



ICAS MARITIME AFFAIRS HANDBILL

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Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

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

[Carbon Accumulates in Abnormally Enormous Quantities at the Bottom of Deep-sea Trenches](#)

December 25 - *Nature World News*
[Europe, Global]

Researchers from the University of Southern Denmark's Danish Center for Hadal Research (HADAL) have spent multiple years creating and deploying "sophisticated underwater robots" to assist them in studying and measuring deep-sea trenches and the organic material that these trenches hold. Three of their recent studies have revealed that deep trenches accumulate "hard-to-decompose organic carbon, including so-called black carbon."

[Scientists freeze Great Barrier Reef coral in world-first trial](#)

December 20 - *Reuters* [Paywall]
[South Pacific]

In December, scientists at the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences successfully completed a new trial for a "cryomesh" method of cryogenically freezing coral larvae that can both be manufactured cheaply and be more effective in preserving coral for later reintroduction into the wild.

[Hokkaido kelp farmers aim to boost storage of 'blue carbon' in seaweed beds](#)

December 19 - *The Japan Times* [Paywall]
[East Asia]

Fisheries cooperatives, governments, and companies from a major kelp-producing region in Hokkaido, Japan, are pushing to increase the amount of carbon captured by blue carbon ecosystems. In addition to supplementing poor fishing harvests by selling blue carbon credits, raising seaweeds can also make fishing grounds richer and increase revenue from the fishery.

[Global study reveals widespread salt marsh decline](#)

December 19 - *Mongabay*

[Global]

After NASA scientists analyzed satellite images from around the globe, they concluded that the world has lost 1,453 square kilometers (561 square miles) of salt marsh between 2000 and 2019, resulting in significant carbon emissions. Severe storms and human-induced restoration both make up for part of the loss.

[Urchin farming company gets world first blue carbon credit for kelp](#)

December 15 - *SeafoodSource*

[Japan, Europe]

The Tokyo-based Japanese subsidiary of the aquaculture company Urchinomics, Uninomics K.K., successfully received the world's first voluntary blue carbon credit for kelp-bed restoration through the relocation of sea urchins. The credit was validated and certified by the state-appointed Japan Blue Economy Association who was tasked with establishing blue carbon credit standards.

[Hyundai to present major ocean transformation plans at CES 2023](#)

December 6 - *SeaTechnology*

[Japan, Global]

Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) Group, the “world’s largest shipbuilding and heavy industries” company, announced it will participate in the world’s largest consumer electronics exhibition where it will present the company’s four-pillar “vision on transforming the ocean for a sustainable future.”

[Sale jumpstarts floating, offshore wind power in US waters](#)

December 5 - AP

[United States, Global]

On December 6, the first-ever U.S. auction of leases to “develop commercial-scale floating wind farms” about 25 miles off the U.S. West Coast was held. The online, live auction attracted many interested parties and companies from around the world.

[New toolkit to aid in creation of marine sanctuaries](#)

December 2 - *SeaTechnology*

[United States]

The U.S. National Marine Sanctuary Foundation has released an online, interactive toolkit via an ESRI ArcGIS StoryMap that walks viewers through the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s sanctuary nomination process, with resources. The release is part of the “Save Spectacular” campaign that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

[U. S. to Pay Millions to Move Tribes Threatened by Climate Change](#)

November 30 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[United States, The Arctic]

Three Native American tribes will be given US\$25 million each by the Biden administration to relocate key community buildings outside of regions currently facing urgent threats from climate change, such as flooding. Eight other tribes will be given US\$5 million each to plan for relocation.

[U.N. Mission Joins Growing Calls to Label Great Barrier Reef 'In Danger'](#)

November 28 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[Australia, Global]

A U.N.-backed mission has joined global calls to urgently protect Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef ecosystem and a world heritage site, from the impacts of climate change.

