The Dynamics of the Political Dimensions of Marine Space

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1. Introduction

Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* were among the first novels which were translated into Japanese. To the Japanese they became examples of Western literary modernism. Many of these works coincide with the age of 'opening of Japan' and with the 'Westernization' efforts of the Meiji government. The age would be remembered for overseas travel, internationalization and Western-style modernity (Peck, 2001, 3).

Three images associated with the sea are common to such novels. (1) The first one is that of discovery, adventure, romanticism and pleasure of meeting the unknown. Its roots are in the positive attitude to modernism. (2) The second one is of remoteness from the civilized world, boredom, and endless travel over large distances of a spaceless mass of water. It provides an alternative understanding of the modernity project, but it also draws on the reality of the marine space. (3) The third image of the sea is that of horror. In mythology, this image has predominated for a long time, and provides an explanation why civilization has for ages kept at a distance from the sea.

This paper is a work in political science and it argues that the dynamics in the way society has approached the sea has been a source of fundamental changes in the institution of territoriality and state sovereignty (Holsti, 2004,

100; Bartelson, 1995, 246). The paper reviews the three images described above in the two parts of the next section, addresses how marine space and the modern territorial state have been institutionalized in the third section, offers two accounts of how the two institutions have changed over the past decades in the fourth section, and draws some tentative illustrations of this change in the fifth section. Finally, as apparent from the introduction, Japan and Nagasaki will be mentioned throughout this work, but it is not the intention to limit myself to these two cases only.

2. Marine Space Dangerous and Distant

The beginning of Jules Verne's novel takes us into the hunt for a terrifying Giant Squid off the shores of Japan, and reveals that society viewed the seas as unknown, mysterious, and infested with monsters and devils (Verne, 2009, 32). Such stories of the sea were represented in Middle Age society in old legends and religious beliefs, as well as, in scientific inquiries. Despite the Golden Age of Navigation, medieval society saw the sea as a danger, depth, and distance. In the sub-sections below, we will examine the role of the sea in religious myth and in medieval science in the West.

2. 1. The Sea and Myth

Some of the oldest representations of the sea appear in religious mythologies. In many religions the sea figures as one of the central elements and often in the myth of creation. Ancient Greek mythology, for example, worshiped Poseidon as the Olympian God of the Seas. He enjoyed high popularity among ancient Greeks because much of their influence in the Hellenic World was owed to maritime transportation. Poseidon fathered many important gods and half-gods that were also often, in some way, related to the sea. Among the many other gods of waters, seas or oceans, none would

match him in importance (Burkert, 1985, 137). Poseidon was mighty, but he had many dark sides. He was wrathful, raging, quick tempered and cruel. He was rightfully feared by people and especially seamen. Homer in his *Odyssey* refers to the sea that Poseidon was ruling over as a 'wine-dark sea,' and the destruction and horror that fell upon Odyssey on his trips forms the central narrative in his work (Szabo, 2008, 3).

Gary Varner remarks that there is probably no age or country which would lack mermaids and water-monsters in its folklore (2007, 13; also in Obayashi, 1993, 202). He argues that the stories which appear in Greek mythology existed in many forms in different regions and cultures. Mythologies and religions interpret phenomena in everyday life, and the seas were always part of such everyday phenomena. Common to such myths is a message warning the listener about the dangers in the sea, which thus redirects people's attention away from that perilous mass of water. Depicted as infested with monsters and demons, the sea was to be avoided or approached with caution.

2. 2. The Sea and Science

If religion put a spell on the sea, had science saved it from such a spell? Myth has no place in science, but lack of concern for the sea has long endured in science as well, and in geography in particular. To stay with the Hellenistic tradition, Ptolemy revolutionized geography between the first and second century C.E., and his achievements had been so spectacular that variations of Ptolemy's maps were relevant over one millennium later (Thrower, 2008, 64). But Ptolemaic maps are far from being errorless. Geographical representations in ancient maps tend to center on land surfaces, and even then, only on the more well-known land areas. Ptolemy had no idea, for example, that Norway and Sweden formed part of the European continent. His depiction of the North African coastline is distorted, and the drawings of

Asia are even less accurate, with India far too small, Sri Lanka far too big, and the Malay Peninsula substantially reduced in size (Dilke, 1987, 198). The Philippines, Taiwan, Japan and other areas of East Asia are simply non-existent there.

