



ICAS MARITIME AFFAIRS HANDBILL

April 26, 2022

Volume 1, Issue 3

Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

[1] Climate Change and Blue Carbon Economy [1]

[Climate Change: China's tree breeders are coming up with a business model to make money while doing right by the environment](#)

April 24 - *Yahoo Finance*

[China]

Inspired by a “breakthrough” scientific research study led by Beijing Forestry University researchers and released in the international journal *Cell* late in 2021, pine tree breeders in China’s Jiangxi province are now working with the study’s researchers to augment the development of forestry as carbon sinks. The work is also encouraged by Chinese President Xi Jinping’s pledge for emissions to peak prior to 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

[Carnival Stakes Claim As First Line To Employ Bio-Digesters Fleetwide](#)

April 24 - *Travel Pulse Canada*

[Global, United States]

Carnival Cruise Line announced that it had installed more than 200 bio-digesters across its fleet of 23 ships, becoming the first major cruise line to apply bio-digesters across its entire operation. A bio-digester is an “enclosed container that converts food waste into liquid at an accelerated rate—breaking down 99% of the food put into it”. By using bio-digesters, ships can commit to only discharging processed food waste in the form of a “fine, silt-like” product.

[Oceans conference comes up with \\$16b in pledges to safeguard marine health](#)

April 15 - *Mongabay*

[Pacific, Global]

On April 13-14, the 7th Our Ocean Conference, co-sponsored by the U.S. government, was held in Palau. Representatives from governments, civil society groups, the private sector, and other

organizations gathered and made 410 commitments worth more than \$16 billion towards protecting and improving the health and productivity of the ocean. The annual event was first held in 2014, inaugurated by then-Secretary of State John Kerry, who is now the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

[Crowley and Shell Aim to Advance Decarbonization in Maritime](#)

April 12 - PR Newswire

[United States]

Crowley and Shell, a privately held, U.S.-owned and -operated maritime, energy and logistics solutions company serving commercial and government sectors, demonstrated their commitment to decarbonization by supporting alternative energy solutions for the future of shoreside and terminal operations. This new memorandum of understanding follows an ongoing joint project designed to provide lower-carbon fuel solutions through constructing the largest LNG bunker barge on the U.S. East Coast.

[How much blue carbon does Seychelles have? Local experts work on monitoring and awareness](#)

April 11 - Seychelles News Agency

[Indian Ocean]

Local Seychelles expert Ameer Ebrahim believes that counting the amount of blue carbon that the Seychelles possesses is the key to gaining international funding and “help put Seychelles on a global map”. He has been heading a project, known as the Roadmap to Blue Carbon Opportunities in Seychelles, that is being carried out jointly by the James Michel Foundation, Australia’s Deakin University and Seychelles’ climate change ministry. Funding for the project is being financed by a grant through the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust.

[Thai national parks ban single-use plastics, Styrofoam items](#)

April 6 - Channel News Asia

[South Asia]

The Thai Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation announced a new ban on Styrofoam packing and single-use plastics in national parks. The ban is partially rooted in the surge for takeaway food due to the coronavirus pandemic which only worsened the polluted state of Thailand’s coastal waters. In 2020, Thailand outlawed the sale of single-use plastic bags at supermarkets and department stores but they are still used in street vending and smaller retailers.

[Singapore Joins Global Initiative to Create Green Shipping Corridors](#)

April 4 - *The Maritime Executive*

[South Asia, Global]

At the opening of Singapore Maritime Week 2022, Singapore officials explained several new initiatives that they will be taking to support decarbonization and make Singapore a 'green shipping corridor'. While announcing that Singapore will join the Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors, among other initiatives, Singapore's Minister of Transport S. Iswaran summarized: "Looking ahead decarbonization is a major challenge for the maritime industry. We must act".

[Comcast Marks Step Toward Carbon Neutral Goal with 250 MW Solar Agreement](#)

March 31 - Comcast

[United States]

Major U.S. telecommunications company Comcast announced an agreement to purchase 250 megawatts of solar electricity from Constellation, which they say will power about 12 percent of its operations in the United States with "clean, renewable energy". Linked to their ongoing Blue Sky Solar Project currently in development in Illinois, Comcast believes this agreement will reduce carbon dioxide emissions associated by nearly 360,000 metric tons each year.

