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Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

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

[Carbon capture focus now on mangroves](#)

January 28 - *Times of India*
[South Asia, Europe]

From January 24-25, the UN Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon organized a workshop at Ahmedabad University in India, supported by Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE) and University of St Andrews, which focused on local blue carbon ecosystem restoration.

[Sea otters may be key drivers of changes in California's kelp forests](#)

January 23 - *Tech Explorist*
[United States]

In a study aimed to create explicit historical reference points and understand drivers of changes in California's kelp forests, scientists found that the growth of kelp forests in central California has nearly offset the loss of mainland coastlines to the north and south. It was also discovered that the presence of sea otters facilitates kelp forest growth by increasing canopy resilience.

[Rejected renewable hub proposal south-east of Melbourne prompts calls for legal overhaul](#)

January 21 - *ABC News*
[South Pacific]

The federal government of Australia has rejected the state of Victoria's proposal to expand the Port of Hastings for an offshore renewable energy terminal there due to environmental concerns. Advocates call for a reconsideration of environmental laws to enable projects aimed at mitigating climate change to be implemented.

[As Japan makes major investments in wind power, some residents are pushing back](#)

January 21 - *The Japan Times* [Paywall]

[East Asia]

Local environmentalists in the northern port city of Ishikari, known for its cultural and environmental preservation, seafood products and tourism, are pushing back against the government's designation of an offshore area for potential wind power generation.

[Carbon catch and release: Study finds bottom trawlers stir up seabed CO2](#)

January 19 - *Mongabay*

[Global]

New research indicates that bottom trawling, a fishing method, releases large amounts of carbon from the seabed, with 55-60% entering the atmosphere within nine years and the remaining contributes to ocean acidification. Critics challenge the study's accuracy and argue that the research potentially overestimates the environmental damages of bottom trawling.

[Japan Plans to Report 360,000 Tons of 'Blue Carbon' to U.N.; First Such Calculation in the World](#)

January 17 - *The Japan News*

[East Asia, Global]

After developing the first calculation method, Japan plans to report to the United Nations that Japan captured about 360,000 tons of blue carbon net emissions in fiscal year 2022, marking the first time the amount of CO2 absorbed by kelp forests and seagrass meadows will be measured.

[De-silting will disturb key blue carbon deposits in Vembanad Lake, warns expert body](#)

January 12 - *The Hindu*

[South Asia]

Experts at the International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming in Kuttanad, India, warn against bottom dredging in Vembanad Lake—a significant blue carbon habitat—for flood management as it could potentially harm the blue carbon ecosystem there. Instead, experts propose the use of traditional silt gathering from the upper strata instead of disruptive dredging.

[CCMI partners with bank in blue carbon off-set scheme](#)

January 11 - *Cayman News Service*

[The Caribbean]

The Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) is partnering with Butterfield Bank to explore the implementation of a blue carbon offset and ecosystem-based restoration scheme in the Cayman Islands. The programme will also determine the potential of tropical marine habitat restoration to

sequester carbon and seeks to create a model for obtaining certified carbon credits through ecosystem-based marine restoration.

[OceanFront to clean Oslo seabed pollution](#)

January 8 - *Sea Technology*

[Europe, North Atlantic]

OceanFront AS has contracted with Oslo Municipality for a three-month seabed cleanup in Oslo harbor and inner Oslofjord using the eSEA eXpiator. The initiative aims to remove marine debris to enhance the environmental condition of the threatened Oslofjord.

[2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

['Opportunistic' Chinese lines send ships to serve Red Sea ports](#)

January 29 - *The Manila Times*

[East Asia, Red Sea, Africa]

Following months of attacks by Yemen-based Houthi rebels on commercial ships sailing through the southern region of the Red Sea en route to the Suez Canal and Europe beyond, several Chinese shipping lines are redeploying their vessels to the area as Chinese vessels appear to not be targeted.

