

The Outer Limits of the Extended Continental Shelf of the United States of America
as claimed by the United States of America in December 2023

or

an intellectual variation on the words of Benjamin Franklin (1771):

**"So convenient a thing is it to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find
or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."**

In December 2023, the United States of America seized for itself unilaterally an extra one million square kilometers of sea floor beyond its Exclusive Economic Zone.

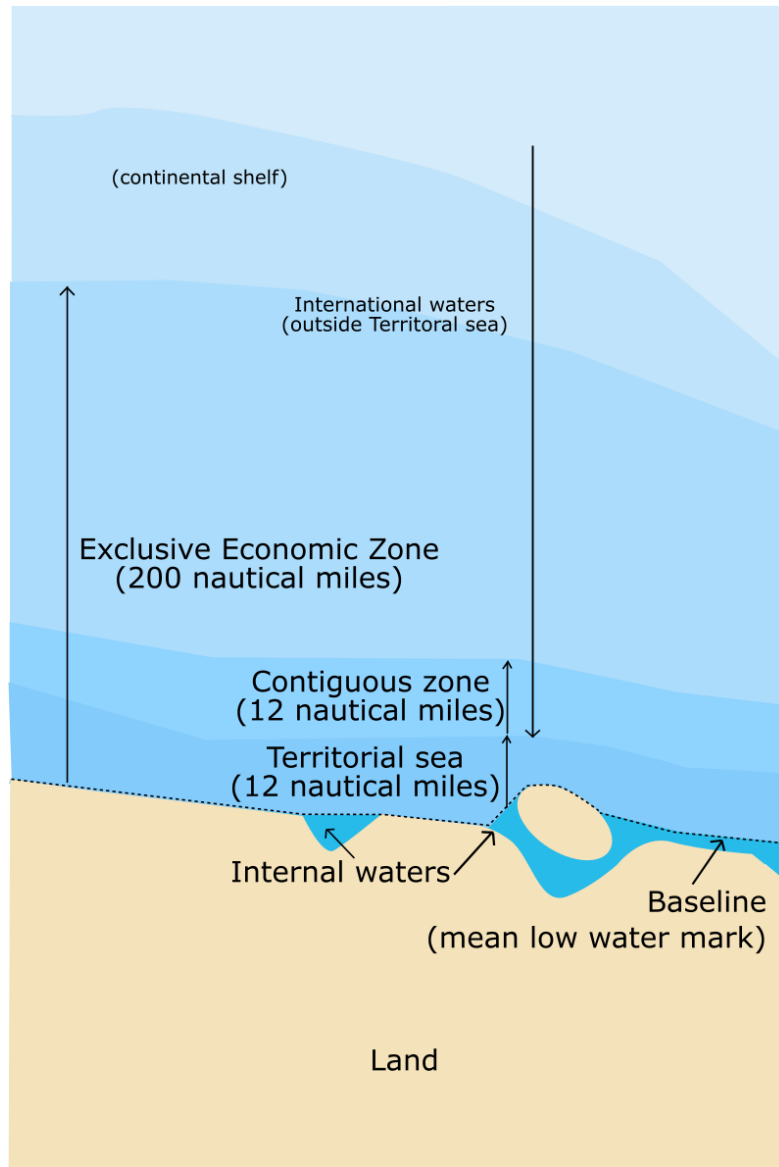
The United States defined the extension in a document titled:
[The Outer Limits of the Extended Continental Shelf of the United States of America](#)

The document stated in particular that: *“... the outer limits of the U.S. continental shelf in areas beyond 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baselines (referred to as the “extended continental shelf”). The United States has delineated these outer limits in accordance with the relevant provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Convention) and the Scientific and Technical Guidelines of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.”*

However, one could puzzlingly contend that the Convention in question establishes in fact quite the opposite, and that the United States has extended its *“Continental Shelf”* over areas which are on the contrary located in the deepest ocean, in water depths of up to 5,500 m, far from the limits of what is commonly considered the continental shelf, and has extended its jurisdiction over the sea floor from the 200 nautical miles (NM) outer limit to at least 350 nautical miles and up to as much as 750 nautical miles. Quite an extension.

Also, quite interestingly, the United States of America decided decades ago **not** to be party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)