[2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

[Nigeria needs global maritime standards to exploit blue economy – NSML Boss](#)

December 25 - *The Sun Nigeria*

[Africa, Global]

While delivering a keynote address at a 2022 conference on the Association of Maritime Journalists of Nigeria, Abdul-Kadir Ahmed, the managing director of NLNG Ship Management Limited, said that the blue economy is not a local but an international industry with “a global set of standards that deal with safety, quality, efficiency and security.”

[FMC Initiates Probe into Shipping Lines' Compliance with Anti-Retaliation Laws](#)

December 15 - *gCaptain*

[United States, Global]

The U.S. Federal Maritime Commission has officially launched a “probe” into the top 20 shipping lines calling on U.S. ports to “thoroughly investigate any allegation of illegal behavior [based on the newly-enacted Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022] and prosecute aggressively when warranted.”

[Cypriot VR company bringing change to shipping sector](#)

December 13 - *Hellenic Shipping News*

[Global]

Ascanio, a portfolio company, and Faneline Holding Group, a “global giant in the maritime and shipping industry,” have launched their joint mixed-reality venture known as “Ascanio Maritime.” Their goal is to deliver “industry and sector ground-breaking commercial solutions” using cutting-edge technologies.

[Spectainer and Nexxiot Deliver Innovation Driving the Sustainability Race in Maritime Transportation](#)

December 13 - CISION

[Global]

Spectainer, the market leader for foldable COLLAPSECON containers, is partnering with Nexxiot to enhance the visibility and sustainability of the supply chain. With almost one-third of the millions of shipping containers carried around the world being empty in transit, COLLAPSECON “significantly reduces the cost and environmental impact of shipping” at multiple points of the supply chain.

[Turkey oil tanker logjam snarls Russia oil sanctions](#)

December 9 - Reuters [Paywall]

[Mediterranean, Black Sea, Russia]

In the midst of global plans by G7 countries, the European Union and Australia to keep Russia from wartime oil revenues, new insurance rules employed by Turkish maritime authorities are leaving dozens of oil tankers stuck in a queue waiting to leave the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.

[US sanctions China-based firms over illegal fishing abuses](#)

December 9 - Al Jazeera

[United States, China]

The U.S. Department of Treasury has put sanctions on two Chinese companies, Pingtan Marine Enterprise and Dalian Ocean Fishing, over alleged illegal fishing practices.

[Minister for Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi Invites Archipelagic Countries to Collaborate to Advance Maritime Economy](#)

December 6 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

[Southeast Asia, Global]

On December 6, at the opening of the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Archipelagic and Island States Forum (AIS Forum) in Bali, Indonesia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi emphasized that the AIS Forum “must become a platform for collaboration in overcoming global challenges” from economics to rising sea levels, marine debris, and over-exploitation.

[‘Gloomy prospects’, ‘losing steam’ – UNCTAD summarises shipping’s outlook](#)

December 3 - Hellenic Shipping News

[Global]

UNCTAD’s 2022 Review of Maritime Transport depicts the upcoming “gloomy” future of global shipping, which it points to the war in Ukraine, China’s cooling economy, inflationary pressures, and the continuation of the pandemic and supply chain pressures, among other reasons, as explanation.

[EU strikes deal to make ships pay for their carbon emissions](#)

December 2 - Reuters [Paywall]

[Europe, Global]

The European Union has officially added shipping to its carbon market, which requires emitters to buy permits when they emit carbon dioxide, in a move likely to encourage the shipping sector to invest in greener technologies.

[Japanese Shipping Makes Progress on Ammonia-Fueled Ship Design](#)

December 1 - *The Maritime Executive*

[East Asia, Global]

Two of Japan's leading shipping companies are reporting progress in developing ammonia-fueled commercial ships; ones ultimately converted from currently-used liquefied natural gas vessels. The goal is reportedly to have a commercial alternative available "by the middle of this decade."

[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]

[Thai warship that sank, killing 6, had too few life jackets, admiral says](#)

December 21 - CNN

[South Asia]

A Thai corvette warship, the HTMS *Sukhothai*, capsized in the Gulf of Thailand during severe weather, as is recorded on nearby video and imagery. 76 of the 105 people on board—30 more people on board than usual—have been rescued while 23 people are still missing at sea.

