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« Sovereignty over maritime areas »

Defining the precise boundaries of the political and economic sovereignties wielded by sovereign States over maritime spaces, along with attributing the ownership of islands, islets, and even isolated reefs, remains a highly complex geostrategic challenge. One merely needs to audit the relevant Wikipedia datasets to observe the substantial volume of active border disputes, while concurrently considering the high number of bilateral treaties and maritime agreements, which attest to the continuous capacity of States to unearth diplomatic common grounds.

Certainly, both naval history and contemporary shipping news bear witness to numerous high-intensity conflicts: including the dramatic Falklands War (1982), the muscular gray-zone rivalries tearing through the South China Sea or the Eastern Mediterranean, Russia's assertive sovereignty expansions across the Arctic theater, and the highly demonstrative flag wars fought between Japan and South Korea. Even France faces its own localized sovereignty challenges, despite having successfully resolved the absolute bulk of its boundary delimitations with no fewer than 31 maritime neighbors. From the elementary affirmation of territorial rights to the control of offshore economic resources, sovereign States are increasingly anxious regarding their maritime domains within a world defined by a highly fragmented and complex geopolitical landscape.

What Dictates International Maritime Law?

Historically, maritime governance was dominated by the sweeping, unilateral pretensions of sovereignty over vast oceanic spaces, masterminded and organized at the dawn of the Age of Discovery by Spain and Portugal through the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). This duopoly was resoundingly challenged by the Dutch Republic and England, which aggressively championed the *Mare Liberum* (Freedom of the Seas) doctrine indispensable to international merchant shipping.

Regarding the definition of actual sovereignty over the waters immediately flanking their coastlines, coastal States long operated without complex legal frameworks; during the era of European land wars, the primary executive objective focused on defensively securing the waterfront, leading to the 18th-century codification of the "cannon-shot rule" established at 3 nautical miles (5.5 kilometers). Consequently, it was the raw military capacity to defend, rather than a codified statutory sovereignty, that was at stake.

The international community had to wait until the second half of the 20th century to witness a genuine structural evolution. The 1958 United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which entered into force in 1964, formally instituted full territorial sovereignty over a nation's territorial sea (comprehensively encompassing the water column, the seabed, and the subsoil), while guaranteeing the universal right of innocent passage for foreign merchant fleets. These territorial waters were standardly fixed at a maximum of 12 nautical miles (nm) from the coast or from straight baselines drawn between offshore islands and protruding capes.

Coastal States were concurrently endowed with a limited territorial police jurisdiction over an adjacent space known as the contiguous zone. However, international maritime law was only definitively fixed with the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS — *CNUDM*), commonly baptized the Montego Bay Convention. Signed on December 10, 1982, it did not capture the required volume of ratifications to enter into permanent global force until November 1994. Notably, prominent non-signatories include the United States, Israel, Turkey, Venezuela, and Peru.

The historic convention rigidly locked in the 12-nautical-mile limit for territorial seas (22.2 km), while engineering a greenfield sovereign space: the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ — *ZEE*), which can expand up to 200 nautical miles (370 km) from the baselines. Crucially, the EEZ does not translate into a political

or territorial sovereignty, but strictly into an exclusive economic jurisdiction, preserving the universal freedom of navigation, overflight, and the laying of transoceanic submarine cables.

Accordingly, maritime charts are divided between a territorial sea of absolute sovereign jurisdiction and an extended economic zone dedicated to exploring and exploiting natural resources (including offshore hydrocarbons, marine renewable wind energies, halieutic fisheries protection, and subsea mineral aggregates). Today, approximately one-third of the planet's cumulative ocean surface is absorbed within the EEZs of coastal nations. Thanks to its sprawling network of Overseas territories and French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF), France possesses the largest EEZ in the world, encompassing 11.7 million km², positioning Paris immediately ahead of the United States, Australia, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Beyond the outer boundaries of the 200-mile EEZ lie international waters, legally defined as the High Seas. The deep ocean floor and the international seabed are placed under the administrative competence of a highly specialized body: the *International Seabed Authority* (ISA). Furthermore, the historic United Nations High Seas Treaty, formally adopted in June 2023, operates as a binding global legal instrument dedicated to the conservation and sustainable utilization of international waters, consecrated as the common heritage of mankind.