[Mitsui O.S.K to launch ocean thermal power plant in 2025](#)

March 29 - *Nikkei Asia*

[East Asia]

Japan marine transport company Mitsui O.S.K. Lines has announced plans to construct a large-scale facility that utilizes ocean thermal energy conversion technology, harnessing power produced by the difference in temperatures at the surface of the sea and in deep water. The technology employs liquid ammonia, pressure changes, steam and evaporation. The estimated price of the facility, hoped to be completed by 2025, is several billion yen.

[2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

[Kenya names envoy for blue economy](#)

April 22 - *The EastAfrican*

[Africa]

On April 22, Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet announced a newly established position in the Kenyan government, Special Envoy for Maritime and Blue Economy Affairs, which is dedicated to policy development regarding maritime resources, among other issues. Nancy Karigithu, Principal Secretary in Kenya's State Department for Shipping and Maritime in the Ministry of

Transport, Infrastructure, Housing, Urban Development and Public Works, will be the first to take on this position.

[White House Plans to Ban All Russian Ships from American Ports](#)

April 21 - *The Maritime Executive*

[United States, Russia]

On April 21, U.S. President Joe Biden announced plans to ban all ships that sail under the Russian flag or that are owned or operated by a Russian entity from American ports, indicating an important symbolic message to isolate the Russian economy in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

[China's Shanghai lockdowns have California ports bracing for shipping chaos, supply-chain 'hiccups'](#)

April 18 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[China, United States, Global]

The renewed lockdowns in Shanghai from another breakout of COVID-19 have heavily disrupted the world's largest container port, inevitably impacting worldwide shipping and likely contributing to global inflation. Many of California's ports, which were already dealing with backed-up ships prior to this new lockdown, are struggling to review their options. Meanwhile, observers are questioning the wisdom of such a high percentage of global trade relying so heavily on a single port.

[Belgian ports stop servicing Russian-flagged ships](#)

April 17 - *Ukrinform*

[Europe, Russia]

Starting on April 17, the Belgian government announced that all national seaports will suspend service to commercial vessels flying a Russian flag. There are a select few exemptions to this new rule, which applies to ships carrying military and/or civil goods. The adjustment is in line with the fifth set of sanctions imposed by the European Union regarding Russia's conflict with Ukraine.

[Irish ports to deny entry to Russian vessels within days in line with latest EU sanctions](#)

April 12 - *Irish Mirror*

[Europe, Russia]

Starting on April 17, with a small number of exceptions, all ships, yachts and recreational crafts registered under the flag of Russia, as well as any who have changed registration from Russia since February 24, 2022, will be denied entry to Ireland's ports. The announcement is in line

with a newly established set of sanctions by the European Union regarding Russia's conflict with Ukraine.

[Oregon invests in research to understand its changing ocean coast](#)

April 10 - KDRV

[United States]

State leaders in Oregon have announced over \$1 million in new investments for ocean research dedicated to better understanding and monitoring changes in the ocean. The funding, announced by the Oregon Ocean Science Trust, originates from a 2021 law that set aside funds to address ocean acidification and hypoxia, which are seen as threats to both Oregon's economy and its ecosystems.

[Shipping bankers fear greenfield shipyards, inflation and interest rates](#)

April 5 - *Seatrade Maritime News*

[Global]

While speaking at the Capital Link Singapore Maritime Forum as part of Singapore Maritime Week 2022, experts in ship finance expressed shared concerns about how geopolitical uncertainties, environmental pressures and an inflationary market could soon negatively impact shipping finance. The panel agreed that "business agility" and "cash balance discipline" are the methods to push through the inflationary period that could soon be coming to the shipping sector.

[Experts warn Black Sea mines pose serious maritime threat](#)

April 4 - Hellenic Shipping Network

[Eastern Europe]

As part of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, both sides have accused the other of laying the naval sea anchor mines that were recently found in the Black Sea, which inevitably disrupted regional shipping. Many shipping companies are increasingly under pressure due to this and other disruptions from the conflict in Ukraine. The German Shipowners' Association estimates at least 60 international cargo ships are still stuck in Ukrainian ports, and global shipowner associations have expressed their shared deep concerns; both about physical safety and technical conflicts with insurance companies over damages caused by war.

