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Friendship in International Treaties
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This chapter provides, first, a brief history of friendship treaties, followed by an overview of a range of treaties that include in their title the concepts of friendship or amity viewed according to geographical context. The ‘great’ powers which have entered into such treaties most prolifically are the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and China. Other countries are covered regionally: Western Europe, Africa, the Asia Pacific and South America.

While there are gaps in the material available in the English language, and more work is needed to explore linguistic and semantic interpretations, it is still possible to identify trends in the uses of friendship treaties by different nation-states that point to the potential for misunderstandings related to the intent of the signatories to the treaties. Treaties named as ‘friendship treaties’ seem to have been used instrumentally and rhetorically by the more powerful nations. However, it is clear that for some non-Western cultures, friendship treaties carry significant normative meaning.

The history of friendship treaties

The terms ‘peace’ and ‘friendship’ have often been used together or interchangeably for treaties, but in the main, peace treaties signal an end to hostilities, whereas friendship treaties have been used, mostly by the major powers, to negotiate over economic resources, territorial integrity, access to harbours, trading lanes, and fisheries, as well as for reasons of security.

There was a distinction made between friendship treaties and other sorts of treaties in the Greek and Roman politics of antiquity (Bederman, 2001; Roshchin, 2006; Digeser, 2008). Between 230 and 130 BCE in the
Ancient Near East, the great kings of the day devised a system of diplomacy and trade by establishing friendships, or brotherhoods, to enable ambassadors and others to travel safely to each other’s countries and to exchange goods (Podany, 2010).

Roshchin (2006, p. 601) refers to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as ‘a cornerstone moment in the history of the concept of friendship’. The modern use of treaties in International Relations (IR) is usually traced back to the treaties of Westphalia (1648) that used the concepts of territorial sovereignty and associated ideas of peace and friendship. The British and French used peace and friendship treaties signed with first nations people of North America in the early eighteenth century, and some of these were incorporated into the Canadian Constitution of 1982. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1778 with France marked the first treaty signed by the United States (Devere et al., 2011, p. 54). Numerous treaties were signed between Pacific island nations and France, Germany, Britain, and the United States throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century (Devere et al., 2011).

Throughout the twentieth century, friendship treaties have been used in particular for agreements between Eastern bloc countries and also between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Friendship treaties have also signalled an independent relationship with emerging states.

**The special friends of the great powers**

Bilateral relationships with the major world powers are often presented as friendships or special, or in some way exclusive, relationships. Much of the literature on friendship treaties is in the form of description and analysis of single bilateral treaties. The major powers that have been most involved in the use of treaties of friendship with other nation states are the USSR, the United States, Britain and China.¹

**USSR**

The Soviet Union (and later the Russian Federation) has signed more treaties of friendship than any other state (approximately 55 friendship treaties), with several states having more than one friendship treaty with the USSR. According to Roshchin (2011), the Soviet Union has used friendship as a ‘rhetorical diplomatic instrument’. He suggests that while Soviet internationalist rhetoric emphasised ‘the romanticized ethical aspects of friendship to achieve more unity and political homogeneity within the socialist international community’, in public