Nevertheless, beyond the standard EEZ baseline, UNCLOS masterminded a major geological exception. When the physical continental margin naturally extends past the 200-mile limit, sovereign States are legally entitled to claim an extension of their economic jurisdiction over the seabed and subsoil. This extended continental shelf can expand either up to 350 nautical miles from the baselines, or up to 100 nautical miles beyond the 2,500-meter depth contour line (isobath), subject to satisfying complex geomorphological and sedimentological criteria.

To arbitrate these sovereign claims, the United Nations engineered the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in 1997. Operating as an administrative institution of the UN, the CLPC thoroughly audits the technical files submitted by coastal States seeking to legally expand their continental shelf jurisdictions. Dozens of nations have filed extensive claims, most prominently France within the institutional framework of a dedicated interministerial program baptized Extraplac, deployed since 2002.

Delimiting Maritime Boundaries

Defining the maritime continuity of terrestrial borders based on the legacy 3-nautical-mile limit was relatively straightforward; however, transitioning to a 12-nautical-mile standard proved far more problematic, to say nothing of the complexities introduced by Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). A vast network of bilateral agreements fixes jurisdiction zones across European waters. This structural delimitation became mandatory in the North Sea within the framework of offshore hydrocarbon exploitation, throughout the Adriatic between Italy and its coastal neighbors, and across the Baltic Sea following the emergence of the newly independent Baltic States. Over subsequent decades, this paradigm rolled out globally, driven by post-colonial reconfigurations across the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

In operational practice, maritime boundaries must be calculated from landside baselines (as a direct continuation line of the terrestrial border) or mapped between opposite or adjacent coastlines and islands utilizing the principle of equidistance to trace median lines. When coastlines present simple, rectilinear geographical configurations, allocating the respective maritime jurisdictions of coastal States is straightforward, provided the resulting lines are unilaterally accepted by each contracting party.

Naturally, when coastal geography becomes intricate, the technical workflow complicates significantly. A highly complex case is exemplified by the maritime boundary dispute between Slovenia and Croatia following their independence, which was only resolved in 2001. Similarly, inside the Caspian Sea, maritime borders remain structurally unfixed.

Nevertheless, formal legal settlements are regularly locked into place, as witnessed by the 2022 treaty between Namibia and Angola, the 2007 agreement dividing Saudi Arabian and Jordanian waters, the 2008 border settlement between Cameroon and Nigeria, and ongoing legal definitions binding Ghana and Ivory Coast.

The presence of islands belonging to one nation but tightly nested against the immediate coastline of an adjacent sovereign State introduces extreme legal friction. For instance, France and the United Kingdom only successfully signed a definitive boundary treaty regarding the Channel Islands in 2004.

The most prominent contemporary textbook case remains Turkey, which deliberately refused to sign the Montego Bay Convention (UNCLOS) to avoid legally recognizing Greece's right to claim a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea in the Aegean, while paradoxically enforcing UNCLOS parameters to delimit its own boundaries across the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The alternative geostrategic challenge centers on the partition of overlapping EEZ claims. On a vastly wider geographic scale, conflicting national pretensions directly collide. In this arena, the core issue shifts away from political sovereignty toward locking into place a monopoly over offshore economic exploitation. Prominent regional examples encompass the boundaries separating Italy and Tunisia within the Strait of Sicily.

Similarly, throughout the maritime corridor dividing Madeira and the Canary Islands, Spain aggressively contests the Portuguese EEZ asserted around the *Selvagens Islands (Îles Salvagens)*. Furthermore, while the United Kingdom holds sovereign title over Rockall—an exceptionally isolated islet measuring a mere 25 meters wide in the North Atlantic—London was legally mandated to abandon its EEZ pretensions over the rock, given that UNCLOS statutorily excludes uninhabited rocks and reefs from generating extended economic zones.

Conversely, across the Eastern Mediterranean, boundary definitions are heavily weaponized politically around a *de facto* partitioned Cyprus and the maritime expansionism asserted by Israel (most distinctively regarding the waters flanking the Gaza Strip).