[China Accused of Fresh Territorial Grab in South China Sea](#)

December 20 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[South China Sea, China]

According to Western officials, China is building up several unoccupied land features in the South China Sea in a move that appears to claim up to 80% of the region's resource-rich waters in a region critical to global trade.

[Fighting border crime, illegal activities and saving people in the Black Sea](#)

December 14 - Frontex

[Black Sea, Europe]

In cooperation with the European Fisheries Control Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency, Frontex—the European Border and Coast Guard Agency—recently concluded a joint operation hosted by Bulgaria and Romania that was focused on enhancing border control operations in the Western Black Sea region.

[**Egypt cancels the illegal Turkish-Libyan memorandum demarcating maritime borders**](#)

December 14 - *Greek City Times*

[Mediterranean, Africa]

Egypt has issued a Presidential Decree that unilaterally demarcates a shared maritime border with Libya based on the drawing of a straight line that supposedly cuts the recently-established Turkish-Libyan memorandum “in half.” Another recent delimitation of an exclusive economic zone between Greece and Egypt also reportedly cancels the Turkish-Libyan memorandum in practice.

[**Ireland will receive €142 million from the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027**](#)

December 9 - European Commission Oceans and fisheries news

[Europe]

Like several of its fellow European Union states, Ireland has adopted the European Maritime, Fisheries and Agriculture Fund program for Ireland by the European Commission. This program is under the Partnership Agreement 2021-2027, which has a total financial allocation for Ireland is €258.4 million, of which the EU contribution accounts for €142.4 million.

[**UN Chief: Convention On The Law Of The Sea More Relevant Than Before**](#)

December 9 - *Marine Insight*

[Global]

The UN General Assembly held a meeting commemorating the 40th anniversary of both the opening and adoption for the signature of the “landmark” UN Convention on the Law of the Sea during which UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted that the Convention is now more relevant than ever.

[**Saudi Arabia, UAE recognize seafarer certifications to encourage maritime relations**](#)

December 6 - *Arab News*

[Middle East, Global]

At the International Maritime Organization’s headquarters in London, representatives from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding for mutual recognition of “education, training, medical fitness and competency certificates of seafarers issued by maritime bodies and authorities.”

[**FMC to review over 175 shipper complaints against ocean carriers**](#)

December 6 - *SupplyChainDive*

[United States]

The U.S. Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) is getting ready to investigate more than 175 shipping complaints that were filed against major ocean carriers under the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022. Many of the complaints are related to “excess detention and demurrage fees.”

[SK vows to continue offshore natural gas project in Australia despite legal setback](#)

December 5 - *The Korea Times*

[East Asia, Australia, Pacific Ocean]

After the Federal Court of Australia again ruled that the Indigenous people were not properly consulted regarding a natural gas field project despite such consultation being required by law, SK E&S announced that SK E&S will still make efforts to carry out its offshore development project.

[Bautista: PH to collaborate on maritime efforts](#)

December 1 - *Manila Standard*

[Southeast Asia]

During the Pilipinas Conference 2022, Philippine Department of Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista said that Manila is actively looking for opportunities to collaborate with other nations, noting that the Philippines “aims to be a major maritime nation that values the safety and protection of marine life and marine environment.”

[4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

[Russia and China hold joint naval drills](#)

December 22 - AP

[East Asia, East China Sea]

On December 20, four Russian and at least three Chinese warships practiced joint activities in the East China Sea, highlighting the increasingly close partnership between the two nations. The Russian Defence Ministry announced the drill ahead of time, later noting: “The main goal of the drills is to strengthen naval cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China and to maintain peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region.”

[US, Italy to Strengthen Naval Alliance](#)

December 21 - *The Defense Post*

[United States, Europe]

The US Navy and Italian Navy have agreed to expand their naval alliance through integrated training and operations among NATO territories, recently exhibiting this partnership in such joint drills.