[Bipartisan bill to address supply chain kinks moves closer to the president's desk](#)

April 1 - NPR

[United States]

The U.S. Ocean Shipping Reform Act, which would work to prioritize shipping containers with American-made goods over those “exporting air” at U.S. ports, was unanimously approved by the Senate. Among other factors, the pandemic has resulted in long wait times and increased costs in supply chains at ports; costs which place heavy stress on business and will likely be passed onto consumers. The bill, whose new rules will still take months to finalize, is designed to “level the playing field” and “make [operations] more fair and transparent”. The bill will now be sent back to the House for final approval before it is sent to the President’s desk.

[FMC commissioner red-flags Congress on China’s container monopoly](#)

March 30 - *Freight Waves*

[United States]

Federal Maritime Commissioner Carl Bentzel has finally released to the public a yearlong investigation into China’s monopoly over ocean container production, which, among other notes, heavily cautions “complete reliance” on Chinese container manufacturing. As Bentzel, who notes his report is not an official FMC publication, explains, Chinese companies control roughly 95% of the global container manufacturing market, which Beijing can subsequently suppress. “The fact that the PRC controls an industry that has a near de facto worldwide monopoly in the production of shipping containers should be deeply concerning”, he summarizes.

[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]

[UN top court raps Colombia over sea row with Nicaragua](#)

April 22 - *Expatica*

[South America, Global]

The International Court of Justice, the United Nation’s top court, has officially ordered the Colombian navy to halt its interference into Nicaraguan waters, finding that “by interfering with fishing and marine research activities of Nicaraguan-flagged vessels...in Nicaragua’s exclusive economic zone...Colombia has violated Nicaragua’s sovereign rights and jurisdiction” and “must immediately cease” such conduct. Though the vote, with nine in favor and six against, marks a significant moment in the longstanding legal battle over maritime borders between the two countries, it only sparked continued verbal disputes. Colombia’s representative believes “the ruling is mainly in favor of Colombia” and, in an address to the nation that night, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega demanded Colombia “abide by the ruling”.

[A gold rush in the deep sea raises questions about the authority charged with protecting it](#)

April 19 - *Los Angeles Times*

[United States]

Michael Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), appeared in a promotional mining video about harvesting minerals from the ocean floor for materials to use in electric car batteries. Observers view Lodge's participation as concerning and a conflict of interest, though Lodge notes in the 2018 video that the ISA itself had approved a 15-year "exploration" contract. Sandor Mulsow, a marine biologist and former ISA official, noted the issue that the ISA—a group born of a United Nations treaty but operating autonomously—"is not fit to regulate any activity in international waters".

[Oman 100th state to ratify the Maritime Labour Convention](#)

April 12 - *Seatrade Maritime News*

[Global]

Oman recently became the 100th nation to ratify the Maritime Labour Convention of 2006, which aims to "achieve decent work for seafarers". The law was originally accepted by International Labour Organisation member states in 2006 and has been amended four times since with the goal of making it "easier for countries to regulate and enforce consistent industry norms and standards, worldwide".

[MOWCA commends Nigeria's maritime anti-piracy law](#)

April 12 - *Ships & Ports*

[Africa]

While on an official visit with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, Dr. Paul Adalikwu, Secretary-General of the Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa (MOWCA), recommended Nigeria's anti-piracy law to other member countries of MOWCA. The referenced Nigerian law, known as the Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences (SPOMO) Act, was described by Adalikwu as effective and successful in redefining the fight against maritime crimes in Nigeria.

[Russia's maritime lawyers call for an end to war in Ukraine](#)

April 11 - *The Load Star*

[Eastern Europe, Russia]

The Russian Maritime Law Association has issued an official statement that calls for an "immediate termination of all military action" in Ukraine and highlights the importance of "reason and legal mechanisms" in resolving disputes.