Depiction of marine areas on such Ptolemaic maps is all the more problematic. The Azov Sea is too big, the Persian Gulf has an incorrect shape, and the Bay of Bengal has a much sharper v-shaped coastline (Bunbury, 1883, v.2, 579).

There is one characteristic that medieval maps, including Ptolemaic ones, have in common. It is the fact that they tend to expand the size of land areas, whereas marine surfaces are minimized and get little attention. It is the seas which form most of the global surface area, but this fact has often been neglected. The seas are often absent from maps even today, in the era of TV, internet and android. Imagine weather maps, which we encounter daily. Most maps communicated in media and in everyday life focus only on landmass, cutting marine areas out of the picture. That is not due to a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of perspective, failing to see the sea as something more than a vast distance of spaceless mass of water.

3．The Great Transformation

In 1944 Karl Polanyi introduced the term 'Great Transformation,' by which he understood the extent of the transition of the society to modernity at the turn of the century. As an economic historian, he tended to focus on the function of the market, rather than of the sea, but his analysis of market mechanisms is profoundly relevant to our discussion. Polanyi argues that the market, with the associated concepts of fictitious commodification of labor, land and money, and with the key role of profit, must be left undistorted in order to perform its self-regulatory functions. In other words, once the

market mechanism is institutionalized, the political must be separated from the economic, and state intervention must be minimized to an embedded status (Polanyi, 1957, 68). Only then can finance capital be liberated from political constraints, and through the operation of the golden standard, the capitalist economy can achieve progress. How does the sea link to this logic?

3. 1. Industrial Capitalism and Marine Space

Relative decline of importance of the sea to daily life during the 20th century could be discerned in many developed countries. This trend relates to the changing economic structure of society in the process of modernization. While industrialization of the economy brings about many new industries which approach the sea in new ways, scaling, mechanization and automatization in shipbuilding, shipping and fisheries commodify labor, and actually reduce the number of jobs in marine related activities. The total amount of interactions that the modern economy had in sea-related activity grew substantially with the increase in trade and consumption, but relative proximity of the population to the sea actually declined as a result of modernization.

With the arrival of the modern nation state, the way humankind perceived progress tended to dissociate itself from marine areas. Countries emphasized reclamation of internal lands for reasons of security and expediency, as well as national integration. (1) Settlement in interior areas intensified as they provided a secure and stable base for business and life. In some cases, even capital cities were removed from insecure coasts into the safety of country's heartlands, as evidenced by Moscow or Washington D.C. (2) With technological revolution, new mineral resources were discovered and they raised the value of arid hinterlands. (3) Urbanization and the increasing concentration of populations propelled construction of railway and road networks, and paved the way to the accumulation of capital, and further

investment into urban land development and industrialization.

In Japanese history, for example, while the country was in economic boom in the 1960s, marine industries experienced hardship. Shipping surged with the increase in trade, but the numbers of Japanese flag ships shrunk, and with them also the numbers of Japanese crews. Shipbuilding and fishing industries also faced harsh realities. The importance of marine areas to national growth had stagnated with the arrival of late-modernity (Kosaka, 2008, 235).

3. 2. Industrial Capitalism and Territorial Sovereignty

Why did marine space receive so little attention relative to land space? Peter Steinberg offers an argument, built on the analysis of Carl Schmitt's writings. He claims that human society constructs the sea in a way distinct from land space. While on the land, fierce battles were fought over small tracts of land, on the seas, freedom has always been the ruling principle (Steinberg, 2011, 269; 2001, 47). Countries imperialized and dominated the land, but they avoided doing the same on the sea. Only narrow belts of water adjacent to coastal states were appropriated by states, and this practice established the general rule for the 3-mile limit to territorial sea.