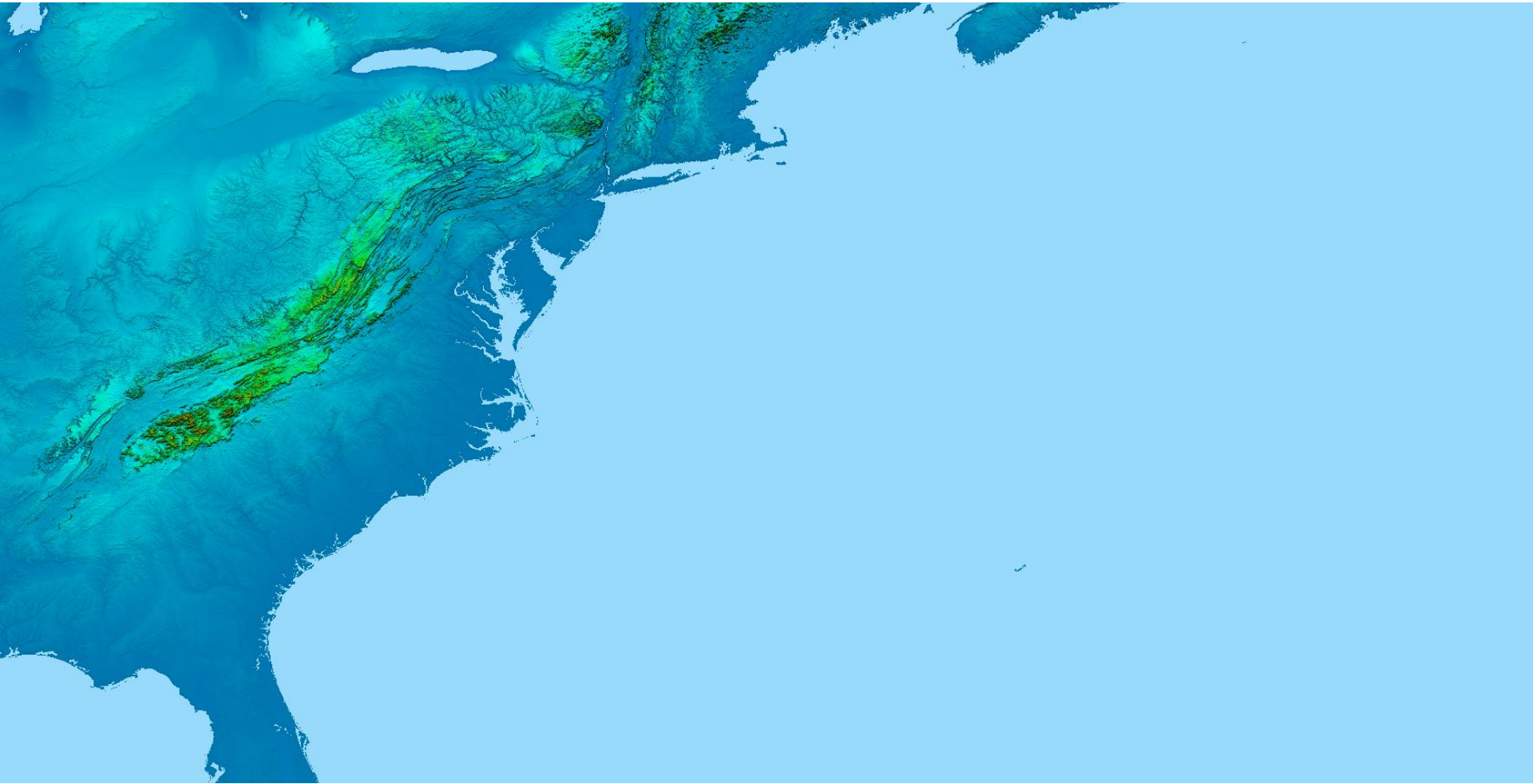
The outer limit is 200 nautical miles from shore.
Not 350, and not 750.

*It does not enclose the continental shelf.
Quite certainly not in 5,500 m water depths.*