[China ship 'shadowing' research vessel in WPS](#)

April 9 - *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

[South China Sea]

A Chinese Coast Guard ship was recorded as 'shadowing' a research vessel inside the exclusive economic zone in the West Philippine Sea. The month-long ongoing offshore survey, working on mapping faults and other potentially harmful geologic features in the area, is a joint project between the Philippines' UP National Institute of Geological Sciences and Taiwan's National Central University.

[Somali Police Force Inaugurates New Counter-Piracy Center](#)

April 8 - *Maritime Executive*

[Africa]

A new 'state-of-the-art' facility for the Somali Police Force Department of Coast Guard has now been completed to help enhance safety and security around Mogadishu Port, a major international shipping route with a long history of piracy. The \$3 million facility was funded by the European Union and developed by the United Nations.

['China's maritime activities in West Philippine Sea contrary to international law'](#)

April 4 - *Philippine Star*

[South China Sea]

In an interview on Cignal TV's One News, a maritime law expert from the University of the Philippines Jay Batongbacal explained that Chinese Coast Guard's activities in the West Philippine Sea, such as around the Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal, are "contrary to international law". His reasoning is rooted in the June 2016 ruling passed by The Hague that found no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to a "nine-dash line"; a ruling which China dismissed.

[Indonesia, Australia agree to eradicate illegal fishing](#)

April 1 - *Ankara*

[South Pacific]

At the annual meeting of the Indonesia - Australia Fisheries Surveillance Forum, the two governments agreed on several cooperative measures to address fishing violations by Indonesian fishermen in Australian waters. Described as a "combination of prevention and law enforcement approaches" involving deterrence instead of just repression, the agreement aims to improve the welfare of the fishermen in their own regions of origin.

[Worldwide fights over illegal fishing lead to armed conflict, deaths](#)

March 31 - Associated Press

[Asia]

Earlier this year, there were street protests in Sri Lanka's capital over the thousands of Indian boats that regularly sail into Sri Lankan waters and capture valuable resources to sell back in India. Reports say that fishermen have lost their lives over confrontations with foreign crews. The protestors demand that the Sri Lankan government take more action, though the navy has already reportedly used force to guard its fisheries.

[Extra protections for seafarers as government introduces new maritime laws](#)

March 30 - Government of the United Kingdom

[Europe]

The United Kingdom has announced new measures to ensure that all ferries in British waters are seaworthy and that all ferry operators are paid the national minimum wage. The actions come after the large transport company P&O Ferries fired 800 workers earlier this month. This issue also resulted in the UK calling on the International Maritime Organisation to hold an international summit discussing workers' rights at sea.

[4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

[Việt Nam, China finish joint sea patrol](#)

April 22 - EIN News

[South China Sea]

From April 19-22, the coast guards of Vietnam and China conducted a joint patrol in the waters along the demarcation line in the Gulf of Tonkin (also known as the Beibu Gulf), exchanging telephone communications and supervising fishing vessels. This is the fourth joint patrol of its kind conducted since a fishing cooperation agreement for this area expired in June 2020. The commander of the Vietnamese side regarded the joint patrol as successful and a contribution to promoting relations between the two sides.

[U.S. warns of response to any permanent China military presence in Solomons](#)

April 22 - Reuters [Paywall]

[South Pacific, United States]

On April 22, a senior-level U.S. delegation led by White House Indo-Pacific Coordinator Kurt Campbell met with the leaders of the Solomon Islands following the announcement of a bilateral security agreement between China and the Solomon Islands. The delegation brought warnings that the U.S. would "respond accordingly" to learning of a permanent Chinese military presence ever being there. The Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare reiterated

that there would be “no military base, no long-term presence, and no power projection capability” in the security deal signed with China.

[Remote island ramps up defenses as tensions rise between Japan and China](#)

April 19 - CNN

[Japan, East China Sea]

As witnessed by local fishermen, the number of Chinese Coast Guard ships patrolling around the Senkaku islands (known as Diaoyu islands by China)—an uninhabited island chain that China and Japan have been disputing over for more than a century—have been noticeably increasing, causing residents of Yonaguni Island to worry.