To channel these frictions, UNCLOS engineered robust institutional frameworks dedicated to peaceful consultation and legal arbitration. States can choose to bring their disputes before the International Court of Justice (ICJ — *CIJ*) in The Hague, or submit files to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS — *TIDM*) established in 1981 in Hamburg, or activate a specialized ad-hoc arbitral tribunal mapped out under UNCLOS guidelines. Provided sovereign nations demonstrate political goodwill, common arrangements remain achievable to define mutual limits, occasionally leading to joint resource exploitation zones; for example, Norway successfully scaled down its original maritime claims around Jan Mayen Island to the benefit of Iceland.

Within the Arctic Ocean, the littoral circle counts five primary coastal states, yet is regulated by only two historical boundary treaties (the USSR/Norway and USSR/United States agreements). In 2007, Russia forcefully asserted its extended sovereignty claims over the deep Arctic floor, claiming the Lomonosov Ridge as a direct geological continuation of its continental shelf, a move highly publicized by the subsea planting of a titanium Russian flag at a depth of 4,000 meters.

This Russian expansionism rapidly triggered symmetric counter-claims filed by Canada and Denmark (Greenland). Ottawa possesses a sprawling northern archipelago composed of 91 major arctic islands, spaces it rigidly codifies as sovereign internal waters, whereas the United States, China, Norway, and Denmark systematically categorize these channels as international straits open to the right of free transit passage. For Canada, the strategic stake targets simultaneously underwriting absolute sovereignty over these freezing spaces and legally blocking the unregulated commercial usage of a major emerging global shipping lane (the Northwest Passage).

Conversely, across the Antarctic range, the 1959 Washington Treaty permanently freezes all territorial and maritime sovereignty claims over the continent and its surrounding waters south of the 60th parallel South. There exist seven historical "claimant" States (*États possédés*) holding sectors of Antarctica, including France with Adélie Land, whose boundaries were originally mapped out in 1924. Crucially, major superpowers such as Russia and the United States rigidly refuse to recognize any of these regional sectors, which can under no circumstance be legally equated with a standard, actionable national sovereignty.

Sovereignty Disputes Over Insular Territories

Defining a maritime boundary operates fundamentally as an exercise in legal arbitration, relying on the mutual capacity of adjacent nations to unearth common grounds. However, when territorial disputes center on the actual ownership of insular landmasses, the geostrategic equation turns significantly more complex. Sovereign nations find themselves locked in direct, zero-sum structural conflicts where rivalries can rapidly escalate into bellicose standoffs.

Driven by selective readings of history and the *de facto* state of affairs on the water, competing nations stand invariably certain of their legal rights. Whether practicing as a liberal democracy or operating as an authoritarian regime, it remains exceptionally rare for a political leadership not to project its territorial claims with fierce assurance, occasionally weaponizing nationalistic rhetoric and martial posturing.

In rare instances, these disputes plague populated islands that history has anchored within the fold of one country, yet are resoundingly contested by a neighboring power. Within the South Atlantic theater—alongside a dense matrix of isolated subantarctic islands—Argentina permanently rejects British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (*Las Malvinas*), a structural post-colonial friction that famously

erupted into a full-scale conventional naval war in 1982, which concluded with the military defeat of Buenos Aires.

In other instances, these structural contentions afflict completely uninhabited islands, isolated islets, or even low-lying reefs that sit barely submerged below the sea surface¹. In charting the planet, one continuously unearths these forgotten lands converting into volatile sources of diplomatic friction, occasionally manifesting as symbolic legal disputes, and at times triggering live, high-intensity standoffs. Rabat aggressively asserts sovereign titles over specialized Spanish strongholds (*Plazas de soberanía*) located a mere few hectometers off the Moroccan coastline. Small Greek islets dotting the Aegean Sea are resoundingly contested by Turkey, a territorial friction that triggered a dangerous, near-military escalation in 1996 (the Imia/Kardak crisis). Central American states regularly dispute island ownership throughout the Caribbean Sea, while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran fiercely claim competing sovereignty over strategic islands positioned immediately west of the vital Choke Point of the Strait of Hormuz.