The trend towards territorial delimitation of the nation-state on land was never matched by anything similar in the seas. Huge ocean areas called High Seas guaranteed freedom of navigation, exploration and economic activity for any vessel. The reasons for freedom in the High Seas lay in the international law, natural limitations and the nature of expansion of capitalism and imperialism (Takabayashi, 1968, 2; Yoshii, 2004, 125).

Firstly, modern international law adopted over time was based on the liberal tradition of Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius. His argument can be summarized into 5 points: (1) The world is composed of equal, sovereign, and territorial states. (2) The sea is common to all, because it is limitless and

cannot be possessed. (3) The sea is not equivalent to terra nullius, and thus cannot be discovered. (4) Marine resources are a common good, and therefore are free to exploit. (5) Those who exploit marine resources also have a duty to conserve them to retain perpetuity of the common good.

Secondly, the principle of freedom of the High Seas is guaranteed naturally, because of technological and budgetary limitations concerning security control and enforcement on the High Seas. And thirdly, imperialistic ambitions of great powers focused on acquisition of islands or land areas, and considered marine areas as 'distances,' and not as objects of colonial control.

Territorialization of the modern nation-state has been referred to in literature as the Westphalian order. Territorial control over land areas meant denial of the freedom of travel through one's territory. Freedom in the ocean areas was a medium for transfer of merchant and industrial capitalism across boundaries, which confirmed that the oceans were cast away from the possessive drives of nation-states and, at the same time, instrumental to progress. Uncivilized and placeless as the oceans were, they functioned as a necessary part of the modern Westphalian order.

4. The Great Transformation Revisited

Polanyi's interest was not in explaining the conditions behind the ascendancy of the modern economic system. The real 'Great Transformation' is the one which deals with how the capitalist system changed since the arrival of modernity. His concern, therefore, was not with the reification of the self-regulatory market system, but in showing how deeply the system is embedded in the social and political relations, and therefore, how fragile it is. His main focus is on the failing role of the gold standard, which was the reason countries withdrew their currencies, and turned to protecting their home economies. He argued for the need to check the operations of the

market mechanism, fallacy of separation of the economic from the political, and he warned against the scare of protectionism of socialist or fascist kinds. How is this linked to the seas?

Polanyi's argument was sharp but not without its faults, as Lacher and others of his critics reveal (Lacher, 2003, 533; Block, 1987, 174). Not only did Polanyi poorly elaborate on the nature of modernity, but he also took the territorial nature of the nation-state for granted. Sovereign states cannot escape their 'territorial trap' easily (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995, 95), especially if they are not aware of the spatial limitations of sovereignty.

But what is territoriality then? I argue for an alternative concept of sovereign territoriality, one which links human society to the sea. How can a fluid be possessed? The seas are dynamic bodies, so no actual sovereign territorial projection is possible onto them. The main characteristic of territoriality is that of immobility. Since the seas are by nature dynamic bodies, this essential nature of territoriality is violated. That was also the main reason why the Westphalian system was not projected onto the seas, and why the Grotian paradigm of freedom of the High Seas was so unanimously embraced. Humanity has not devised technology to stop marine water from moving, except for expensive breakwater structures. The traditional solution for society has been to leave the sea out of the race for territorial advances, and attempt to solve the few needs that it had upon the sea in other ways. Fishing and maritime transportation have been the most important marine industries and neither of them necessitated any territorial solution, except for the normative one provided for in the existing international law. This solution, however, has faced many challenges. The sea has increasingly intervened into human lives in ways that horizontal dispersal of sovereignty has not been ready to deal with. Such interventions were augmented by trans-border movement of mobile factors of economic production, cultural identity, and social externalities.

The alternative solution is two-fold. The first one is territorial extension from the land to the sea. This has already been taking place, as the state has become increasingly interested in developing economic resources in underwater areas. Technological innovation is beginning to make such dreams sound not impossible. We cannot stop the sea from moving, but we can anchor to the seabed, or use counter-movement systems (such as dynamic positioning) to overcome the pitfalls of mobility. Any territoriality which is projected onto the sea becomes dynamic and sovereignty liquid. With technological change, society has found ways in accepting, if not overcoming such liquidity. This does not make the sea immobile, but it makes it more submissive to human domination.

