



ICAS MARITIME AFFAIRS HANDBILL

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Volume 1, Issue 4

Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

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

[‘Time running out’: US, Germany intensify climate change fight](#)

May 29 - Al Jazeera

[United States, Europe]

On May 27, the United States and Germany signed an agreement to jointly develop and deploy green technologies and establish standards that will accelerate the transition to clean energy; especially those related to offshore wind power, hydrogen and zero-emissions vehicles. The collaboration is part of a pledge to support ambitious climate policies and energy security initiatives around the world.

[Safeguarding our planet and people: A call for climate action at Davos 2022](#)

May 24 - World Economic Forum

[Global]

The United States’ and China’s Special Envoys for Climate Change, John Kerry and Xie Zhenhua, both spoke at the recent World Economic Forum’s 2022 Annual Meeting (better known as Davos 2022). Both parties emphasized that climate action is now “is about action” rather than just words and that it is now “critical” for world leaders to take radical action to avoid climate catastrophe.

[World’s oceans at most acidic level in 26,000 years, climate report warns](#)

May 18 - Reuters [Paywall]

[Global]

In an annual report titled “State of the Global Climate,” the World Meteorological Organization found that the world’s ocean has reached record warmth and acidity levels in the last year. Selwin Hart, the United Nations’ Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Climate Action,

criticized “many major economies” for stepping back on climate-related commitments due to other recent conflicts and warned that the “many choices” that are being made could “lock in a high-carbon, high-polluting future.”

[Japan to launch first exchange for carbon emissions trading](#)

May 13 - *Nikkei Asia* [Paywall]

[East Asia]

Japan Exchange Group (JPX) and Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) announced plans to establish the country’s first market for carbon dioxide emissions trading. According to follow-up reports, the new market will be set up inside the Tokyo Stock Exchange and start pilot operations this September, with the goal to begin full-scale operations in April 2023.

[Baker proposes \\$3.5 billion bill that could make Massachusetts the leader in offshore wind](#)

May 10 - *Cape Cod Times*

[United States]

At a joint meeting at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and other state officials discussed a \$3.5 billion bill, part of which specifically focuses on clean energy investments such as offshore wind development. “The big goal here”, the governor noted in a public speech to the Academy, “is to make sure we don’t miss the opportunity to be a national and, in some ways, a global leader in offshore wind”.

[Growing African mangrove forests aim to combat climate woes](#)

May 6 - *AP News*

[Africa]

In recent months, multiple African nations, including Kenya, Madagascar, Gambia, Senegal and Mozambique, have started investing in large scale mangrove restoration initiatives in an attempt to protect coastal communities from climate change. Mozambique’s project, announced in February, is touted as the world’s largest coastal or marine ecosystem carbon storage project with hopes to turn 457,100 acres of its land into a forest that could capture up to 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide.

China replaces fuel subsidies with responsible fishing payments

May 4 - *China Dialogue Ocean*

[China]

Governments of the Shandong and Fujian provinces in China announced that they will replace traditional fishing fuel subsidies with new “fishery stewardship” subsidies to incentivize responsible and sustainable fishing. Starting this year, subsidies will be provided for compliance with closed seasons, which were installed to protect fish stocks, and for other responsible fishing behaviors.

Top Sea Polluters Beg for Climate Rules That No Rival Can Avoid

May 4 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[Global]

The ocean shipping industry, one of the world’s major sources of carbon emissions, is calling on the International Maritime Organization to develop a “global, enforceable multilateral regulation to avoid race to the bottom” regarding emission of greenhouse gas. According to an United Nations official, the industry said they “don’t really mind that level of regulation” so long as regulations are the “same for everybody”.

New state bill could require ‘blue carbon’ to offset coastal development

May 2 - *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

[United States]

In an attempt to protect the lengthy California state coastline, some of the state leaders have proposed Assembly Bill 2593, which would require projects on public lands to “compensate for greenhouse gas emissions by building or contributing to blue carbon projects”. While similar compensation laws already exist for the state, this bill would specifically add blue carbon mitigation to the list of requirements when approving coastal permits.

Pew Launches Blue Carbon Network to Help States Address Climate Change

April 29 - *Pew Trusts*

[United States]

Pew Charitable Trusts has officially launched its Blue Carbon Network alongside its partners, which houses the following goals: “Provide experts and state officials with opportunities to discuss blue carbon science”; “Connect local, state, and national partners to share information and best practices”; and “Troubleshoot challenges in coastal habitat data and mapping”.