Throughout the Far East, multiple insular territories are simultaneously claimed, depending on the coordinates, by North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, or Taiwan. The most highly mediatized textbook case centers on the Liancourt Rocks—baptized after a 19th-century French whaling vessel, named *Dokdo* in Korean and *Takeshima* in Japanese. This cluster of islets rests *de facto* under the permanent administrative and police control of Seoul, yet is unyieldingly claimed by Tokyo.

The two democratic nations deploy a fierce, continuous verbal rivalry; in 2012, the South Korean President executed a high-profile sovereign visit directly to the rocks. While Japan consistently proposes bringing the dispute before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for formal binding arbitration, Seoul resoundingly rejects any international judicial intervention. Northeast of Taiwan, the Senkaku Islands, currently administered under Tokyo's sovereign authority, are aggressively claimed by both Beijing (as the *Diaoyu* Islands) and Taipei.

The Macro-Crisis of the South China Sea

The most complex and geostrategically tense space regarding the delimitation of land and maritime sovereignty on earth is firmly anchored within Southeast Asia. The core conflict centers on the ownership of two primary archipelagos—the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands—coupled with a dense matrix of coral reefs, cays, and simple sandbanks stretching across the South China Sea. These low-lying features are fiercely weaponized because they are legally engineered to generate territorial seas and highly coveted EEZs, unlocking exclusive access to world-class halieutic fisheries protection zones and untapped offshore hydrocarbon fields.

Crucially, these escalating naval rivalries unfold directly within the single most heavily congested maritime shipping highway on the planet by volume of merchant tonnage, although zero physical disruption to international commercial transit has ever been recorded to date. This sprawling conflictual field counts a dense matrix of sovereign actors, pitting China against Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines. Across all these nations, territorial claims operate as a primary instrument of nationalistic political mobilization, intertwining the volatile borders left by post-colonial decolonization with the ultra-aggressive expansionist ambitions deployed by Beijing.

To the north, the Paracel Islands are geographically clustered equidistant from the central Vietnamese coastline and China's Hainan island province. Both Beijing and Hanoi claim ancient, historical titles over the archipelago; however, Chinese military forces have maintained exclusive *de facto* control on site since a 1974 naval clash. To permanently anchor its sovereignty, Beijing historically elevated the infrastructure network on Woody Island into a formal city-prefecture under Hainan Province in 2012, baptized Sansha City (housing a permanent population of hundreds of registered fishermen, civil servants, and garrisoned military personnel).

Conversely, further south, Vietnam maintains a highly dense operational presence across approximately 750 distinct islets, atolls, and reefs composing the Spratly Islands. Geographically, the Spratlys sit significantly closer to the Philippine archipelago; historically, the legacy colonial powers—Spain and subsequently the United States—displayed virtually zero interest in mapping or securing these low-lying

¹ As a geostrategic curiosity, Venezuela holds absolute title over Aves Island (*Isla de Aves*) in the middle of the Caribbean Sea, maintaining a permanent boutique scientific naval base to forcefully assert its sovereignty. Nevertheless, severe marine erosion and rising sea levels could cause this low-lying sandy feature to entirely disappear within a few decades.

features. Following World War II, the Allied powers mandated nationalist Republic of China forces to evict Japanese garrisons from the range, allowing Taipei to forward a permanent presence on Taiping Island. However, South Vietnam and subsequently the unmapped, unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam aggressively asserted total historical sovereignty over the chain. Between 1975 and 1978, Hanoi's forces systematically established military strongholds across 21 distinct features. Today, because the entire Spratly archipelago is claimed by every single regional neighbor, individual islets are fragmented among active garrisons deployed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Consequently, dangerous maritime incidents, gray-zone collisions, and water-cannon skirmishes between military or state-backed civilian fleets remain an overly regular operational reality. Beijing identically controls Scarborough Shoal located in the immediate vicinity of Luzon (the Philippines), and even claims sovereign rights over Macclesfield Bank—a completely submerged atoll resting under 11 meters of water.

