



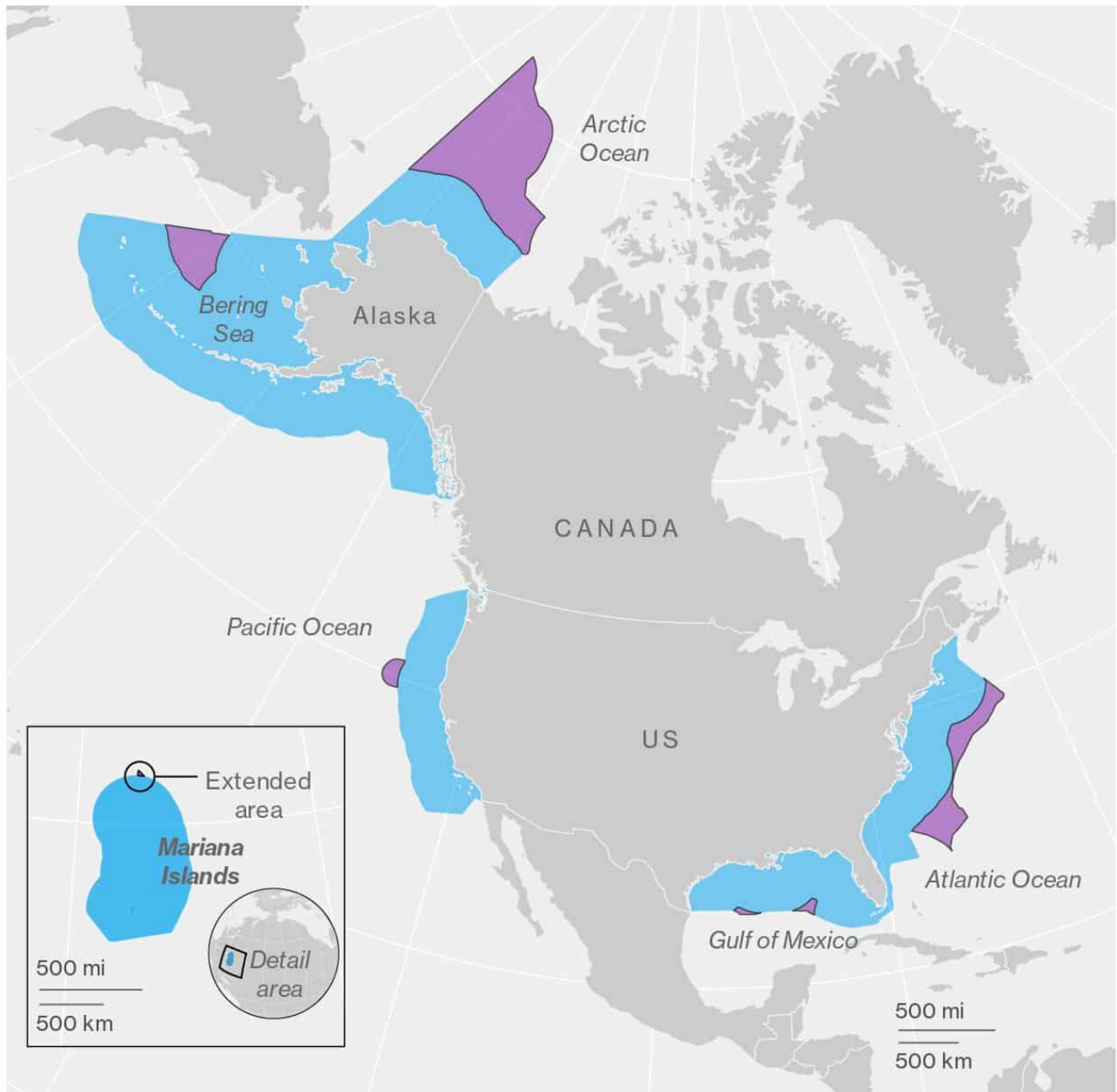
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U.S. claims huge portion of the ocean floor, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic

written by Uriel Araujo
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US Adds a Million Square Kilometers to Continental Shelf Claim

- US extended continental shelf
- US maritime limits and boundaries



Source: US Department of State

Bloomberg

In an underreported but hugely important development, the United States is [now claiming a vast portion of the ocean floor](#), twice the size of California. According to the U.S. Department of State (DOS) [Media Note](#) released on December 19, the area “is approximately one million square kilometers spread across seven regions” and “holds many resources.”