[China's 38th Antarctic expedition ends, 2 icebreakers back in Shanghai](#)

April 27 - CGTN

[China, The Antarctic]

China's research icebreakers *Xuelong* and *Xuelong 2* successfully completed their expedition to the Antarctic, returning to Shanghai. The joint expedition lasted 174 and 168 days, respectively. While in the Antarctic, the 255 researchers conducted hydrological, meteorological and environmental investigations and cooperated on replenishment with other nations with "fruitful results".

[Mekong River's water level in red alert due to hydroelectric dams](#)

April 26 - Viet Nam News

[East Asia]

The Mekong Dam Monitoring group reported that water levels of the Mekong River have been on red alert status since early April 2022. The abnormal changes are reportedly caused by the discharge from hydroelectric dams, which could cause serious, permanent damage to the downstream fisheries, wetlands, and communities that rely on the Mekong River.

[2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

[Taiwanese shipping industry facing serious crew shortages](#)

May 30 - Hellenic Shipping News

[China, Global]

Due to both the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, Taiwan's shipping companies are facing serious staffing shortages. The situation was dire enough for seven Taiwanese shipping companies to attend a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony, held by the Maritime Port Bureau, for a sea crew incubation project and for these companies' leaders to publicly advertise the merits of the jobs, saying shipping is now a "maritime high-tech industry".

[IMO Breaks Deadlock on Carbon Pricing for Shipping](#)

May 27 - The Maritime Executive

[Global]

During the most recent meeting of the International Maritime Organization Intersessional Working Group, countries reached an agreement on pricing shipping greenhouse gas emissions "as part of a basket of mid-term measures". The agreement, which comes after more than a decade of discussions, is seen as a "clear and positive" "obvious next step" for the Organization that invites future, similar measures to the table.

[Long Beach Port Chief Doesn't See Labor Deal by July 1 Deadline](#)

May 23 - *qCaptain*

[United States]

The head of the Long Beach port in California does not project successful talks for a new labor contract for dockworkers despite a previously set deadline being set for July 1. He is optimistic that the two parties “will resolve their differences within a reasonable time” but by “a couple of months thereafter” instead of the initial July 1 deadline. The parties last discussed labor contracts in 2014, which coincided with a series of slowdowns across West Coast ports.

[European Maritime Day 2022: Sustainable blue economy for green recovery](#)

May 19 - European Commission

[Europe]

Co-hosted by the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius, the European Maritime Day (EMD) conference took place in Ravenna, Italy in late May. The conference aimed to achieve a sustainable blue economy to green recovery by enhancing the maritime dimension of the economy.

[Predictions of Supply Chain "Chaos" as Shanghai Resumes Shipping](#)

May 18 - *The Maritime Executive*

[China, Global]

A new survey conducted by logistics platform Container xChange forecasts that the 2022 summer peak season cargo surge “will be even more chaotic” than the previous year’s peak season. Most of the predictions are rooted in the eight-week lockdown at Shanghai ports due to China’s zero-tolerance COVID-19 policy that left stacks of export cargo waiting to be shipped as the industry enters its typical peak season.

[Record diesel prices impact Connecticut's maritime economy](#)

May 13 - FOX61

[United States]

Boaters and shipping companies are now facing record levels in diesel fuel prices, with experts projecting that prices will only continue to increase. In the last year, the price of diesel fuel has virtually doubled from \$3.20 to \$6.36 per gallon, with some industry workers converting boats into dockside condos or even comparing the situation to the levels seen in the World War II era.

[FreightWaves releases SONAR Container Atlas to measure global maritime volumes](#)

May 10 - FreightWaves

[Global]

Supply chain monitoring company FreightWaves has announced the release of its SONAR Container Atlas; its newest tool in measuring and forecasting global maritime volumes. The Atlas, still in beta testing, measures shipping activity in three ways: 1) Ocean container spot rates, 2) Maritime supply-and-demand analytics, and 3) Import manifest data.

[U.S. Department of Commerce Invests \\$7 Million to Make Critical Improvements to Maritime Infrastructure in Port Townsend, Washington](#)

May 10 - U.S. Economic Development Administration

[United States]

On May 10, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced that the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration has awarded a \$7 million grant to the Port of Port Townsend in Washington in order to help replace the Point Hudson Breakwaters, which was previously damaged by storms. In addition to enhancing social and environmental resiliency, Secretary Raimondo explains, the replacement of the breakwaters will protect "a federally authorized channel vital to both regional commerce and national defense."

