly on land.

For decades, the United States Federal Government – in tandem with the Mexican authorities- have developed and implemented a wide array of strategies to ensure the sanctity and security of the border, resulting in the decreasing of illegal immigration between the two countries. Yet, recent years have witnessed increasing public scrutiny of the role of the border in the US-Mexican relationship, which continues at the time of the writing and will extend far beyond. Within this territorial politics, a discourse of porous borders, illegal immigrants and crime creates a complex mix of insecurity. Border life and security is often distilled into simplistic sound bites (i.e. Presidential-Nominee Donald Trump’s

'Build this Wall') which tap into populist sentiments and dominate the US-Mexican relationship.

Conclusions

The relations between these *saltwater neighbours* have witnessed a number of significant subjects of discord. The two flashpoints explored within this chapter are linked to a dispute that extends beyond the disciplinary focus of geopolitics and International Relations, and into the realm of International Law. Both the Canadian and Mexican disputes with the United States were rooted in their respective declarations of sovereignty over a defined territory. Neither declaration was accepted by the United States. From the claiming of migratory fisheries to the territorialisation of the seabed, the maritime space has become a sphere of international disputes over who owns resources (material or predicted) and who does not.

It is significant that historical episodes explored did not create a dramatic turbulence in the wider diplomatic relations of the three nations studied. Despite disputes occurring between the nations, they have been overshadowed by additional geopolitical issues – particularly by those on the land border. As Saul Bernard Cohen (2015: 104) has argued regarding the US-Canada relationship, “What is remarkable about this international border of 5,500 miles is that the remaining disputes are so minor.” The same is true of USA-Mexico relations, with the two states demonstrating an important degree of diplomatic resilience during the period of the two tuna embargoes. In 1993, the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed into law by President Bill Clinton (taking effect on 1st January 1994). This pioneering piece of multilateral legislation, and the economic interdependence that it stimulated, occurred in the wake of the *Polar Sea* episode and during the second US embargo on Mexican tuna. Successive Canadian policies on defence have not contained analyses on Canadian-US relations, demonstrating an important degree of strategic integration, with the United States assisting in the protection of Canada in the centuries since the 1823 Monroe Declaration (Morchain, 1973; Miller & Broches, 1985).

However, it would be foolish to deny the geopolitical activity that occurs around these relations. What is important here is not that the oceans do not provide an important area of policy for these nations - a glance at Canada's stance on Russia and the United States' presence in the Indian Ocean shows the importance of saltwater relations to these nations. Instead, the coherence to these saltwater relations demonstrates a degree of resilience within the marine relations between the states. The geopolitics between these nations exists at a number of other diplomatic junctures of geopolitics - trade, immigration, and crime: flows that often occur over land borders in North America. It is these borders that have become securitised by successive governments – and increasingly militarized in the post-9/11 era. Although, flashpoints have occurred in the saltwater relations between these states, it is important to note that a higher degree of harmony and collaboration endured. The cause of this is likely geographic. Whilst the land borders have these North America are geographically wide, historically porous and politically securitised, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans of North America are open stretches of maritime space, possessing both a significant openness to the 'outside world' and extensive seabords for the nations involved.

Yet, not all oceans are as open as the Atlantic and Pacific of the United States' eastern and western seaboard - instead, they find themselves passing through strategic choke points such as the Suez Canal and the Straits of Malacca. The Indian Ocean can be understood as closed off to additional regions, such as Europe, with the assimilation of the Indian Ocean into the networks of societal communication and trade occurring via a number of strategic choke points. It is this fact that results in a degree of vulnerability of such maritime trade. A greater complexity is found when the economic importance of these chokepoints – and their control - is included. It is here that the heads of scholars of geopolitics are turned, with many arguing that USA-India-China relations will provide the central causal factor in the shaping of the future of this region over the next century (Bouchard & Crumplin, 2010; Hastings, 2011; Kaplan, 2010; Malik, 2014; Khurana, 2015). With the sphere of maritime security seemingly centred on the Indian Ocean and the tri-polar contest in the region, the oceans of North America and the disputes over their territory are absent from the debate.

Yet, an external factor of climate change may exacerbate these issues of who controls the oceans of North America, and who has access to the goods transported above and lying beneath the surface. The world is transforming and the resilience of the saltwater geopolitics of North America may transfigure into precariousness. Climate change may melt the polar ice, exacerbating previous issues of Canadian territoriality. Overfishing may drive the US and Mexican fleets towards increased competition and a new *tuna war*. Flashpoints of territoriality have occurred in the past and, with the continent's land borders increasingly politicised, the relations between the nations of North America may extend beyond the earth and into the saltwater.

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