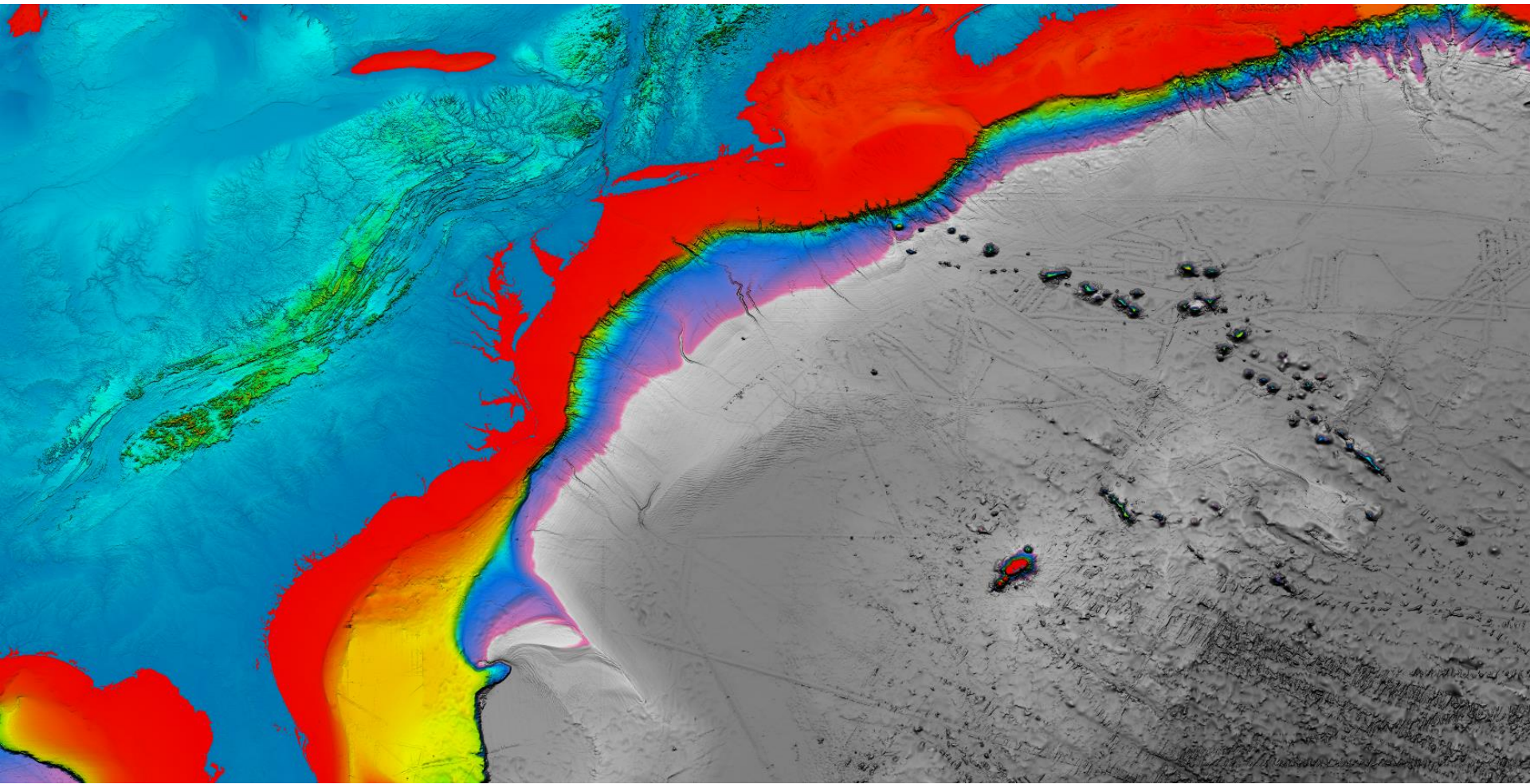
A number of nations have understandably
protested vigorously, among them Russia
and China.

If not heeded, they may elect to take
forceful action in international waters
against what can very possibly be
perceived as an underwater land grab, but
in doing so wouldn't they be seen again as
acting irresponsibly without the slightest
trace of prior provocation whatsoever?

