Chapter 9

Canada and St. Pierre and Miquelon Transboundary Relations: Battles and Bridges

Phillip M. Saunders and David L. VanderZwaag*

Introduction

The French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, perched off the end of the Burin Peninsula, southeast of the Cabot Strait and the Gulf of St. Lawrence (see Figure 1), have, through a unique combination of geography, history and resources, presented Canada with one of the more challenging examples of transboundary relations in the marine context off its coasts. The islands, with a total area of 242 km² and a population of approximately 7,000,¹ have been the focus both of longstanding conflicts over sovereignty, jurisdiction and resources, and repeated efforts at conflict resolution, including the 1992 arbitration of the maritime boundary.² In the modern era, the parties have gone beyond simple resolution of conflicts and have at least attempted to engage in active transboundary cooperation.

This chapter considers the current status and future prospects of efforts at bilateral cooperative management of the resources and uses of the marine areas in the area of St. Pierre and Miquelon and the neighboring regions of Canada, with a particular focus on fisheries issues. Any understanding of the present and future management of marine resources in this area, however, first requires a brief review of the history of conflicts which has set the context, both from a jurisdictional and policy standpoint, for the situation facing both countries today.

Battles: Sovereignty, Resource Conflicts, and Dispute ‘Resolution’

For a relatively insignificant geographic feature,³ St. Pierre and Miquelon has been at the center of a surprisingly acrimonious history of conflicts over

---

³ In the Canadian Memorial in the Canada-France case, it was noted that while the island of Newfoundland was commonly known as ‘the Rock’, the equivalent nickname used by St. Pierrais is
Figure 1. Canada and St. Pierre and Miquelon: Maritime boundary and related claims. This figure shows the maritime boundary from the 1992 decision, as well as the claims of the parties, the “relevant area” defined by the Court of Arbitration, the outer limit of the Canadian exclusive economic zone, and a line 350 nautical miles from St. Pierre. (Source: C. Schofield and I. Townsend-Gault, “Extending the baguette: France plays leap-frog on behalf of St. Pierre and Miquelon,” International Zeitschrift 5/2, July 2009. Map prepared by Andi Arsana. Online: <http://www.zeitschrift.co.uk/> (accessed 20 December 2009)).