[Philippines, Indonesia to Heighten Border Security Cooperation](#)

December 16 - *The Defense Post*

[South Pacific]

The Philippine and Indonesian border committees will be increasing sea patrols next year, boosting maritime border security ties through four coordinated patrols annually, as part of the 12-point agenda previously proposed by the two nations in November 2022.

[Australia vies with China for Pacific influence, signs new security deal](#)

December 14 - NPR

[Australia, Pacific Ocean]

Australia and the island nation of Vanuatu have signed a new security deal as China continues to appeal for influence in the Pacific region. The new deal, the full text of which is yet to be released, reportedly covers “humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, law enforcement, cyber security, defense, border security and maritime safety.”

[\[The Philippines\] DND chief shows support to ‘AUKUS’ alliance](#)

December 14 - *Manila Bulletin*

[South Pacific]

During a courtesy visit of Australian Ambassador Hae Kyong Yu in Quezon City on December 12, the Philippines' Department of National Defense Officer in Charge Jose Faustino Jr. showed support to the trilateral "AUKUS" alliance while thanking Australia for backing a 2016 ruling favoring Philippines' territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea.

[U.S. Gives Patrol Boat to Mozambique to Improve Maritime Security](#)

December 9 - *The Maritime Executive*

[United States, Africa]

As part of a larger effort in fighting terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Mozambique Channel, Washington donated a 33-foot, high-speed patrol boat to the Mozambican Navy to be used for “interdictions and maritime boarding operations” in the conflict-ridden Cabo Delgado province. Local officials will also participate in training offered by the U.S.-based SAFE Boat International.

[Austal, General Dynamics Team Up for US Navy Nuclear Submarine Production](#)

December 8 - *The Defense Post*

[United States]

Two U.S. corporations—Austal USA and General Dynamics Electric Boat—have partnered on production work in Alabama to support the US Navy’s Virginia-class and future Columbia-class nuclear-powered submarine fleet. These partnerships follow millions of dollars in contracts signed this year with the US Navy to enhance and support submarine production and training.

[Canada to send more warships to Taiwan Strait as China claims ‘sovereign rights’](#)

December 6 - *The Independent*

[North America, East Asia]

In an interview with *Financial Times*, Canada’s foreign minister Melanie Joly said that Canada is prepared to deploy more warships through the Taiwan Strait to push back against unilateral, threatening actions and “make sure that...it remains an international strait.”

[Japanese, Korean Fighters Scrambled in Response to Joint Russia-China Bomber Patrol](#)

November 30 - USNI News

[East Asia]

Korea and Japan both scrambled fighters in the Sea of Japan region in response to the first joint Russia-China patrol in the area since May. The two Chinese H-6 bombers reportedly flew from the East China Sea through the Tsushima Strait into the Sea of Japan where they met with four Russian Tu-95MS bombers and two Russian Su-35 fighters before flying north.

[China says US ship 'illegally intruded' in waters near Spratlys](#)

November 29 - Al Jazeera

[China, United States, South China Sea]

A spokesman for the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army said that the Chinese military drove away a US Navy ship that had "illegally intruded" into waters near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and had "seriously violated China's sovereignty and security."

Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: NOAA - [2022 Arctic Report Card](#) [December 2022]
- Government Release: GAO Report - ["Arctic Maritime Infrastructure: Government-wide and Coast Guard Strategies Lack a Means to Measure Progress"](#) [December 7]
- Press Release: U.S. Department of Defense - ["U.S. and Cabo Verde Sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Defense Cooperation"](#) [December 15]
- Press Release: European Union External Action - ["UNCLOS: Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius on the 40th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea"](#) [December 11]
- Press Release: U.S. Indo-Pacific Command - ["U.S. Department of Defense and Japan Ministry of Defense Joint Statement on Cooperation for Japan's Next Fighter Aircraft"](#) [December 9]
- Press Release: U.S. Department of the Treasury - ["Treasury Targets Serious Human Rights Abuse Aboard Distant Water Fishing Vessels Based in the People's Republic of China"](#) [December 9]
- Press Release: United Nations - ["General Assembly Lauds Success of Law of Sea Convention, But Deplores Sea-Level Rise, Lack of Support for Small Island Nations, Increased Maritime Risks"](#) [December 8]
- Press Release: U.S. Department of Defense - ["Joint Statement on Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations \(AUSMIN\) 2022"](#) [December 6]
- Press Release: U.S. Navy 7th Fleet - ["7th Fleet Cruiser Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea"](#) [November 28]
- Interview: Natasha Brown, Head, Public Information Services, IMO - ["IMO: The Regulatory Framework for Maritime Data Sharing"](#) [*The Maritime Executive* - December 15]