The Atlantic coast of the United States

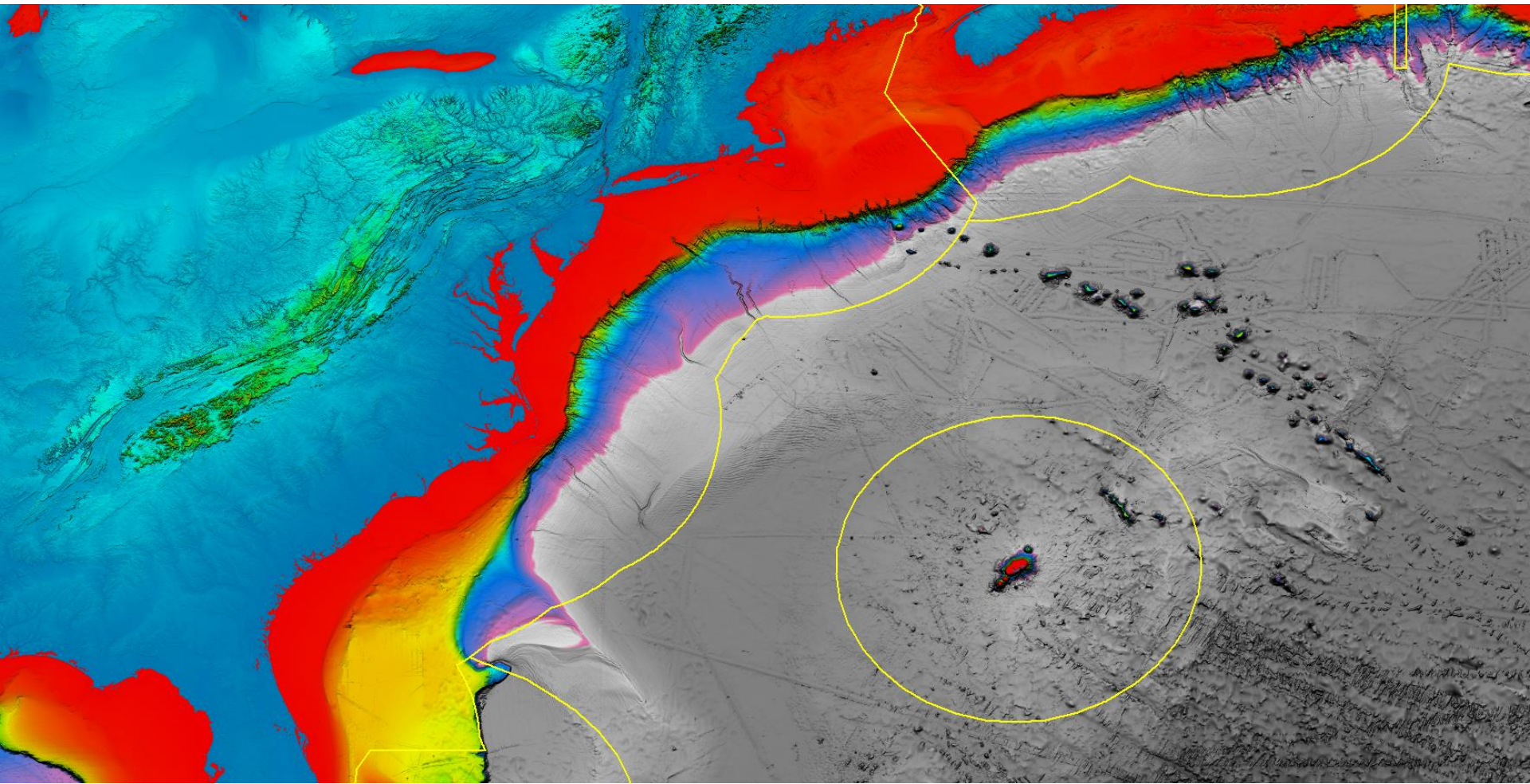


The bathymetry offshore the Atlantic coast of the United States.
The continental shelf is clearly visible, in water depths of a few hundreds of meters



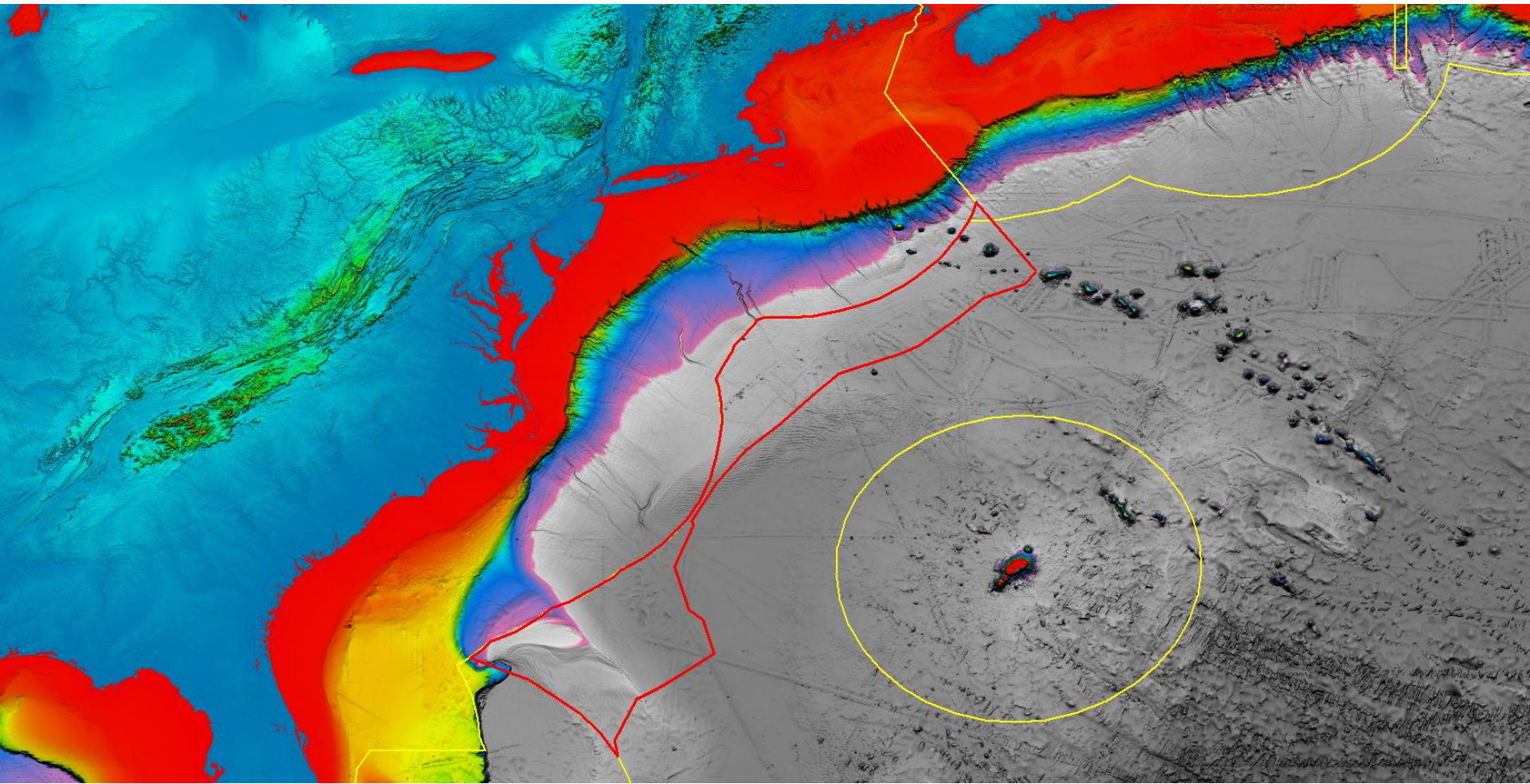
The red color marks areas shallower than 100 m, yellow 1,000 m. Blue is in 2,500 m, purple 3,000, and grey in up to 5,500 m water depth.