[Maersk Reports Record Quarter While Cautioning of "Warning Clouds"](#)

May 4 - *The Maritime Executive*

[Global]

In the wake of setting record quarter earnings in the first part of 2022, shipping and logistics giant A.P. Moller-Maersk released notes of caution over the current market for the remainder of the year. Reasons for the caution and uncertainties included rising operating costs, global inflation, and "situations with Russia and China" such as the global supply chain pressure resulting from China's COVID-19 restrictions.

[The Republic of the Marshall Islands becomes first Pacific island nation to publish fishing activity to Global Fishing Watch Map](#)

April 27 - *Global Fishing Watch*

[South Pacific]

On April 14, the Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce for the Republic of the Marshall Islands John Silk announced the decision to share vessel monitoring data on Global Fishing Watch's public map at the seventh Our Oceans Conference. The decision, he explained, is aimed at bolstering ocean governance and promoting global compliance.

[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]

PH Coast Guard meets with Japanese counterparts to strengthen cooperation

May 28 - Manila Bulletin

[East Asia, South Asia]

On May 24, top officials of the Philippine and Japanese coast guards met in Tokyo to “strengthen cooperation and interoperability in enforcing maritime laws”. An official press release by the Philippine Coast Guard said it was the first bilateral meeting between the two parties and explained the meeting “focused on countering piracy, capacity building...and maritime security operations”.

Global agreement on plastics on the agenda at UNEP meeting in Seychelles

May 25 - Seychelles News Agency

[South Pacific]

From May 25-28, the United Nations Environment Programme’s Regional Seas Strategic Directions programme held its annual meeting in the Seychelles. The meeting focused on developing ways to track regional and global targets and commitments across a three-year framework, such as the UN’s global agreement on plastics and the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is about global ocean conservation.

Report highlights impact of changes in Antarctica

May 24 - Phys.org

[Antarctic]

A newly published report by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, led by scientists from Britain and Australia, focuses on tracking the impacts of climate change in the Antarctic. Among other conclusions, the report shows that ice sheets in the region are already melting and the Southern Ocean is warming; changes that are predicted to have both regional and global impacts including but not limited to sea level rise. The report was published specifically for the Parties to the Antarctic Treaty who are gathering in Berlin for their 44th Annual Meeting.

China Maritime Law Association: the revision of maritime law needs to properly handle disputes and respond to the demands of the industry

May 19 - *EqualOcean*

[China]

In May, the 10th International Symposium on Maritime Law was held in Ningbo, China. At the seminar, Wei Dong, Vice President of the China Maritime Law Association and a director at the Ministry of Transport, noted the demands of the industry to amend laws and, when amending, disputes and contradictions need to be properly handled.

Chinese Spy Ship Did Not Breach Sea Law, Australia Says

May 14 - *Voice of America*

[China, Australia, South Pacific]

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the Chinese intelligence ship tracking off Australia's west coast within 50 nautical miles of a sensitive defense facility in the prior week did not breach international maritime law. In response, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian stated that China always abides by international law.

Seattle gives \$1 million to keep Maritime Academy afloat for another school year

May 13 - *Seattle Times*

[United States]

Seattle's City Councilmember Tammy Morales announced the Council would give \$1 million to keep the Seattle Maritime Academy operational. The Academy, open since 1968, is a program that trains students for fields including deep-sea sailing, commercial fishing and ferry transportation, marking the importance of critical technical maritime education.

First Woman Set to Lead Biden Maritime Agency, Oversee Port Aid

May 10 - *Bloomberg Government*

[United States]

On May 10, Ann Phillips was elected (75-22) as the first woman to lead the Maritime Administration. Meanwhile, the maritime industry faces complaints about supply chain backups and allegations of sexual assault in a maritime training program.

[U.S. to announce plans to battle illegal fishing in the Pacific](#)

May 9 - Reuters [Paywall]

[United States, Pacific Ocean]

U.S. Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell has revealed a decision to soon announce plans to better battle illegal fishing in the Pacific. The effort is specifically to combat China's vast fishing fleet in the region.

[US to Invite Pacific Leaders to White House, Increase Diplomatic Outreach](#)

May 3 - Voice of America

[United States, Pacific Ocean]

U.S. Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell announced the Biden administration's plans to strengthen diplomatic engagement in the Indo-Pacific region by inviting Pacific leaders to the White House. The announcement was made during Campbell's virtual address to a U.S.-New Zealand business summit.