- Opinion: [“Indonesia's 'blue carbon credits' are crucial for global climate mitigation. Here's how to help them flourish”](#) [Phys.org - December 22]
- Opinion: [“The ‘fourth propulsion revolution’ and preparing for a green maritime industry”](#) [Hellenic Shipping News - December 22]
- Opinion: [“Pacific islands see China-West tussle as chance for climate action”](#) [Nikkei Asia - December 21]
- Opinion: [“California is embracing the wrong strategy for carbon sequestration. Why not algae?”](#) [Cal Matters - December 14]
- Opinion: [“Japan's place in Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy”](#) [The Japan Times - December 7]
- Opinion: [“Australia, China and the judgment of the Solomons”](#) [Financial Times - December 5] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Increased investment in maritime transport needed to prepare for future crises”](#) [Business World - November 30]
- Analysis: [“With focus on Nansei Islands, Japan prepares for potential Taiwan conflict”](#) [The Japan Times - December 20]
- Analysis: [“Hackers Have Found a New Incentive to Target Shipping”](#) [The Maritime Executive - December 19]
- Analytical Tracker: [“Tracking Biden's environmental actions”](#) [The Washington Post - last updated December 19]
- Analytical Graphic: [“Starving the Mekong”](#) [Reuters - December 15]
- Analysis: [“An Indo-Pacific security network is only now emerging”](#) [Observer Research Foundation - December 13]
- Analysis: [“PLA submarines uses adversary forces in South China Sea as practice partners”](#) [Global Times - December 11]
- Analysis: [“VARD presents a zero-carbon range of renewable energy-driven vessels”](#) [Naval Technology - December 2]
- Analysis: [“A plan to push back against China's fishing practices”](#) [War on the Rocks - December 2]
- Analysis: [“Flexible Underwater Drone”](#) [Sea Technology - December 2022]
- Analysis: [“Coastal Job: Underwater Cave Ecologist”](#) [Hakai Magazine - November 28]
- Analysis: [“Brazil's 'Blue Amazon', and the promise and perils of seabed mining”](#) [China Dialogue Ocean - November 22] [In Chinese]

Events on the Maritime Domain

- On November 29, the Wilson Center Polar Institute held a virtual event on [“Achieving Security in the Arctic: the Role of DHS and its Components.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On November 30, the Wilson Center Polar Institute, in partnership with the Canadian Armed Forces and Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, held a virtual teleconference on [“Technological Innovation and Arctic Climate Security.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On December 6, the Wilson Center, along with the Water, Peace and Security (WPS) Partnership, held their hybrid [Water @ Wilson Series Launch | Water, Peace, & Security: New Tools for a New Climate](#) at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC. A full recording is available.

- On December 7, the Wilson Center’s Polar Institute and Canada Institute held a virtual discussion on [“Overcoming Remoteness: Arctic Innovation in Transportation, Energy and Connectivity.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On December 7, the Stimson Center held a virtual event on [“Linking Renewable Energy and River Conservation: Delivering on Vietnam’s Climate Commitments”](#) as part of their Mekong Basin Connect Project. A full recording is available.
- From December 14-16, the United Nations and a multitude of partners held a hybrid [“Global Workshop on Source-to-sea Management”](#) that they said “will gather experts and policymakers from the freshwater and ocean communities, as well as from transboundary basin organizations and marine organizations, with the aim to strengthen cooperation and to share good practices in policy-making and implementation of effective source-to-sea management.”
- From June 5-8, 2023, the IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society and Marine Technology Society will be hosting the [“OCEANS 2023 Limerick - Blue Ocean Planet Earth”](#) in person in Limerick, Ireland; an event for “global maritime professionals to learn, innovate, and lead in the protection and utilization of the world’s largest natural resource – our Oceans.” Registration opens February 20, 2023.