The yellow line marks the existing 200 mile limit.

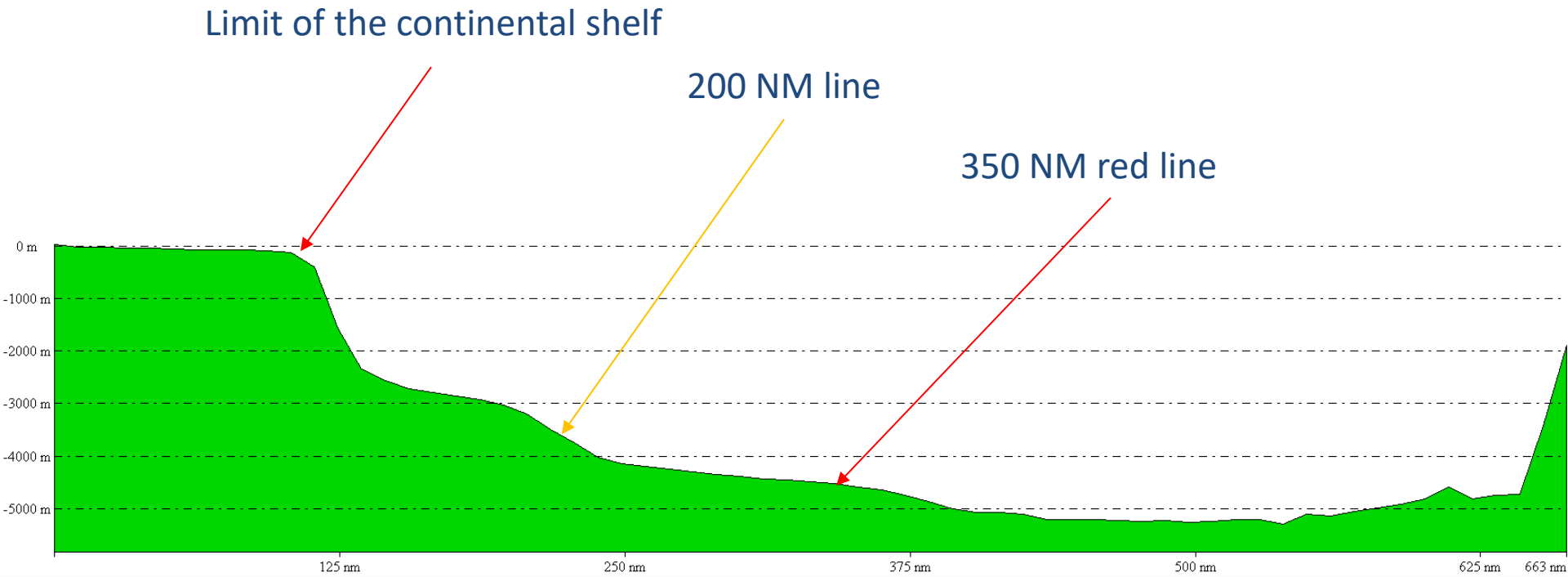


Nations are the United States, Canada, Bermuda, The Bahamas, and the narrow band of Saint Pierre et Miquelon in the upper right corner.