[African Flag Registries Exploited by High-Risk Fishing Operators – New Report](#)

April 28 - African Business

[Africa, Global]

A newly released report by international maritime intelligence organization TMT and I.R. Consilium explores how foreign fishing operators are accessing and taking advantage of African flag ship registries for their fishing vessels with the goal of achieving legal impunity. It also explores the flaws in African flagging regimes that seem to invite this exploitation.

[World Court orders Colombia to cease activities in Nicaraguan maritime zone](#)

April 21 - Reuters [Paywall]

[South America, Global]

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Colombia must “immediately cease” conducting its patrolling and related activities in parts of the Caribbean that are within Nicaragua's exclusive economic zone. The ICJ ruled that Colombian activities in this area violated Nicaragua's sovereign rights and ordered Colombia to adjust a 2013 presidential decree establishing a zone around islands in the disputed area that was, the year before, judged not to belong to Colombia.

[4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

[China signs deal with Samoa during Pacific trip watched closely by U.S. officials](#)

May 28 - *United Press International*

[China, South Pacific]

During a regional tour in the South Pacific, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Samoan leaders signed an “economic and technical cooperation agreement” focused on “cooperation rather than...vicious competition”. As reported by local news, the agreement includes plans for a cultural arts center, a Samoa-China Friendship Park, and a police fingerprint laboratory. Before landing in Samoa, Wang Yi visited Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. With American Samoa just 40 miles east of Samoa, U.S. officials are paying attention to the visits to the region.

[China wants 10 Pacific nations to endorse sweeping agreement](#)

May 25 - *The Seattle Times*

[China, South Pacific]

According to a draft agreement obtained by *The Associated Press*, China wants 10 small Pacific nations to endorse a “game-changing” “Common Development Vision” agreement that covers a variety of “traditional and non-traditional security” issues ranging from security to fisheries. Concurrently, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and 20 other Chinese representatives began in-person visits to the region, with Wang set to visit seven regional countries in person.

[Chinese Carrier Strike Group Now Operating in East China Sea](#)

May 23 - *USNI News*

[China, East Asia]

China's Liaoning Carrier Strike Group is now operating in the East China Sea after two weeks of drills in the Pacific Ocean and the Philippine Sea, as reported by the Japanese Ministry of Defense. This strike group consists of eight ships: one aircraft carrier, five destroyers (one Type 055, three Type 052D, one Type 052C), one frigate (Type 054A) and one fast combat support ship (Type 901).

[China's PLA Navy sends destroyer and frigate on first escort mission, targeting pirates off Somalia](#)

May 19 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[Africa, China]

The People's Liberation Army Navy has sent three ships to serve their first escort mission in the Gulf of Aden and off the waters of Somalia. According to an official statement, the escort is

composed of the *Suzhou* (a Type 052D guided-missile destroyer), the *Nantong* (a guided-missile frigate), and the *Chaohu* (a supply ship) with two helicopters. The Type 052D, known to NATO as Luyang III-class, has advanced technological capabilities and is among the most modern of China's fleet.

[Australian Navy to host largest international exercise in its history](#)

May 16 - *Naval Today*

[South Pacific]

The Royal Australian Navy is set to conduct its largest international exercise in its history, with its leaders stressing the importance of collective and cooperative defense among neighbors. Exercise Kakadu, which began in 1993 with just four navies, has seen the involvement of 28 nations in the past 30 years.

[Chinese navy's biggest destroyer leads Yellow Sea combat drills seen to target smaller rivals](#)

May 16 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[Yellow Sea, East Asia]

According to a CCTV report, China's *Lhasa* recently conducted three days of air-defense, anti-ship and anti-submarine drills in the Yellow Sea alongside three Type 056A corvettes. The *Lhasa*, the second of two Chinese Type 055 stealth-guided missile destroyers, is the People's Liberation Army's most advanced warship of its kind and was declared combat ready in January of this year. It is regarded as the second most powerful destroyer in the world after the USS *Zumwalt*.

[Australia says Chinese spy ship has been hugging west coast](#)

May 13 - ABC News

[South Pacific]

Australian defense minister Peter Dutton said that a Chinese warship with spying capabilities was sighted about 250 nautical miles from Broome in Western Australia. The ship had already been tracked along the coastline throughout the week prior. "Its intention," Dutton said, "is to collect intelligence right along the coastline" on "military and intelligence installations". Dutton also noted that it was unprecedented for a Chinese warship to venture so far south.