The second solution lies in the acceptance of an extension of what Zygmund Baumann calls 'liquid modernity' into a geopolitical dimension (2000, 115). Freedom in the seas has always posed a challenge to the state. But sovereignty guaranteed that such threats could be contained. Peter Taylor calls them geopolitical 'power containers,' but he asserts, that with increasing environmental destruction, those containers are leaking, and, "pollution is no respecter of boundaries" (1994, 161). Complex migration patterns, growing ecological impact of the sea on the land, expansion and intensification of information and identity networks, all these liquefy sovereignty, and in all of them, the sea is playing a part.

5. Transformation of Governance in Marine Areas

The ways the two mechanisms of *territorialization of the sea*, and of *liquefaction of sovereignty* operate on the international, domestic and local levels of governance will be examined below with a special focus on Japan and on Nagasaki at the local level.

5. 1. International Level

The temptation to territorialize the sea has always been present as a kind of a Seldenian counter-stream to the Grotian understanding of order. It gained some attention during the League of Nations Conference of 1930 for the Codification of International Law. However it was only after the Second World War that this challenge gained more attention with the reintroduction of efforts for codification of the International Law of the Seas. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) was concluded in 1982 and it introduced the most comprehensive set of rules for governing the oceans. The convention redefined the way human society has approached the oceans, and it addressed the issue of economic development of marine areas. The latter issue being complicated by lengthy negotiations between developing and developed countries. Coastal states were given the territorial-like rights over economic resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and over seabed resources in the Continental Shelf (Booth, 1985, 45). Apart from the regime governing such marine areas, UNCLOS and IMO conventions also introduced a set of new regulations on shipping security and safety, which have favored coastal states rather than flag states. Stricter regulations on environmental and safety standards, insurance requirements and other regulations aim to promote safer traffic, but they also impose invisible barriers to free passage, and therefore have an effect similar to territorial control by the coastal state (Baatz, 2014, ch. 8).

Changing international regulations corroborate, that parallel to the *territorialization of the sea*, there is a reverse trend which corrodes and thus *liquefies sovereign control* of territorial states. One such example is the issue of climate change, evidenced by El Niño and La Niña weather phenomena, rising sea levels, strong typhoons, abnormal monsoons, and droughts that are difficult to detect or cope with by individual states and require international efforts in the form of regular UNFCC, IPCC and other international

conferences (Yamamoto and Esteban, 2014, 118).

5. 2. Domestic Level

Domestic turn towards the sea has originated from bureaucratic and scientific circles in public administrations, and it converges around the concept of Integrated Coastal Zone Management. ICZM is a set of policy instruments for policy integration of miscellaneous branches and levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders. Governments all around the globe have dealt with the sea as a part of their administrative restructuring. China and Korea created a cabinet level ministry overseeing marine affairs. Japan enacted the Basic Act on Ocean Policy in 2007 with the Prime Minister's Office taking the leadership in overseeing the effective implementation of the new law through its newly established Headquarters for Ocean Policy (Terashima, 2012, 178). In many countries, one effect of such restructuring and new legislation was the intensified effort in the investments in discovery of new technologies for exploitation of energy and mineral resources in Territorial Seas, EEZs, and other marine areas.

Such efforts have been checked with the need to address regional or global issues that paid little respect to national borders, such as diminishing marine biodiversity, dramatic decline in fish stocks, piracy, terrorism, contiguous disease, jurisdiction disputes and migration.

5. 3. Local Level in Japan

Due to long coastlines and mountainous landscape, most of the population in Japan lives in areas which are directly or indirectly impacted by the sea, with the effect that most local governments are involved in a sea-related activity. Close proximity to the sea, however, has not necessarily been reflected in a more effective administrative structure of local government bodies. Only some progress has been registered recently.