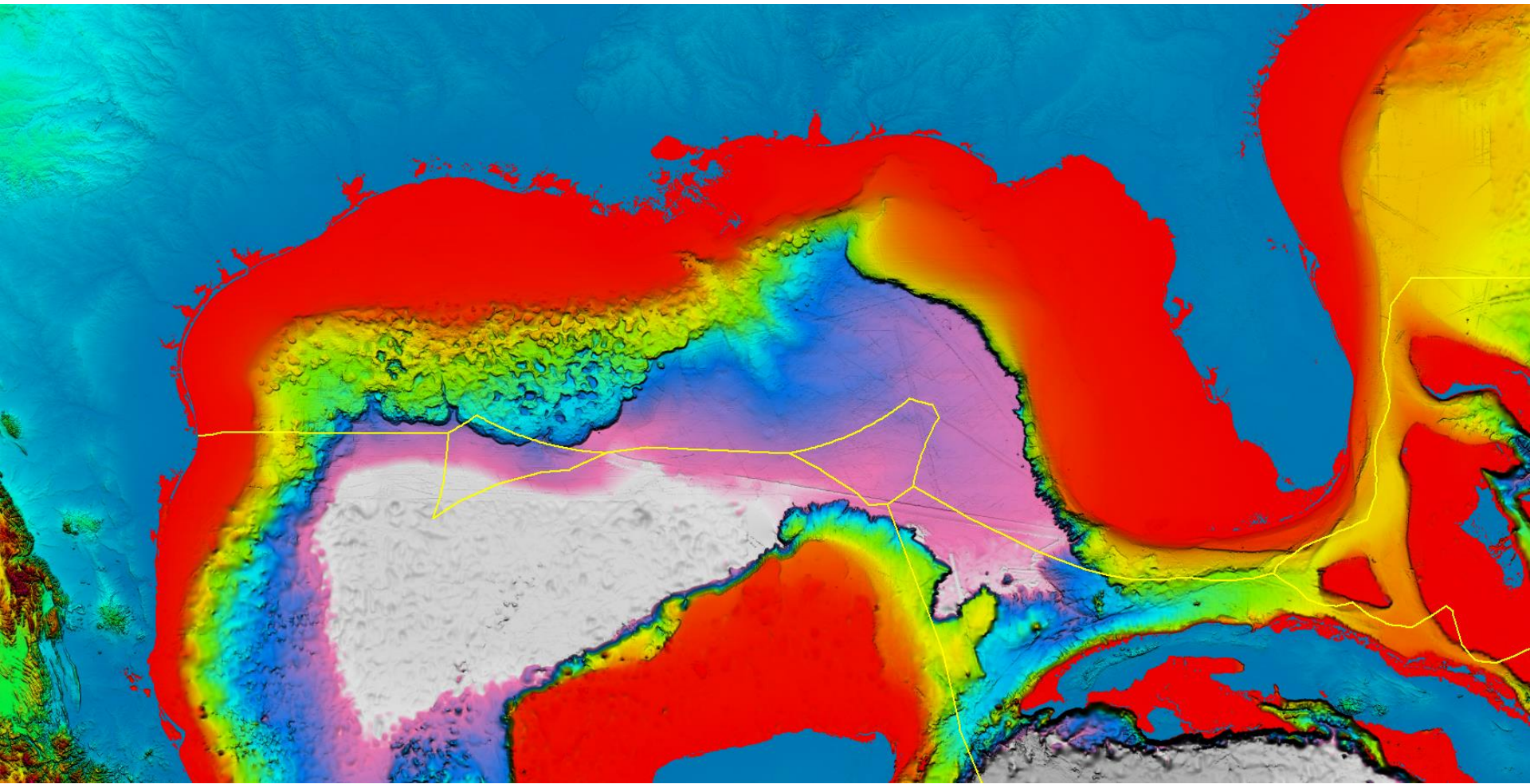
The red line marks the Extended Continental Shelf. Note the absence of continental shelf within the red area.



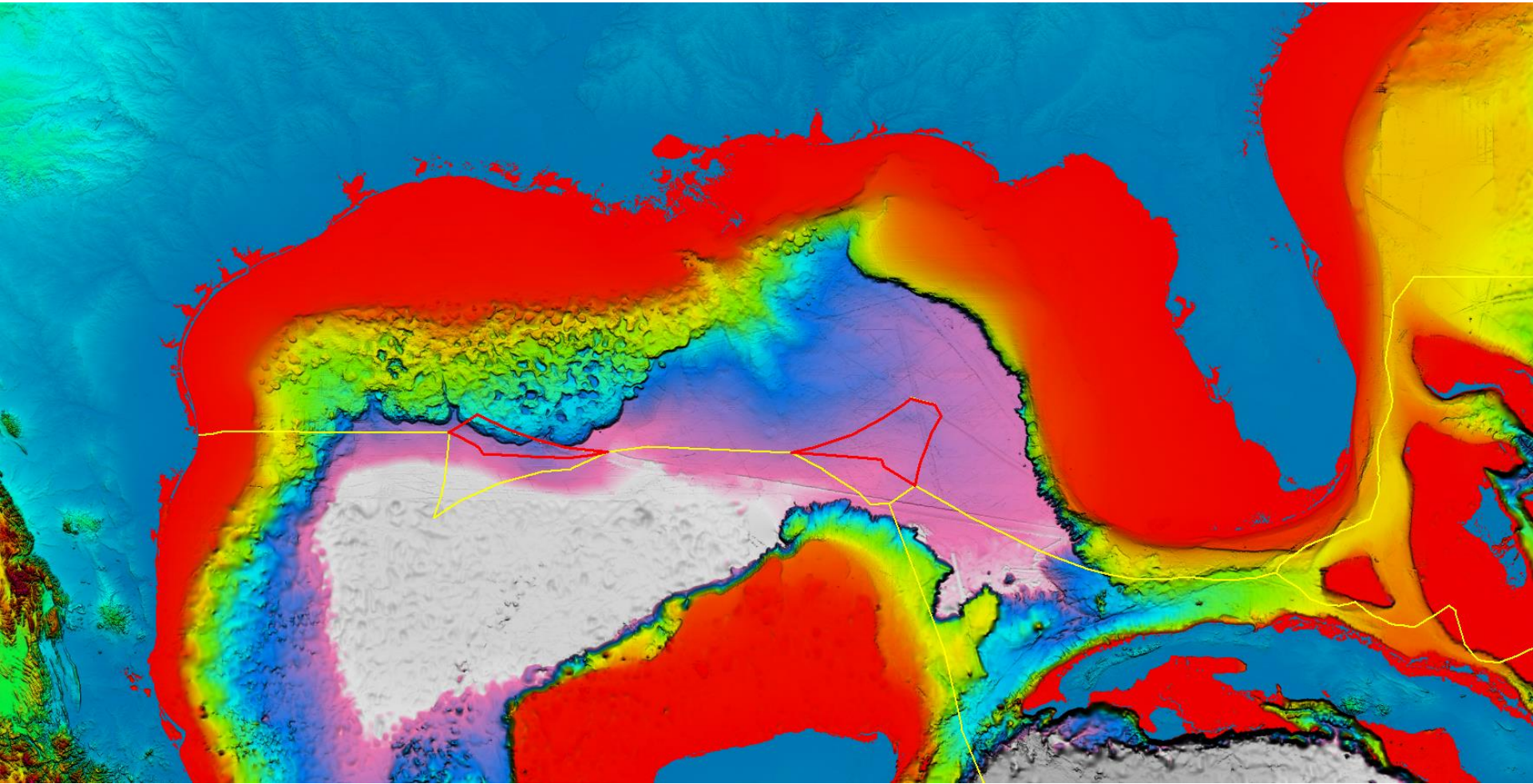
Depth profile between New York and Bermuda