[Great Wall of Naval Targets Discovered in Chinese Desert](#)

May 11 - USNI News

[China]

New satellite imagery taken by Maxar Technologies appears to show aircraft carrier targets in China's Taklamakan Desert. Analysts believe the images to be of People's Liberation Army testing sites for long-range ballistic missile tests; potentially for testing the ability to hit ships in port. A series of images taken since last December appear to show that a test missile successfully hit the ship replica, which was then quickly disassembled and is now gone.

[U.S. Cruiser Transits Taiwan Strait Days After Chinese Naval, Air Exercises](#)

May 10 - USNI News

[East Asia]

Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Port Royal (CG-73), homeported in Hawaii, conducted a "routine transit" of the Taiwan Strait through non-territorial waters "in accordance with international law". This was the second transit through the Taiwan Strait conducted by a US naval ship in the last two weeks. Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby commented on the passage during a press briefing, noting that the two transits should not necessarily be taken as signs of increased maritime activity around China.

[Taiwan says it cannot afford new U.S. anti-submarine helicopters](#)

May 5 - Al Jazeera

[East Asia, United States]

Taipei has announced it no longer has plans to purchase advanced anti-submarine helicopters from the United States. Taiwan had previously said it planned to purchase 12 MH-60R helicopters produced by Lockheed Martin Corp unit Sikrosky. Some local media said that the U.S. had rejected the sale, but Taiwanese Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng explained instead in parliament that the "price is too high" for Taiwan.

[Japanese warship, jets shadow PLA Navy strike group on western Pacific combat drills](#)

May 5 - South China Morning Post [Paywall]

[East Asia, West Pacific]

The Chinese navy aircraft carrier *Liaoning* strike group—which includes five destroyers, one frigate and one supply ship—carried out fighter jet combat drills in the waters south of Okinawa and east of Taiwan. The larger than usual strike group attracted attention from Tokyo who scrambled fighter patrol and surveillance jets in response. The Chinese navy said the group was on a "routine mission" for realistic combat training. The Japanese light carrier *Izumo* was dispatched nearby as well to follow and monitor the exercises.

[Russia says it fires cruise missiles from submarine, warns again on NATO arms shipments](#)

May 4 - Reuters [Paywall]
[Eastern Europe, Russia]

The Russian defense ministry published a video showing one of its submarines in the Black Sea firing two Kalibr cruise missiles at unspecified Ukrainian ground targets. Russia had previously said that this strike was not the first of its kind. The announcement was accompanied by a warning that Russia would seek to hit any shipments of NATO weapons sent to Ukraine.

Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: U.S. Department of Defense - [“Readout of the 10th Caribbean-United States Security Cooperation Dialogue”](#) [May 27]
- Government Release: The White House - [“Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders’ Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order”](#) [May 23]
- Government Release: Council of the European Union - [“Joint Statement EU-Japan Summit 2022”](#) [May 12]
- Government Release: Congressional Research Service - [Navy Large Unmanned Surface and Undersea Vehicles: Background and Issues for Congress](#) [Updated May 11]
- Government Release: Congressional Research Service - [U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress](#) [May 6]
- Government Release: Congressional Research Service - [Navy Constellation \(FFG-62\) Class Frigate Program: Background and Issues for Congress](#) [Updated May 11]
- Research Article: [“An evaluation of management effectiveness of China’s marine protected areas and implications of the 2018 Reform”](#) [Marine Policy - May 2022]
- Analysis: [“Three Rounds of Coercion in Philippine Waters”](#) [Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative - May 26]
- Analysis: [“Putin’s Black Sea blockade leaves millions facing global famine”](#) [Atlantic Council - May 18]
- Analysis: [“U.S. Navy gathers best destroyers in Japan to hunt Chinese submarines”](#) [Nikkei Asia - May 10]
- Analysis: [“Chinese bases in the Pacific: A reality check”](#) [The Interpreter - May 10]
- Analysis: [“Delhi Continues Strategic Investment in the Indian Ocean”](#) [Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative - May 9]
- Analysis: [“Sinpo South Shipyard Update”](#) [Beyond Parallel - May 2]
- Analysis: [“Sharper: Taiwan”](#) [Center for a New American Security - April 27]
- Analysis: [“Blue carbon offsets taking root”](#) [China Dialogue Ocean - April 26]
- Opinion: [“Better Cybersecurity at Sea Starts With the Crew”](#) [The Maritime Executive - May 29]

