

AREA OF DETAIL

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United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Part VI, Article 76

Definition of the continental shelf

1. The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil...that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines [of] the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.

8. Information on the limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines... shall be submitted by the coastal State to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf...on the basis of equitable geographical representation. The Commission shall make recommendations to coastal States on matters related to the establishment of the outer limits of their continental shelf. The limits of the shelf established by a coastal State on the basis of these recommendations shall be final and binding.

Part VI, Article 77

Rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf

1. The coastal State exercises over the continental shelf sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.

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The translation of the spherical world onto the flat plane of a map is a mathematical problem; the translation of the political world into a map is an ideological problem. How does one represent the world in a way that does not show dominance? Something or someone is always bigger than the others, at the top, at the center.

The United Nations emblem is a world map in an "azimuthal equi-distant projection centered on the North Pole." The continents are not divided by national boundaries, thus geopolitical relationships are not pictured. This map is purely symbolic, representing nations united under common interests, all parts considered equal.

What is at the center of the UN emblem? A blank spot which belies the geopolitical realities of the area. This area of detail, the ice-bound ocean of the Arctic Circle, is regulated by the UN. As the climate warms and ice recedes, new possibilities for commerce and capital become possible. This center of the World is becoming a focal point in other ways, as surrounding nations look to claim territory in order to develop new energy resources and commercial routes.