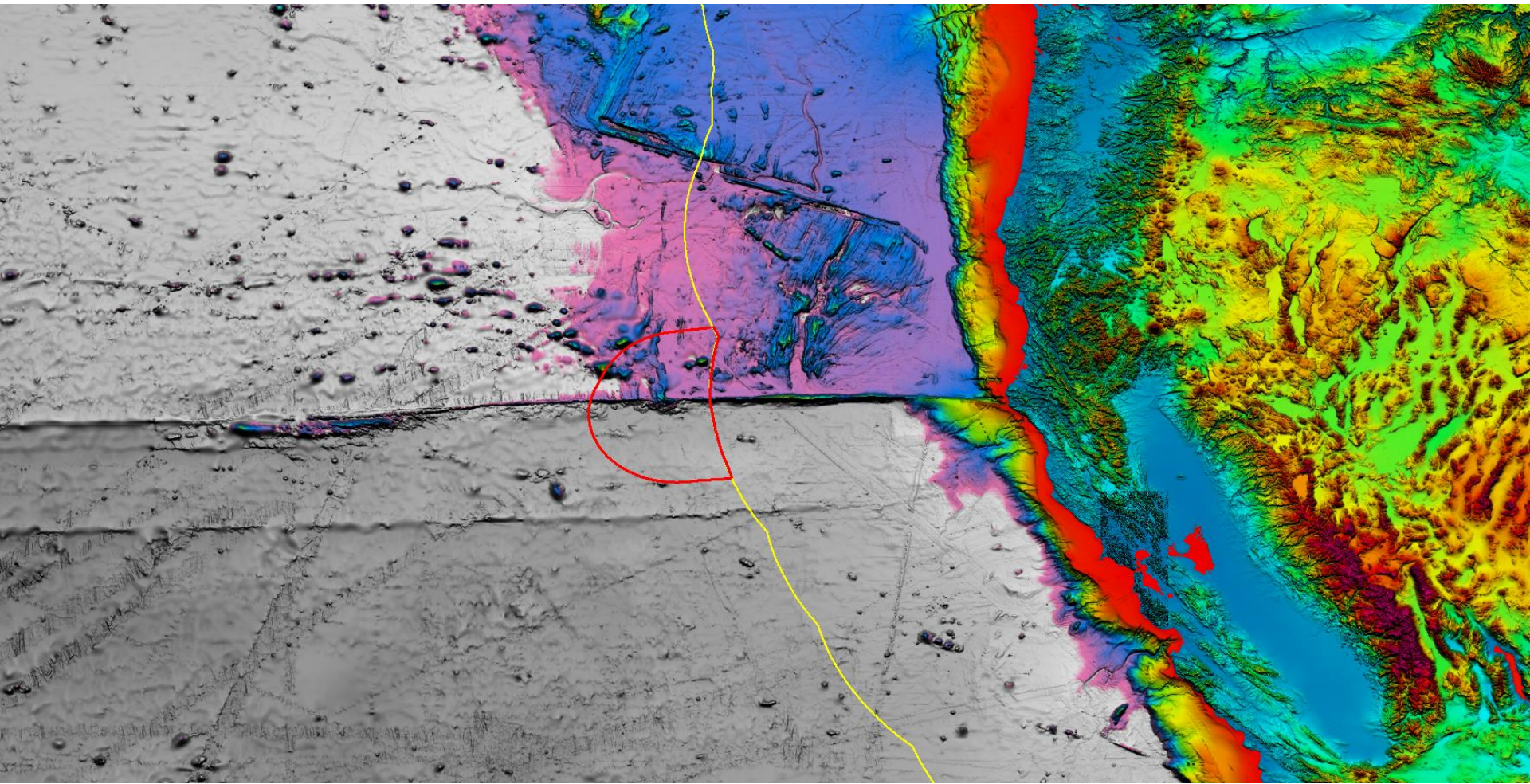
In the Gulf of Mexico, existing 200 NM limit