- Opinion: [“Managing fish stocks shared by nations must focus on the impacts of climate change”](#) [Canadian Manufacturing - May 27]
- Opinion: [“A New Maritime Advanced Research Project Agency Is Key To The Blue Economy”](#) [Forbes - May 26]
- Opinion: [“Tariffs on China Throw Shade on the U.S. Solar Industry”](#) [The Wall Street Journal - May 24]
- Opinion: [“China’s lockdowns haven’t greatly affected maritime shipping”](#) [MarketPlace - May 19]
- Opinion: [“The time is now for Vietnam’s Blue Economy”](#) [Asia Times - May 10]
- Opinion: [“The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea at 40”](#) [AsiaTimes - May 3]
- Opinion: [“We’re Thinking About the Indian Ocean All Wrong”](#) [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - May 2]
- Opinion: [“How Japan and Australia Can Keep the Indo-Pacific Free”](#) [National Interest - April 26]
- Podcast: CNA Talks: A National Security Podcast - [“China’s Polar Silk Road Through the Arctic”](#) [Center for Naval Analysis - April 27]

Events on the Maritime Domain



- On May 5, the Wilson Center Polar Institute held a virtual event on [Nordic Security Perspectives in the Arctic](#).
- On May 5, the Foreign Policy Research Institute Asia Program and the Wilson Center held a symposium on [Economic Security and Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific](#).
- On May 18, the Wilson Center Polar Institute held a virtual event on [Antarctic Diplomacy: Issues and Trends in 2022](#).
- On May 18, the Smart Maritime Network held their hybrid [Rotterdam Conference](#) where experts spoke on and debated the present and future of shipping, trade and digitalization.
- On May 31, the Wilson Center Asia Program is holding a virtual event on [The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and What It Means for the United States](#).
- On May 31, the Observer Research Foundation is holding a virtual feature event on [Blue Talks: Conservation and Development Imperatives for Blue Economy](#).
- Throughout May and June, the World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology will be holding a [variety of digital conferences around the world](#), each with a focus on specific disciplines and topical subjects. These conferences also happen regularly throughout the rest of the year and are open for submission.
- On June 7, the Center for Security & International Studies will be holding a virtual chat with Mike Wirth, chairman of the board at Chevron Corporation, on [Oil and Gas Majors in the Energy Transition](#).

Handbill Spotlight

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

Issue Background ¹

The [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) (UNCLOS) is an international treaty that establishes a legal framework for the sustainable development of the oceans and their natural resources. On November 1, 1967, Malta's Ambassador to the United Nations [Arvid Pardo](#) spoke of the devastation of the ocean caused by pollution, calling for an effective international regime over the seabed beyond a clearly defined national jurisdiction.

Following his urging, many also recognized the need for updating the freedom-of-the-seas doctrine, leading to the convening of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. The Conference was held in New York in 1973. It ended nine years later with the adoption of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with notable adjustments made concerning the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, fishing, and conservation of living resources on the high seas. To this day, this edition of UNCLOS remains the foremost legal framework for understanding, judging, addressing and resolving issues in the global maritime realm.

So far, UNCLOS has been ratified by [168 parties](#), including 167 states and the European Union. This latest Convention established three new institutions on the international maritime scene: the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority, and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Furthermore, among other adjustments made, the 1982 Convention defined a coastal nation's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as 200 nautical miles from the coast and territorial waters as twelve nautical miles from the coast; a legally recognized standard for countries to abide by.

Since its adoption, two additional instruments were concluded under the Convention: the 1994 [Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI](#) of UNCLOS and the 1995 [UN Fish Stocks Agreement](#). A [third treaty](#) under UNCLOS, one on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), is currently being negotiated in the Intergovernmental Conference convened under the auspices of the United Nations, as decided by the General Assembly in the 72nd session.



¹ Image Source: Logo of the 3rd UNCLOS Conference, UN Library, [Public Domain](#)

Recent Events

In 2022, UNCLOS approached the 40th anniversary of its adoption into law. To celebrate, on April 29, 2022 the United Nations General Assembly held a special session to mark the significance and successful outcomes of rules-based multilateralism by such an international legal framework.