Outside the intricate web of overlapping claims dividing regional neighbors, the most singular and disruptive legal posture remains China's sovereign doctrine. Indeed, Beijing enforces the highly controversial "Nine-Dash Line" (frequently nicknamed the "*Cow's Tongue*"—due to its geometric shape), a sweeping cartographic delineation that closes off nearly the absolute entirety of the South China Sea to the exclusive benefit of Chinese sovereignty, saving only a narrow strip of territorial waters tracing the immediate coastlines of adjacent states.

Under this exceptional framework, it is the sea itself that is claimed as historical property, rather than the landmass features and their legally attached waters. Taiwan strictly shares this identical historical reading of maritime law, given that Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist regime originally engineered and published this cartographic line prior to the 1949 revolution.

To confront this expansionism, Manila brought a landmark judicial case before the international courts. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague resoundingly ruled that zero legal or historical basis existed to justify the Nine-Dash Line's claims, invalidating Beijing's artificial island-building activities. Predictably, Beijing fiercely boycotted the proceedings and rejects the legitimacy of UNCLOS rulings over what it codifies as its sovereign territory. In any event, no single Southeast Asian neighbor disposes of the military capability to enter into a hot conventional conflict against China, as regional economies remain deeply, structurally intertwined with Beijing's macroeconomic matrix. There remains a profound, underlying nationalistic defiance during active naval incidents on the water, systematically driving tactical security alignments with Tokyo and Washington.

France and the Strategic Architecture of Its Maritime Boundaries

Across metropolitan France, Corsica, and its sprawling Overseas territories, France disposes of an exceptionally dense matrix of territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). To lock in these borders, Paris has been structurally mandated to enter into complex, protracted bilateral negotiations with its thirty-one maritime neighbors.

Within the European metropolitan theater, the boundary dividing French and Belgian waters has been definitively fixed since 1990, while agreements with the United Kingdom were signed in 1977 and 1982. The most complex legal and hydrographic dossier centered on the Channel Islands, where attributing the sovereignty of low-lying islets—specifically the British-controlled *Minquiers* and *Écréhou*, and the French-controlled *Chausey* archipelago—and mapping Jersey's outer perimeters was only resolved later, at the dawn of the 2000s.

In the Bay of Biscay, the French EEZ (decreed in 1976) and the Spanish EEZ (1978) experience structural overlaps. Symmetrically, Paris and Madrid maintain a persistent boundary disagreement regarding their respective maritime zones west of the Gulf of Lion (*Golfe du Lion*). Conversely, the maritime borders separating Corsica and Sardinia have been clearly delimited since 1986. Further north, the Principality of Monaco was endowed in 1984 with a narrow sovereign maritime corridor, engineered as a direct seaward extension of its highly restricted terrestrial territory.

Historically, through the 1763 Treaty of Paris, France forfeited the absolute entirety of its North American colonial empire, preserving uniquely the micro-archipelago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon. The territorial waters dividing this enclave from Canada were fixed in 1972. However, the definition of its attached EEZ proved significantly more thorny; France unilaterally traced its boundaries in 1976 against a backdrop of bitter fisheries protection warfare over the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

The landmark international arbitration of 1992 ultimately awarded France a narrow, elongated maritime corridor extending directly southward into the open ocean. Subsequently, a 2005 treaty signed with

Ottawa engineered a joint resource-sharing mechanism in the event of any cross-border offshore hydrocarbon discoveries.

Throughout the West Indies, the French republic encompasses four distinct insular territories: Saint Martin (partitioned through a land border with the Netherlands), Saint Barthélemy, the Guadeloupe Archipelago, and Martinique. France successfully signed binding delimitation treaties with the United Kingdom (governing the waters of Anguilla and Montserrat), Venezuela (regarding the isolated outpost of *Aves Island*), Saint Lucia, Dominica, and Barbados. Consequently, formal maritime boundary agreements are still lacking with the Kingdom of the Netherlands (regarding Saint Martin and Saba) and with Antigua and Barbuda. Along the South American littoral, while a definitive border treaty has bound French Guiana and Brazil since 1981, negotiations are still ongoing to close a similar pact with Suriname.