[Mexico aims to compete with Panama Canal by using cargo trains](#)

January 25 - *Freight Waves*

[Central America, Global]

With the Red Sea full of conflict and Panama Canal clogged from drought, Mexican officials are now working to push forward its \$2.8 billion Isthmus of Tehuantepec's Interoceanic Corridor (CIIT) project as an alternative for global supply chains to move towards land-based rails.

[German chemicals sector shows strain of Red Sea supply crisis](#)

January 22 - *Reuters*

[Red Sea, Europe, Global]

Delayed shipments via the Red Sea are starting to impact Europe's largest chemicals sector, which is located in Germany, bringing supply delays and higher freight costs on top of existing demands for energy and materials costs.

[Red Sea attacks already bigger issue for supply chain than pandemic, maritime advisory warns](#)

January 18 - *CNBC*

[Global]

According to new analyses from maritime advisory firm Sea-Intelligence, forced diversions from the Red Sea around Africa are already having a bigger impact on vessel capacity than the pandemic did.

[Ships Advertise Chinese Links to Avoid Houthi Attack in Red Sea](#)

January 11 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[Middle East, Africa]

At least five vessels traveling through the Red Sea have publicly signaled that they have a link to China, such as having Chinese crew aboard, in attempts to avoid attack by Houthi militants. Similarly, at least five other vessels have openly signaled that they hold no links to Israel.

[Myanmar and China's CITIC to resume stalled deepwater port project](#)

December 29 - *Nikkei Asia*

[Southeast Asia, China]

Sources suggest that Myanmar's deepwater port project in Kyaukpyu, backed in part by Chinese state-owned financial conglomerate CITIC Group, is restarting its construction efforts, though the time frame for completion is currently unclear.

[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]

[Houthis Attack U.S. Warship as China Urges Iran to Rein In Rebels](#)

January 26 - *The Wall Street Journal* [Paywall]

[China, Middle East]

Chinese officials have asked their Iranian counterparts several times to assist in limiting the Iran-backed Houthi attacks on ships passing through the Red Sea, though Iran says it does not control the Houthis. A Chinese spokesperson said Iran has “actively deescalated the situation, called for an end to the disturbance to civilian ships, and urged relevant parties to avoid fueling the tensions.” According to U.S. officials, over recent months the U.S. has repeatedly asked top Chinese officials to assist on this security issue in the Red Sea.

[China accuses US of ‘abusing’ international law by sailing in Taiwan Strait and South China Sea](#)

January 25 - AP

[East Asia, United States, China]

On January 24, USS *John Finn* conducted the first freedom of navigation transit of 2024 through the international waters of the Taiwan Strait, to which China responded that the U.S. “should stop abusing international law, cease all dangerous and provocative behavior, and strictly restrain the activities of front-line troops.”

[The U.S. just expanded its territory by one million square kilometers](#)

January 23 - *Earth*

[United States]

The U.S. has officially increased its geographical territory by one million square kilometers, primarily due to the redefinition of its continental shelf boundaries. This expansion, spreading across seven

ocean regions with over half in the Arctic, is based on the Extended Continental Shelf concept under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The process, started in 2003 and completed on December 19, 2023, allows the U.S. to manage and access resources in these areas.

[Norway Loses Court Battle With Climate Groups on Oil Fields](#)

January 18 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[North Atlantic, Europe]

Climate activists from Greenpeace Norway and Young Friends of the Earth won a court case in Norway against the state over development plans at a handful of undersea oil and gas fields that were approved by the state in 2021 and 2023.

[China, Philippines seek better communication, management of conflicts in South China Sea](#)

January 17 - *Reuters*

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia, China]

Last week, China Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong and Philippines Foreign Ministry undersecretary Theresa Lazaro held a frank and in-depth exchange of views on South China Sea issues, mutually agreeing to improve communication and conflict management. The discussion was held while the two parties co-chaired the eighth meeting of the China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea in Shanghai.