[Russian warship: Moskva sinks in Black Sea](#)

April 15 - BBC

[Eastern Europe]

After first denying its sinking, the Russian defense ministry announced that its 12,490-ton warship *Moskva* had sunk in the Black Sea. Kyiv states that the *Moskva* sank after being hit by missiles and that the ship’s captain was killed on board, a view that the United States also believes, but Moscow states that the ship sank from “fire” and “choppy seas” and that the captain died during an “explosion and fire on board”. The *Moskva* is the biggest Russian warship to be sunk in action since World War Two.

[Japan, US hold navy drills off Korea amid nuke test worry](#)

April 13 - ABC News

[Japan, United States]

For the first time in five years, U.S. and Japanese naval warships conducted a joint naval exercise in the Sea of Japan in the waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula. The exercise was led by the 7th Fleet’s USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) carrier strike group. This coincides with the 110th birth anniversary of North Korea’s late founder on April 15, a reason that some experts were concerned North Korea would use to conduct a major weapons test.

[Thai-Chinese Submarine Deal Faces Axe: PM Prayut](#)

April 7 - *The Diplomat*

[China, South Asia, Europe]

Thailand’s Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha announced that a national purchase of a Chinese S26T Yuan-class submarine, agreed to in 2017, might not come to pass after a German company announced it would not supply its propulsion system to the Chinese maker. Germany’s Motor

and Turbine Union company is reportedly barred from selling military items to China due to a European Union embargo set following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacres.

[China accuses US, UK and Australia of trying to build Asia-Pacific NATO](#)

April 6 - ABC News AU

[China, Asia-Pacific]

At a Chinese Foreign Ministry daily briefing, spokesperson Zhao Lijian said that AUKUS—the newly established Indo-Pacific alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States—would “undermine peace and stability” in the region. Lijian commented that their “ultimate goal is to create the Asia-Pacific version of NATO” and that the three countries should “abandon the Cold War mentality” fostered by the agreement.

[Foreign ship sinks in Mariupol after missile attacks, says flag registry](#)

April 5 - Reuters [Paywall]

[Eastern Europe]

Amidst the conflict in Ukraine, another foreign ship has reportedly been sunk as they are stuck at ports along the Black Sea. According to the vessel’s flag registry, a Dominica-flagged cargo ship sank after being “heavily fired upon by Russian armed forces” a day after it had been “intentionally” shelled twice. The cargo ship was believed to have been without any cargo onboard when it sank.

[Freedom of navigation operations rose in 2021, but fewer were near China](#)

April 4 - Navy Times

[Global, United States]

According to a 2021 report by the Pentagon, the U.S. military conducted more freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in fiscal year 2021 (37 FONOPs) compared to fiscal year 2020 (28 FONOPs). However, the number of U.S. military FONOPs against Chinese claims did not follow this upward trend. The U.S. only conducted five FONOPs against China’s territorial claims instead of seven as they did in the previous fiscal year.

[Congress Orders Pause on Second Frigate Shipyard Until Navy Proves Design](#)

March 30 - USNI News

[United States]

According to the new fiscal year 2022 appropriations bill passed by the U.S. Congress, the US Navy is required to resolve “past production challenges in managing costs, technical concurrency, design changes and schedule of lead ships of a class” prior to being awarded a contract for a second frigate shipyard. In general, the Navy’s recent and upcoming budget

requests have been facing significant changes and adaptations, part of which is to support the Navy's growing anti-submarine warfare force.

[Britain to boost military presence in Arctic](#)

March 29 - Reuters [Paywall]

[Arctic, Europe]

While speaking at a news conference in Norway during a NATO military exercise, Britain's defence minister Ben Wallace announced that Britain would commit militarily "to deeper integration, interoperability with [Arctic] countries such as Norway". Wallace also said that Britain has plans to "effectively, permanently, have a...Marine strike group...active in the Nordics". The statements come amid increasing concerns from NATO allies about Russia's activities and plans once the conflict in Ukraine comes to an end.

Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: The White House - "[Readout of Senior Administration Travel to Hawaii, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands](#)" [April 22]
- Government Release: European Commission - "[Green Deal: EU announces €1 billion worth of commitments to protect the ocean](#)" [April 14]
- Government Release: U.S. Department of State, Surangel S. Whippis Jr. and John Kerry - "[Opinion: To Solve Climate Change, Dive Into the Power of the Ocean](#)" [April 7]
- Government Release: Congressional Research Service - "[Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress](#)" [Updated April 1]
- Government Release: Congressional Research Service - "[Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress](#)" [Updated March 24]
- Government Release: The White House - "[Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore in Joint Press Conference](#)" [March 29]
- Report: [Global Island: Sustaining Taiwan's International Participation Amid Mounting Pressure from China](#) [Center for a New American Security - April 19]
- Opinion: "[On the South China Sea, Philippine presidential hopefuls tend to be naively nationalist or neocolonialist](#)" [South China Morning Post - April 20] [Paywall]
- Opinion: "[Without Icebreakers, Arctic Infrastructure Won't Matter](#)" [The Arctic Institute - April 12]
- Opinion: "[Biden's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is at a crossroads](#)" [The Hill - April 8]
- Opinion: "[Taiwan is not Ukraine, and China is not Russia – but Biden is still Biden](#)" [The Hill - April 5]
- Opinion: "[The Cyberlaw Podcast: All At Sea: Maritime Cybersecurity](#)" [Lawfare - April 5]

- Opinion: [“China’s Indo-Pacific fears show need for diplomacy”](#) [Financial Times - March 31] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“China Violates Philippine Sovereignty On Eve Of U.S. Military Exercise. Here’s How Washington Should Respond.”](#) [Forbes - March 30] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Why a tiny Pacific nation’s China deal is getting global attention”](#) [NBC News - April 24]
- Analysis: [“Polar Perspectives No. 12 | Norway’s Arctic Strategy – Steady As She Goes”](#) [Wilson Center - April 20]
- Analysis: [“Maritime Security and Development in the South-West Indian Ocean Region: Harnessing India’s Engagement with Small Island Developing States”](#) [Observer Research Foundation - April 12]
- Analysis: [“Japan Countering China’s Naval Build-up with Modern Fleet”](#) [USNI News - April 11]
- Analysis: [“The fund that could kick-start the UK’s blue impact economy”](#) [The Fish Site - April 5]
- Analysis: [“Carbon flow through inland and coastal waterways, implications for climate”](#) [Penn State University - April 5]
- Analysis: [“Could the Arctic be a Wedge Between Russia and China?”](#) [War on the Rocks - April 4]
- Analysis: [“‘Lawfare’ in the South China Sea disputes”](#) [Lowy Institute - April 1]
- Analysis: [“What Biden’s talks with Singapore’s Lee say about US Indo-Pacific focus”](#) [South China Morning Post - April 1] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“In the Shadow of Warships: How foreign companies help modernize China’s navy”](#) [Center for Strategic & International Studies - April]
- Analysis: [“What Is the Insured’s Duty under a Marine Insurance Policy? It Depends...”](#) [JDSupra - March 31]
- Analysis: [“With Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, Arctic Science Crumbles”](#) [Hakai Magazine - March 28]
- Analysis: [“With Eyes on Russia, the U.S. Military Prepares for an Arctic Future”](#) [The New York Times - March 27] [Paywall]

Events on the Maritime Domain



- On March 30, the Wilson Center held a virtual discussion on [“Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Opportunities for Peacebuilding in Transboundary River Basins: A Case Study of the Eastern Nile Basin.”](#)
- On March 31, South China Morning Post hosted its [Climate Change Hong Kong Summit](#), held in person in Hong Kong.
- On April 1, the Atlantic Council’s Cyber Statecraft Initiative held a virtual discussion on [“Protecting the global marine transportation system against cyber threats.”](#)

- From April 5-6, the Center for Strategic & International Studies and the US-Asia Business Council hosted the [US Indo-Pacific Conference](#), which included a number of keynote addresses from ambassadors and US government officials. The conference was webcasted live.
- On April 6, the Wilson Center hosted a discussion on [“Hong Kong’s Pathway to Carbon Neutrality.”](#) featuring Hong Kong’s Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing.
- From April 13-14, the Republic of Palau and the United States co-hosted the [7th Our Ocean Governance Conference](#) in Palau, which was available to watch through livestream. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry [gave prepared remarks](#) during the opening day.
- From April 26-28, the DSNAME Foundation and MARLOG will be holding the [7th World Maritime Technology Conference](#) in Denmark.
- From April 26-29, the American Bar Association will be holding the [2022 ABA International Law Section Annual Conference](#) at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. On April 28, there will be a panel on “Breaking the Ice Along the Ice Silk Road: The Implications of China’s Arctic Ambition”.
- On April 27, the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies will be holding a virtual engagement on [“The Arctic Region in the Indo-Pacific Context - Current Challenges and Implications of the Ukraine Crisis”](#).
- From May 19-20, the European Commission will be celebrating its annual [European Maritime Day](#) “during which Europe’s maritime community meet to network, discuss and outline joint action on maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy.”