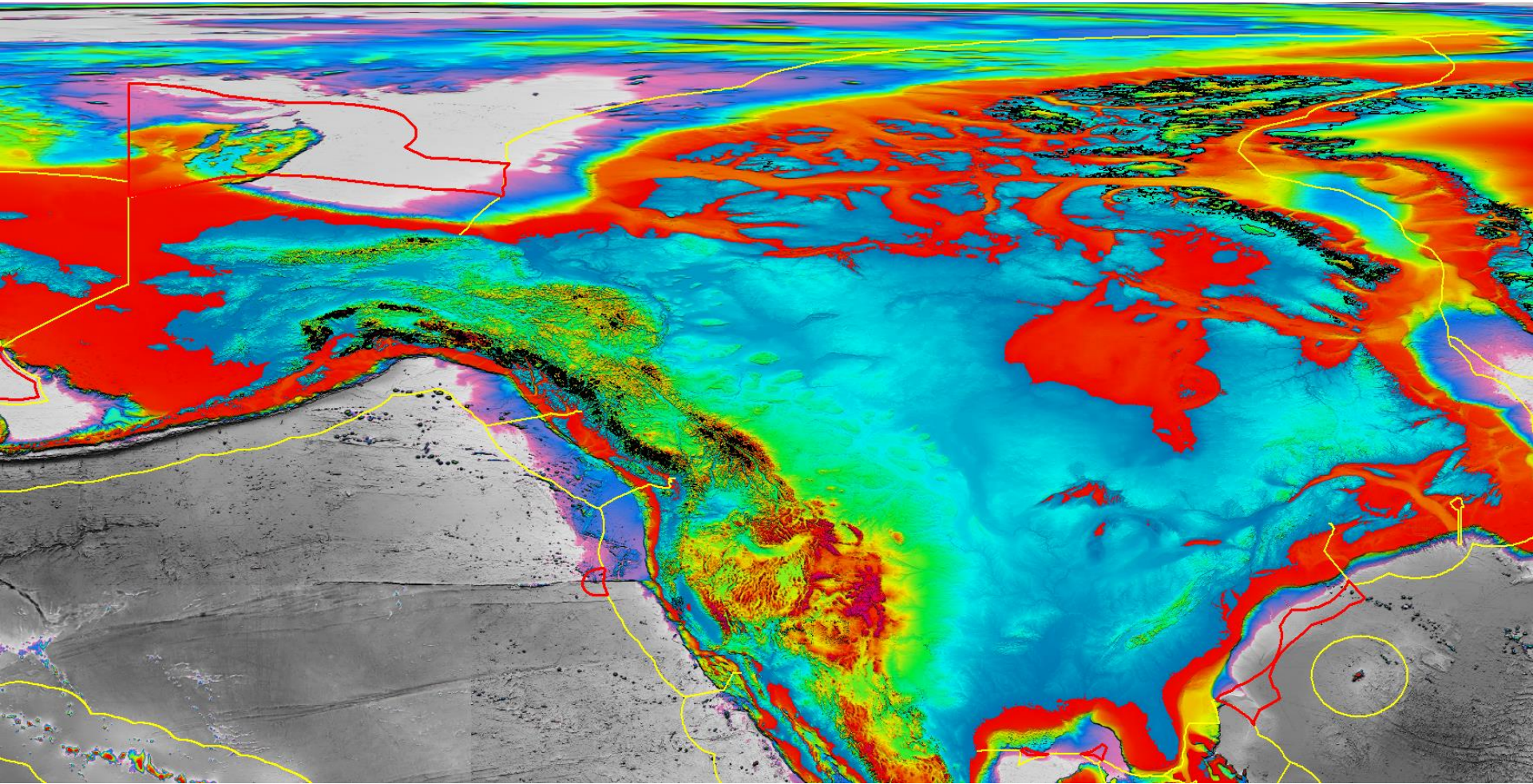
In the Gulf of Mexico, red extension of the Continental Shelf in very deep water, in areas devoid of continental shelf



Offshore California, a puzzling protuberance over very deep and flat sea floor lacking any continental shelf.



500,000 sq. km Arctic Extension in the upper left corner, 85% of which is not on any continental shelf, up to 750 nautical miles from shore in 3,800 m of water depth.



The author of this document is not judging the issue from a political standpoint, since he understands that the territory of each nation on Earth was delineated by brute force and land grabs at one point in history or another.

However, he is interested in the perhaps utter bad faith and awkwardness behind what could easily be described as a surreptitious underwater land grab, not that he sees any disproportionate moral issue in it, but he is curious to learn how, in the future, the issue will be diplomatically resolved with those nations that are, or will be, understandably at odds with the grab.

In case any ever chose to take forceful action in international waters, he wonders whether the actors would be seen again as acting irresponsibly and without the slightest trace of prior provocation whatsoever, and in which way the United States may as usual invoke in the dispute the virtues of Democracy, the Free World, and the Rules Based Order.

The author repeats again the words of Benjamin Franklin:

"So convenient a thing is it to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."