[According to the DOS](#), it “released the geographic coordinates defining the outer limits of the U.S. continental shelf in areas beyond 200 nautical miles from the coast, known as the extended continental shelf (ECS).” The mapping was also carried out by the U.S. ECS Task Force (an American interagency body comprising 14 agencies).

The data collection pertaining to this initiative, supposedly “the largest offshore mapping effort” ever conducted by Washington, actually started in 2003 and involved the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

According to the DOS Executive Summary titled “[The Outer Limits of the Extended Continental Shelf of the United States of America](#)” (page 13), the Atlantic superpower has “maritime boundaries” or “unresolved” boundaries pertaining to the so-called “extended continental shelf” (ECS) with the following “neighboring countries”: Mexico, Cuba, the Bahamas (Atlantic region), Japan (Mariana Islands Region), and Russia (Arctic and Bering Sea Region), Canada (in the Arctic and Atlantic regions).

Albeit an explosive announcement as it is, as of today, one will have a hard time even finding news pieces on this development, with the exception of [Bloomberg](#), [Telesur](#), and a few others. It has immense political and geopolitical potential repercussions, though. The U.S. not only got bigger, territory-wise, now, from Washington’s perspective: this is about claiming sovereignty rights in resource-rich areas where one could find the so-called “critical minerals” needed for renewable energy projects, deemed “key national security concerns” by Joe Biden’s administration, as

Bloomberg journalist Danielle Bochove [writes](#). [According to](#) U.S. Naval War College Professor James Kraska, these American shelf area claims highlight U.S. strategic interests in securing such hard minerals to ensure “American economic prosperity and national security.”

The unilateral claims, which can only be described as a bold territorial grab, include also the Bering and the Arctic Sea, where the Russian Federation, as well as other states, also have claims. The Department of State’s announcement comes without significant diplomatic talks with other actors or bilateral agreements and without filing a claim through any relevant United Nations (UN) structures, for that matter, in clear defiance of the “rules-based” global order by which Washington allegedly abides. Ironically, the U.S. justifies such wide aspirations by referring to the 1982 [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) (UNCLOS), which Washington itself has never ratified.

Mead Treadwell, former lieutenant governor of Alaska (who was also the 2006-2010 Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission), [urges](#) Washington to ratify it or else issues could arise: “it’s a problem if somebody challenges us who believes they’re got other rights to the same land.” One cannot highlight enough the fact that the enormous territory now claimed by the U.S. extends all the way to the Arctic, an area deemed strategic by Russia – and China also has plans for the region, describing itself as “a state near the North Pole.”

Russian authorities unsurprisingly have criticized the American announcement. Grigory Karasin, chair of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, has responded by [stating](#) that “we have taken and will continue to take all measures that are necessary for our national interests in this geographical area.” Similarly, Nikolai Kharitonov, head of the State Duma Committee on the Arctic, said that unilaterally expanding boundaries on this area is “unacceptable” and could lead to “increased tension.” In April 2021, I [wrote](#) on how NATO’s plans to militarize the Arctic were a

source of tension with Moscow – and now this is exponentially boosted by American unilateral territorial expansion.

Much has been written about the [space race](#) as a [new arena](#) for geopolitical dispute – outer space being understood as the “new sea.” Well, similar considerations may apply to the continental shelf and the deep sea itself, with its unexplored resources and fauna, plus a troublesome lack of nomos (lawlessness) pertaining to [mining](#) and, more seriously, to territorial and sovereignty claims, as we have seen.

The issue has more than one angle, this also being yet another dramatic instance of the U.S. overall “[encircling](#)” of Russia, which, by the way, also materializes itself in the so-called “[NATOization](#)” of Europe: Finnish and Swedish NATO bids, for one thing, result in extending the Atlantic Alliance’s territorial reach as far out as the Russian eastward Arctic flank, thus making Russia the only non-NATO state in the [Arctic](#).

The ongoing Washington [proxy attrition war](#) in Ukraine against Moscow, as former U.S. ambassador to Finland Earle Mack has described it, might very well be coming to an end with a soon-to-come [land-for-peace deal](#) (after the U.S. elections, presumably) – but, as we can see, there is now a vast universe of potential future conflict unleashed by the latest American ocean floor territorial claims.

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Source: [InfoBrics](#)