Handbill Spotlight

Taiwan Strait

Issue Background¹

The Taiwan Strait, at a mere 100 nautical miles wide, situated between China’s mainland and the island of Taiwan, has increasingly become a significant roadblock for any potential progress in the U.S.-China relations. While the issue of Taiwan has a [complex historical background](#), the matters that concern the U.S.-China bilateral relations began in 1949. Following the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in the civil war and the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the U.S.-backed Kuomintang (KMT) Republic of China government relocated to Taiwan. Both the [People’s Republic of China](#) and the [Republic of China \(ROC\)](#) officially claim both mainland China and Taiwan as part of their respective territories, which makes the island a *de facto* breakaway province of China today.



¹ Image Source: Map of the Taiwan Strait ([CIA, public domain](#))

As a legacy of the Chinese civil war, the strait of Taiwan has historically been a source of crises between Beijing, Taipei, and Washington. In 1957, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis saw a year-long armed conflict between the two sides of the strait. The armed conflict extended into an artillery blockade of the strait in 1958; also known as the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. Less frequent bombardment continued until 1979 when the U.S. and PRC officially reestablished their diplomatic relations.

In 1972, the U.S. and PRC [jointly released](#) the Shanghai Communiqué, which is the first of a series of three communiqués—formal statements mutually agreed upon by two nations—that laid the foundation of the rapprochement between Beijing and Washington. In the [Shanghai Communiqué](#), the U.S. first declared its “one China” policy, which has since guided its approach to China and Taiwan. The U.S. declared that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.”

In addition to the three joint communiqués, the U.S. Congress passed the [Taiwan Relations Act](#) in 1979, which reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to assist Taiwan with the capacity to “resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan.” Furthermore, the U.S. unilaterally clarified its position in its [1986 joint communiqué](#) with the PRC with the [Six Assurances](#). The “one-China” policy, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and the Six Assurances are the items that [continue to guide](#) Washington’s China and Taiwan policies—and thus, that of the Taiwan Strait—today.

Recent Events

Under the Trump administration and the Biden administration, the tensions have continued to rise in the Taiwan Strait as a combination of changes in China mainland, Taiwan, and the U.S. that shift the balance of power and political landscape in the region. China’s power continues to grow and Beijing is becoming [increasingly assertive](#) on territorial issues. The pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) replaced the KMT to be the leading party in Taiwan. Unlike her predecessor Ma Ying-jeou, Taiwan’s current leader Tsai Ing-wen takes [a harder line](#) towards mainland China. Lastly, the U.S. has shifted into a more competitive position *vis-à-vis* China as it now sees Beijing as the [pacing challenger](#) that “harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order.” The U.S. Navy, together with other U.S. allies, has conducted more frequent transit of the Taiwan Strait under the Trump and Biden administration.

Outgoing Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s [visit to Taiwan](#) in August 2022 sparked a new peak of tensions between China and the U.S. over the Taiwan Strait. The high rank lawmaker’s visit, despite [repeated Chinese warnings](#) beforehand, triggered an escalated response from Beijing. Beijing launched [ballistic missiles](#) over Taipei for the first time in a series of military drills. While the Biden administration insisted that the California legislator has her rights to visit the self-governing island, it did contend that it was “[not a good idea](#).” U.S.-China relations are at a new historical low as China criticizes the U.S. for [undermining peace and stability](#) across the Taiwan Strait.

The Biden administration also released mixed signals with regard to Taiwan in 2022. While Secretary of Defense [Lloyd Austin](#), Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#), and National Security Advisor [Jake Sullivan](#) all repeatedly clarified that the U.S. has not changed its “one China” policy and its policies on Taiwan, President Joe Biden has repeatedly publicly stated that [U.S. forces will defend Taiwan](#) in the event of a Chinese invasion. Unsurprisingly, the mixed signals and the president’s remarks sparked strong criticism from Beijing.