Japan has in the past decade undergone administrative restructuring known as 'the Great Consolidation of Heisei,' which delegated new powers to the local government bodies, but at the same time, decreased the involvement of the central government in local matters, including a reduction in the local allocation tax. What accompanied the decentralization reforms was optimism that local governments would embark on a more active role in community services, including the introduction of integrated coastal zone management. This optimism was reflected in the Fifth Comprehensive National Development Plan adopted in 2000 and entitled Grand Design for the 21st Century, which provided a conceptual basis for developing the Guideline for Integrated Coastal Zone Management Planning, intended to guide local government in establishment of their own coastal zone management plans and policies. However, almost no such initiative was undertaken, as local governments received no substantial fiscal incentives to carry out such projects. Only recently, some successful cases have been registered in a few cities at different locations in Japan, such as Shima, Hinase, Miyako, Taketomi and others, and these are expected to serve as examples of coastal zone management at the local level (OPRF, 2014, 55).

Together with decentralization, several deregulation reforms have been introduced. One of such reforms deals with easing or alteration of nation-wide regulations to trigger economic growth or other policy targets in administratively designated special zones. There have been more than 1000 such special zones in Japan, and the system has received wide acclaim from local governments. Nagasaki Prefecture and other local government entities, for example, have been involved in three comprehensive special zone projects now. These include: 'Base of Marine and Environmental Industry in Nagasaki,' 'Revitalization of Goto Islands by Camellia' (Goto City), 'Kyushu - Asian Island of Tourism,' all of which relate directly or indirectly to the sea. Local government has no general legal or fiscal jurisdiction extending to the

sea, but through its operations, it has always been somehow involved with the coasts and with the sea.

What kind of global challenges do local governments encounter from the sea? Nagasaki Prefecture in its Five-Year General Plan for the period of 2011-2015, has listed issues such as: decrease in fish stocks, declining population of fishermen, disaster management (typhoon, flood-tide, tsunami, etc.), crime prevention, narcotic control, global warming prevention, marine pollution control (especially Omura Bay), removal of marine debris, and others (Nagasaki Prefecture, 2011). The effects of the sea on the land will need more attention and more active participation of government, NGOs, volunteer networks and other stakeholders.

6. Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* has an undeniable place in the world of marine novels. It starts with search for marine monsters, but after ten months under the seas, when hero Annorax escapes with his two companions from the submarine, the story is no longer about unknown and scary monsters, but about the knowledge Annorax had accumulated about the ocean. Verne's tale is, of course, a masterly presented fiction, but today, the world is increasingly moving into the mind of Annorax. What did he see below the surface of the sea? Didn't he find new possibilities, rather than the dangers he was looking for at the beginning of the story?

Human society tended to develop almost independent of the sea, which was considered distant, deep and dangerous. At times it chose seclusion from the sea, and from the wider world. But today, this long tradition of discarding the sea is over. The sea is becoming more relevant to our society, in unprecedented ways. New potential offered by marine space is a new

frontier for human society, which may lead to entirely new ways of economic development. As argued above, the new ways of economic development also pose new challenges of *extension of sovereign territoriality* and of *liquefaction of sovereignty*, and the international society will have to devise more effective ways to address the negative effects of the promising 'Blue Growth.'

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Abstract

Human society has viewed marine space as an empty, deep and useless mass of water for most of its recorded past. With the arrival of the modern nation-state came an institutionalization of the relationship between society and the sea, but in a way radically distinct from that with land. In this paper, I suggest that in political science, this historical trend of seeing human society

as land-based and the sea as irrelevant is over. The sea is irreversibly becoming more intertwined with our lives. There are two mechanisms which ensure increasing importance of the sea to our society. The first one is *territorialization of the sea*, manifested by the introduction of the EEZ and other institutions challenging the traditional understanding of the sea in modern international law. The other one is *liquefaction of territorial sovereignty* as a result of globalization. Increasing movement of information, goods, people, externalities, and identities across boundaries erode territorial sovereignty beyond its traditional meaning. The sea has had a major role in promoting such erosion.

New potential offered by marine space is a new frontier for human society, which may lead to entirely new ways of economic development. They also pose new challenges, and human society will have to devise more effective ways to address negative effects of the promising 'Blue Growth.'

Key Words : Governance, sovereignty, marine space, human society, integrated ocean management