At this [40th anniversary special session](#), multiple representatives from key maritime nations and international bodies [shared](#) their thoughts on UNCLOS and what it has accomplished over the decades. [Abdulla Shahid](#), President of the UN General Assembly, said the convention has “laid the foundation of our ocean governance, with the first single set of rules for ocean and seas.” Singaporean Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh, the former President of the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea, also lauded the Convention, calling it “a victory for international law and the rule of law and a victory for the peaceful settlement of disputes.” However, not all discussion was celebratory. Singapore’s Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan emphasized the limitations of UNCLOS as it still lacks ratification from the world’s premier maritime power—the United States. In addition, Balakrishnan pointed out how some countries unilaterally define some ambiguous terms to achieve their own ends, which can sully the Convention as an objective tool of law.

It is true that the U.S. is yet to ratify UNCLOS, but the need to do so is not being ignored outright in Washington. Just this past March, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the [America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science \(COMPETES\) Act of 2022](#), aiming to increase U.S. economic competitiveness with China. Notably, the bill included an amendment that stipulated it is in the nation’s best interest to ratify the UNCLOS formally.

Keep In Mind

In order to reach agreement among the exceptionally diverse interests of all its member states, during its development the writers of UNCLOS had to accept many compromises. Whenever negotiation proved impossible, they settled on ambiguity. For example, [Article 121 Regime of Islands](#) loosely defines an island as “a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide.” By not clarifying the legal standards on natural formation of islands as well as the characteristics of rocks, there is space for countries to argue for their own interests.

The Convention’s attempt to achieve a consensus is admirable and understandable. But over time these ambiguities have greatly undermined the legitimacy of the Convention itself. Some parties twist these ambiguities to their taste, causing some others to no longer take UNCLOS seriously. Take [the Arbitral Tribunal in the South China Sea Arbitration](#) between China and the Philippines in 2016 as an illustration. For three years, the Arbitration Tribunal set under Annex VII of UNCLOS debated over the legality of China’s “nine-dash line”, its claims to historic rights, the status of certain maritime features, and the legality of certain Chinese activities in the South China Sea. Although an award was unanimously issued under UNCLOS in July 2016, which was largely in the Philippines’ favor, China firmly and immediately [rejected](#) the ruling, based on its legal argument on the admissibility and jurisdiction of the Arbitration Tribunal.

As coastal states constantly feel threatened by foreign military activities in their EEZs over their national security and maritime environment, the increase of maritime crime also forced them to extend their control beyond the territorial sea. This, hence, creates a security dilemma as maritime powers are simultaneously concerned about the possible restrictions of their naval and air access and mobility caused by such extensions and have little faith in UNCLOS.

Regarding the role of UNCLOS in the China-U.S. maritime relations, controversy is also found. China has been accused of deliberately obscuring its maritime claims in the South China Sea by using terms not found in the UNCLOS, such as “adjacent waters” and “relevant waters.” And some countries keep demanding that China “clarify” the legal status of its [Nine-Dash Line](#) map. On the other hand, under both the [Trump and Biden administrations](#), the U.S. has aligned itself with the tribunal’s decision, objecting to China’s maritime claims in the South China Sea on the grounds that they violate international law. As described by the U.S. Department of State, [freedom of navigation operations \(FONOPs\)](#), one of the most frequently cited tenets of the 1982 Convention, were [designed](#) to “challenge coastal state maritime claims that unlawfully restrict navigation and overflight rights and freedoms and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms guaranteed in international law as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.” The U.S. frequently conducts FONOPs around China and elsewhere around the world and releases a [report](#) each year summarizing U.S. operations. Such denunciations and activities, however, reduce in credibility given that the United States has still not ratified UNCLOS despite having participated in its formulation.

With that being said, the existence of UNCLOS as a statute of international law is invaluable. In addition to regulating the sustainable development of the oceans and their natural resources, it serves an important role to maintain regional as well as global stability among nations. Although the Convention still contains ambiguity, opportunities to improve are still present. For example, more addendums could be made to address [indigenous peoples’ rights](#) and the [protection of underwater cultural heritage](#), which could potentially lead to increased collective efforts of its member states. Additionally, some experts have [argued](#) that UNCLOS can be a framework to establish stable and efficient international space law on issues such as the exploration and exploitation of natural resources. Its provisions on innocent passage also offer [a potential model](#) for resolving military use and potential conflict in space. Thus, while UNCLOS still lacks complete clarifications on some vital concepts and ratifications from powerful parties such as the United States, it excellently fulfills the role of an essential legal framework for understanding, judging, addressing and resolving issues in the global maritime realm while also offering possibilities for future interdisciplinary development in other fields of international law.