Handbill Spotlight

Blue Carbon and Marine Protected Areas

Issue Background

First emerging as an acknowledged field of study as part of a 2009 United Nations Environment Programme report in recognition that the ocean plays a role as earth’s largest carbon sink, “blue carbon” has been recognized as a crucial, natural way to sequester carbon and conserve marine ecosystems in the long-term. ‘Blue carbon’ refers to the habitats, species, and processes that sequester carbon into deep sediments or deep waters in both coastal and open ocean ecosystems. [According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), coastal blue carbon ecosystems (which includes seagrasses, salt marshes, and mangroves) “store three-to-five times more carbon per unit area than tropical forests, and [sequester]carbon at a rate ten times greater than tropical forests”.

There is still debate as to what processes should constitute deep sea blue carbon, including its measurement, as sequestration does not occur *in situ* in open waters. However, the scientific community generally acknowledges that it is important not to limit blue carbon policy and management to coastal blue carbon alone, as deep-sea ecosystems do play an immense role in capturing carbon, though its full extent is not yet entirely understood. Without including blue

carbon resources as part of a country's carbon emissions stock, the nationally determined contributions of each signatory of the 2015 Paris Agreement will be inadequately measured. Thus, marine protected areas (MPA) have been discussed as necessary for the conservation of blue carbon resources in both coastal and deep-sea ecosystems. Numerous successful examples of MPAs within national borders garner some hope for increased implementation, yet outside national borders or in areas of disagreement, the situation is cloudier.

Recent Events

Fortunately, despite its relative nascency as an internationally recognized field of study, there has been significant multilateral cooperative efforts in addressing the need to better incorporate blue carbon as a necessary topic of discussion. 2019 marked the first year in which ocean issues were put at the front and center of climate action, which was marked by Chile hosting the first 'blue' Conference of the Parties (COP25) in Madrid, Spain. A delegation led by the United States, the United Kingdom, Chile, France, and Costa Rica elevated the role that MPAs can play in climate change mitigation and outlined the need for blue carbon to be incorporated into countries' nationally determined contributions. The result of these conversations led to the establishment of the [International Partnership on MPAs, Biodiversity and Climate Change](#). During COP26 in Glasgow, the Partnership further raised the profile of MPAs by providing expertise and lessons learned from the respective member countries.

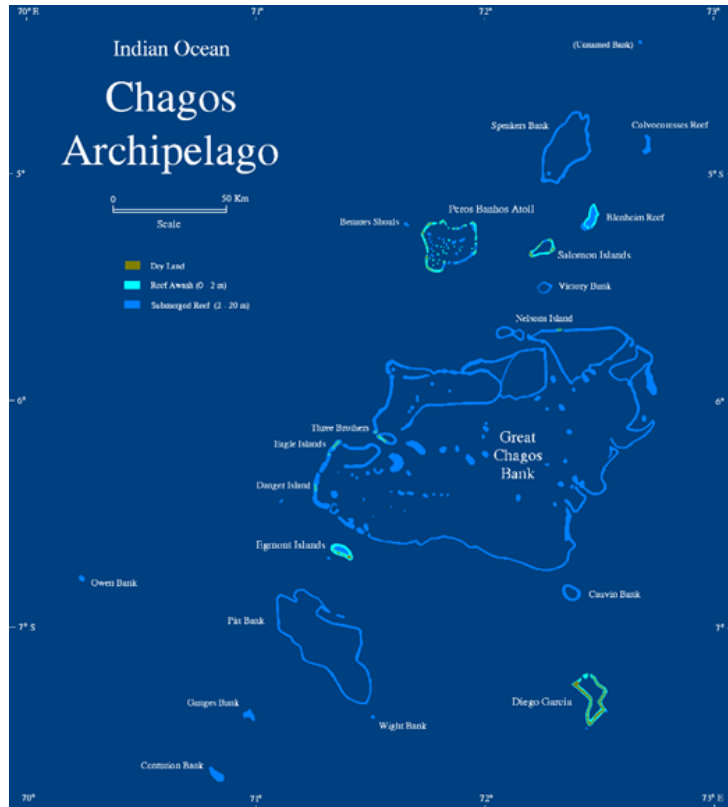
This new partnership has the potential to link numerous regions of the world together to develop best practices in conservation policy based on the best available science. Such collaborative efforts should be built out further so that Asia, Africa, and other regions can also participate and be involved. As a result of its efforts, in addition to other representative countries taking part in COP26, the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) that was adopted under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change now recognizes ocean-based actions as essential to addressing climate change. It also requires that an annual dialogue be held every May or June from 2022 onward to report back to the COP each year. Yet, the road to effective MPAs outside of national borders is fraught with danger, particularly in regions of continued dispute.