The geostrategic equation turns vastly more conflictual within the Indian Ocean range. Here, the primary sovereign territories are La Réunion and Mayotte, supplemented by a matrix of isolated islands flanking Madagascar: including Tromelin Island to the east, and the Scattered Islands threading the strategically vital Mozambique Channel (*Les Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Bassas da India, Europa*). Paris locked in boundary agreements with the Seychelles regarding Mayotte, and signed treaties with Madagascar and Mauritius to delimit the waters of La Réunion.

Nevertheless, France confronts two deep, historical sovereignty challenges across this theater:

The Comorian dispute over Mayotte: Since 1974, the Union of the Comoros has resoundingly claimed sovereignty over Mayotte, which chose to remain within the French Republic. Consequently, zero bilateral agreement exists to delimit the maritime borders dividing the two nations.

The Madagascan and Mauritian claims: The Scattered Islands are actively claimed by Madagascar; no maritime zoning treaty exists between Paris and Antananarivo, nor with Mozambique. Symmetrically, Tromelin is claimed by Mauritius as an integral component of its national maritime perimeter. A projected public treaty dedicated to the joint co-management of Tromelin between Paris and Port Louis has been repeatedly postponed by the French Parliament.

France rigidly watches over the absolute sovereignty of the islands placed under the administrative framework of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands. Highlighting this strategic resolve, President Emmanuel Macron executed a historic state visit directly to the Glorioso Islands in October 2019, forcefully reasserting the permanent French sovereign presence on site.

Deep within the Southern Indian Ocean, the archipelagos of *Crozet, Saint Paul, and Amsterdam* operate in complete geographical isolation, denuded of any maritime neighbors. Symmetrically, the Kerguelen Islands command an unfixed maritime boundary with Australia; however, Paris and Canberra successfully signed a comprehensive bilateral treaty establishing joint maritime surveillance and fisheries protection cooperation across the range. Further west, negotiations are underway with South Africa to formally align the boundaries of the extended continental shelf west of Crozet.

The French ultra-marine territories anchored within the Pacific Ocean are composed of three distinct archipelagos: New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and French Polynesia. For New Caledonia, highly remote islets and coral reefs—including the *Chesterfields, Fairway, Matthew, and Hunter* islands—generate a massive oceanic perimeter. Paris signed binding maritime delimitation agreements with Australia, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji; however, an active border dispute persists with Vanuatu, which aggressively claims sovereign titles over Matthew and Hunter Islands.

Regarding Wallis and Futuna, boundary treaties exist with Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, and New Zealand (governing the Tokelau maritime range), yet an agreement is still lacking with Samoa. Conversely, zero diplomatic frictions plague French Polynesia, where unassailable treaties successfully delimit borders with the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and the United Kingdom (Pitcairn Islands). Finally, Clipperton Island, situated in complete isolation 940 kilometers off the Mexican coast, was subject to a formal, definitive recognition of French absolute sovereignty by Mexico City as early as 1959.

The Geopolitics of the Blue Carbon: From Resource Shortages to Environmental Leadership

Cumulatively, the French Exclusive Economic Zones encapsulate 10.186 million square kilometers. The geographic distribution of this sovereign maritime empire is heavily concentrated: 47% is anchored in French Polynesia, 13% is generated by New Caledonia, and 22% is masterminded by the TAAF grid.

Crucially, the raw material wealth of the French EEZ is exclusively halieutic by nature—spearheaded by high-value oceanic tuna loops and the lucrative Patagonian toothfish longline fisheries of the Southern Ocean. To date, there exists virtually zero industrial exploitation of marine mineral resources or offshore hydrocarbons, following the total failure of deepwater drilling campaigns in French Guiana.

Consequently, unable to extract heavy commercial revenues from its deepwater subsoil, France has fundamentally oriented its maritime strategy toward global environmental diplomacy, transforming its vast waters into an unassailable engine of international soft power. By 2020, fully one-third of French sovereign waters were officially classified as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Accelerating this ecological momentum, the Government of French Polynesia officially announced the greenfield classification of an additional 1 million square kilometers of protected waters. By opting to protect and restore marine biodiversity on a planetary scale rather than industrializing its seabed, France successfully garners a highly valorizing international image, positioning Paris as a vanguard leader of the global blue economy and ocean governance.

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