Keep in Mind

While the U.S. continues to conduct [routine transits](#) of the Taiwan Strait to show its commitment to uphold freedom of navigation in international waters, these routine transits puts the stability of the strait in danger as they coincide with [increased and normalized](#) Chinese military operations around the self-governed island since the Pelosi visit. These uncoordinated military operations in the narrow strait will become a huge challenge for both Beijing and Washington during a period when the two countries lack effective and consistent military-to-military communication channels. The strait is seeing more uncertainty in the forthcoming years.

And regarding the strained political relations, they do not appear to be softened in the near future. Prior to the midterm election, the incoming Republican Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy has previously stated that he [will visit Taiwan](#) if he becomes House speaker. As the Republican party regained control of the U.S. House, the possibility of another U.S. Speaker of the House—technically the third in line for the U.S. presidency—visiting Taiwan within a year, puts more tension on the U.S.-China relationship. Should McCarthy visit Taiwan in 2023, the U.S.-China relationship will face another severe challenge and the Taiwan Strait could see another crisis on the horizon.

Taiwan’s 2024 Presidential Election could also have a significant impact on not only cross-strait relations but also the U.S.-China bilateral relationship. While the KMT enjoyed a huge [victory](#) in Taiwan’s recent local elections, the next leader of the self-governing is still uncertain. The next leader of Taiwan will face huge challenges balancing the tensions between Beijing and Washington, as well as the mounting tensions over the Taiwan Strait.

Last in the main equation is China. China’s growing military capabilities and its desire to reunify Taiwan is not a secret to the West. That said, Beijing continues to stress its hope to [resolve the issue of Taiwan](#) through peaceful measures while never renouncing the use of force. Concerns of a [potential deadline](#) for resolving the issue of Taiwan by force have been raised in the West over the past year. Minister Jing Quan from the Embassy of China in the United States rejected such speculations at [ICAS’ 2022 Annual Conference](#) while restating China’s official position on the issue of Taiwan. On the other hand, at another think tank event U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Colin Kahl said it is [unlikely that China has a hard deadline by 2027](#), but contended that China has its [2027 centenary objectives](#) to become more competitive against the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region.

This issue’s Spotlight was written by Yilun Zhang, ICAS Research Associate.

ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

– MAP Academic Engagement –

Executive Nong Hong speaks at the 7th International Conference
on the Law of the Sea
November 15-17, 2022 (Seoul, KST)

ICAS Executive Director Dr. Nong Hong participated in the Seventh International Conference on the Law of the Sea, with a theme of “Law of the Sea for the Next Generation: Effectiveness of UNCLOS Revisited.” Dr. Hong presented in Panel 5: Voices of the Next Generation, speaking on the topic of “China’s Chance to Revisit the Role of UNCLOS in Ocean Governance and Dispute Settlement in the South China Sea.”



Learn more about the event and the other speakers:

<https://chinaus-icas.org/event/executive-nong-hong-speaks-at-the-7th-international-conference-on-the-law-of-the-sea/>

Watch the event recordings: <https://www.youtube.com/@lawofthesea1982>

– Letter from the ICAS MAP Team –

To our readers,

The Maritime Affairs Program (MAP) Team at ICAS would like to thank all of our readers for your support in 2022! With the development of the MAP Handbill newsletter, various academic engagements, the release of several interactive maritime issue brief trackers, and the formal creation of the Program as a distinct entity, 2022 was very exciting for the ICAS Maritime Affairs Program.

In 2023, we look forward to continuing our current work and developing new projects as we strive to inform and stimulate open, fact-based, intellectual discussion on an array of topics in the maritime realm. We know that maritime affairs continue to be a vital point of interaction in not only U.S.-China relations but in global bilateral and multilateral relations around the world, bringing both difficult complexities and opportunities for engagement.

Regards,
The ICAS MAP Team