[Iran seizes oil tanker involved in U.S.-Iran dispute in Gulf of Oman](#)

January 15 - *Reuters*

[Middle East]

On January 9, Iran seized the Marshall Islands-flagged *St Nikolas* crude oil tanker “with a judicial order.” The seizure of the tanker, which was carrying Iraqi crude oil originally destined for Turkey, is being linked as a retaliation “after the theft of Iranian oil by the United States last year.”

[Beijing hits out at German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock’s ‘unwarranted’ attack on its actions in South China Sea dispute with Philippines](#)

January 13 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia, China]

Beijing criticized German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock for her comments made during a recent visit to the Philippines, where she accused China of violating Manila’s rights in the South China Sea. The Chinese embassy in Manila refuted the blame, asserting that China has implemented essential measures to protect its sovereignty and is dedicated to addressing issues through dialogue, also stressing that countries outside the region should not involve themselves in the dispute.

[EU makes muddled response to crisis in the Red Sea](#)

January 12 - *Politico*

[Red Sea, Europe]

European Union member states have been expressing mixed responses over the conflict in the Red Sea, with several remaining relatively quiet on the issue. At least up through mid-January, the only EU states who have assisted the U.S. in the region are the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.

[UN Security Council demands Houthi rebels stop Red Sea attacks in vote that implicitly condemns Iran](#)

January 10 - *Associated Press*

[Red Sea, Global]

In a 11-0 vote, with four abstentions, the United Nations Security Council demanded “in the strongest terms” that the Yemeni-based Houthi rebels halt their attacks in the Red Sea on the basis that the attacks are impeding global commerce and undermining navigational freedom.

[The Norwegian government approves deep-sea mining. “It is devastating”, eco-activists protest.](#)

January 10 - *Arctic Today*

[North Atlantic, Arctic Ocean]

On January 9, Norway’s parliament “endorsed the Government’s proposal to open parts of the Norwegian continental shelf for exploration for and production of seabed minerals,” making Norway one of the first nations to open up for commercial seabed mineral mining.

[Blinken Warns Houthis of Consequences for Red Sea Attacks](#)

January 8 - *qCaptain*

[United States, Middle East, Red Sea]

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Houthi militants in Yemen must know they will face “consequences” for continued attacks on ships in the Red Sea while noting that “40 countries [have] come together to make clear what the Houthis are doing has to stop.”

[China Appoints Naval Commander as Defense Minister](#)

December 29 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[China]

After the unexplained disappearance and subsequent removal of Chinese General Li Shangfu from his position as defense minister, China appointed former naval commander Admiral Dong Jun as its new defense minister. This appointment marks the first time an officer with a naval background has become the defense minister and fills a significant vacancy in China's military hierarchy.

[4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

[Denmark Dispatches Frigate Preparing to Join Red Sea Security Efforts](#)

January 29 - *The Maritime Executive*

[Europe, Middle East]

On January 29, Denmark dispatched its frigate *Iver Huitfeldt* in preparation for participating in the U.S.-led Operation Prosperity Guardian in the Red Sea in February. The dispatch occurred ahead of a final vote by the Danish Parliament of whether or not to confirm Danish participation in the mission.

[Seoul dismisses North Korea's claims of undersea nuclear weapons test](#)

January 21 - *The Korea Herald*

[East Asia]

After an analysis, South Korea's presidential office called North Korea's claims of having "successfully tested so-called unmanned, nuclear-capable attack drones" "exaggerated and fabricated."

[Houthis vow to keep attacking ships in Red Sea after U.S., U.K. strikes target their weapons in Yemen](#)

January 12 - *CBS News*

[Red Sea]

Following open strikes against the Houthi rebels by U.S. and British forces in early January, conducted with assistance from four other nations, Iran-backed Houthi rebels vowed to continue attacking Israel-linked ships sailing in the Red Sea. Within days after this announcement, U.S. and British naval forces shot down 21 drones and missiles fired by the Yemen-based Houthi rebel group, marking the largest attack in the area by the group to date at that point.