Keep In Mind¹

As maritime disputes take an overwhelming amount of bandwidth in the international relations and policy community, it is essential that the scientific community find ways to remain a prominent part of the conversation. With intensifying situations in regions like the South China Sea, the scientific community has an opportunity to play a mitigating role. However, extreme caution must be taken. Even environmental science and conservation efforts can be co-opted to serve political interests at the expense of actual progress. Unilaterally declaring MPAs have the potential to exacerbate marine conflicts rather than solve them.

¹ Image Source: Map of the Chagos Archipelago, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

Take the case of the Chagos Archipelago. On April 1, 2010, the United Kingdom unilaterally established an MPA around the Chagos Archipelago, which extended 200 nautical miles from its baselines and covered an area of half a million square kilometers. The archipelago, which has been the subject of a decades-long sovereignty dispute between the UK and Mauritius, has also housed a joint UK/US Naval base on its largest island of Diego Garcia since the early 1970s. As a result of the MPA declaration, the Mauritian government launched an arbitral tribunal with the Hague which [ruled against the UK in 2015](#), arguing that its establishment violated international law as set out by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Even further, it was discovered, according to [Wikileaks CableGate documents](#), that the UK had established this MPA for political reasons in order to prevent the archipelago's former inhabitants from being able to return. As of 2021, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea concluded that the UK has no legal sovereignty over the Islands and should return them to Mauritius—[a position that the UK rejects to this day](#).



Although this is only one such high profile example, incidents such as this serve to greenwash and undermine international trust, thus ruining the potential effectiveness that MPAs could achieve through conservation of their blue carbon resources. Countries will be less likely to apply MPAs as a potential mechanism to not only achieve carbon emission goals, but potentially shelving tensions in highly disputed waters like the South China Sea. However, if blue carbon resources are to be adequately conserved in both coastal and open sea ecosystems, as well as applied to the nationally determined contributions of Paris Agreement signatories, MPAs must be negotiated through bilateral or multilateral agreements. Otherwise, MPAs will simply become another mechanism for a state to impose its claims in contested waters. This is the great potential danger that is at the brink of irreversibly passing into common custom if the issue is not given enough attention.

This issue's Spotlight was written by Matt Geraci, ICAS Research Associate & Manager, Blue Carbon & Climate Change Program.

ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

— MAP Commentary —

The South Pacific Ocean: Another battleground for China-US competition?

By Nong Hong

April 21, 2022

In February, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Fiji, a major power in the South Pacific, marking the first such visit in four decades. Analysts see Blinken's visit as being motivated by a desire for the US to strengthen its presence in the region to match the growing influence of China.

Interestingly, during the period of Blinken's visit, a fleet of Chinese naval vessels was sailing into Tonga to deliver tsunami relief supplies. With China's growing interest and presence in the South Pacific Ocean, and signs that the US is unveiling new strategies to better engage with the South Pacific nations, will the South Pacific Ocean become a major strategic battleground along the lines of the South China Sea, or will enough common interests facilitate cooperation?

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