This issue’s Spotlight was written by Sylvia Hu, ICAS Research Assistant Intern.

ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

— ICAS BCCC Issue Brief —

Technology Solutions to Determine Maritime Zones: Applying High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and GIS to Demarcate Sovereignty and Sovereign Rights Claims

By Matt Geraci & Yilun Zhang

May 26, 2022

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sea-level rise threatens the environment of island countries disproportionately. It presents increasingly urgent political complications as they face an imminent need to record and submit international evidence to prove their existing baselines.
- Noticing the pressing need from dozens of island countries to produce evidence and records of maritime zones, scholars at the Institute for China-America Studies (ICAS) launched a special research project to explore technology solutions to this issue.
- Combining High-resolution satellite imagery (HRSI) with a Geographic Information System (GIS) for mapping baselines and maritime zones for small island developing countries provides a relatively low-cost way for governments to achieve this.
- Obtaining the most accurate high-resolution imagery will require a financial investment. Fortunately, these costs are far less expensive when compared to traditional methodologies of measuring maritime zones.
- The findings suggest that island countries could cooperate with non-profits, universities, and companies to borrow the know-how from the world's most advanced experts to significantly reduce the barriers to accessing these resources.
- Maritime zone demarcation methodologies stemming from satellite technologies provide cost-effective solutions and ought to be seriously explored. Without consideration of novel pathways, sea-level rise and climate change will force UNCLOS signatories to adapt to harsh realities with severe legal implications as their coastlines recede.

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— ICAS Commentary —

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

By Nong Hong

April 21, 2022

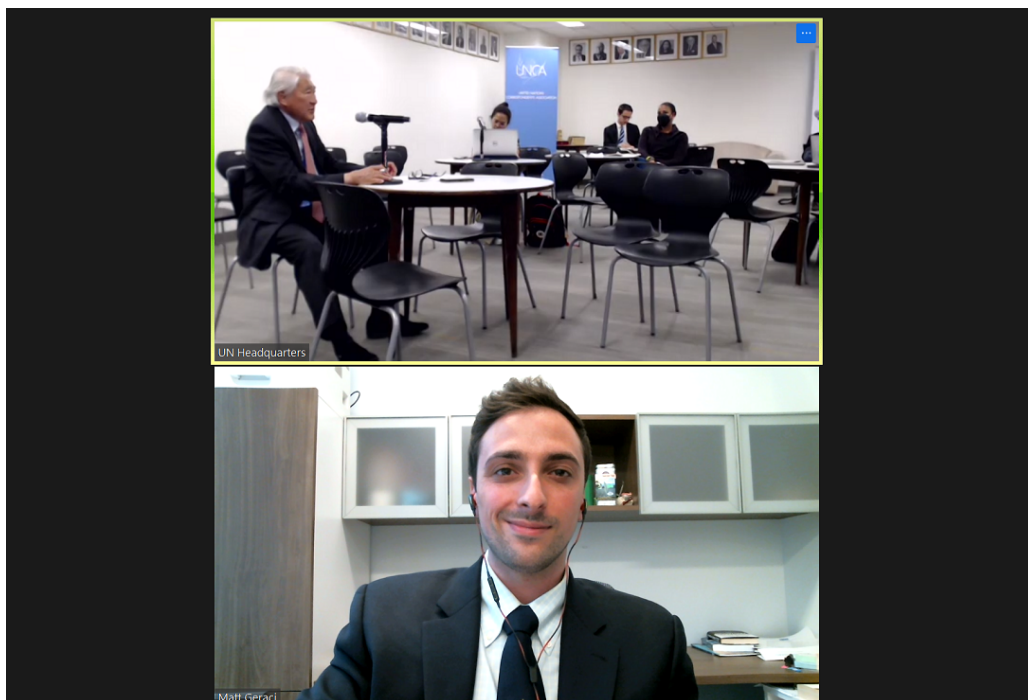
In February, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Fiji, a major power in the South Pacific, marking the first such visit in four decades. Analysts see Blinken's visit as being motivated by a desire for the US to strengthen its presence in the region to match the growing influence of China.

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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— ICAS Academic Engagement —

Matt Geraci speaks at a United Nations seminar for delegates
April 26, 2022



On Tuesday, April 26, 2022, Research Associate Matt Geraci delivered a briefing held at the United Nations seminar for delegates from over 60 UN Missions on how small island states can utilize satellite imagery and GIS applications to demarcate existing land territory and maritime zones.