[China and India race to expand aircraft carrier fleets](#)

January 9 - *Nikkei Asia* [Paywall]

[Indo-Pacific, Global]

Both China and India appear to be focused on augmenting their naval capabilities and modernity. China is preparing the deployment of its third aircraft carrier which has an electromagnetic catapult that provides advanced combat capabilities. India intends to develop its third aircraft carrier and collaborate with the U.S. on developing cutting-edge carrier related technology.

[U.S. Navy chief to prioritize getting more ships ready for action](#)

January 9 - *Defense News*

[United States]

On January 9, the recently-appointed U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Frachetii said in a public speech that, in order to address surging international crises, the US Navy should "get more

players on the field.” The focus, Franchetii detailed, is on improving the Navy’s readiness while integrating the service with the joint force and working alongside Congress and industries.

[Indian Navy Retakes Merchant Ship From Armed Hijackers in the Arabian Sea](#)

January 7 - USNI News

[Indian Ocean]

On January 7, the Indian Navy secured the hijacked Liberian-flagged MV *Lila Nortolk* in the Arabian Sea by sending a team from the Indian Navy’s Marine Commandos. Since the Houthi forces started to sabotage the merchant vessels in the Indian Ocean region, India has expanded its deployment of naval fleets in the Arabian Sea.

[North Korea Fires Artillery Near Border With South Korea](#)

January 5 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[East Asia]

On January 5, North Korea fired 200 rounds of artillery, targeting the disputed western sea border with South Korea. North Korea claimed this operation is a countermeasure vis-a-vis the live-shell firing drills conducted by South Korean and U.S. near the inter-Korean border. This was also North Korea’s first artillery firing since it scrapped the agreement of ceasing hostility around the border with South Korea.

[China gives first official look at Fujian aircraft carrier’s advanced catapult launch system](#)

January 3 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[China]

For the first time, China publicly showcased the advanced electromagnetic plane catapults on its latest aircraft carrier, the Fujian. This announcement was featured in a CCTV news program highlighting the military’s response to Chinese President Xi Jinping’s call for national rejuvenation.

[Navy to seek industry help on countering ‘cross-domain’ drone attacks](#)

January 3 - *Breaking Defense*

[United States, Red Sea]

The US Navy is looking to collaborate with the industry to address the challenge of countering cross-domain drone attacks, especially in the Middle East. More specifically, they expect to acquire innovative solutions capable of detecting, identifying, tracking, and mitigating multiple uncrewed systems (USX) across different domains. This effort is part of a proactive approach to strengthen naval defenses against ongoing drone threats targeting its warships.

[China plans to keep ships near Senkakus every day in 2024](#)

December 30 - *The Japan Times* [Paywall]

[East Asia, China, Japan]

In 2024, China reportedly plans to maintain a constant presence of its ships near the Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands, which China refers to as the Diaoyu, in the East China Sea. This decision follows Chinese President Xi Jinping's call to bolster Beijing's claim over the islets during his visit to the command office for the East China Sea area of the China Coast Guard. The plan also includes the possibility of inspecting Japanese fishing boats in the area.

Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: U.S. Congressional Research Service - [“China-Philippines Tensions in the South China Sea”](#) [January 23]
- Government Release: U.S. Congressional Research Service - [“Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter \(Polar Icebreaker\) Program: Background and Issues for Congress”](#) [January 17]
- Government Release: The Scottish Parliament, SPICe Spotlight - [“Climate change and Scottish Parliament committees: Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee – sectors”](#) [January 16]
- Government Release: U.S. Congressional Research Service - [“Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea: Issues for Congress”](#) [January 12]
- Government Release: U.S. Naval Institute - [“CNO Franchetti’s Warfighting Priorities”](#) [January 9]
- Government Release: U.S. Department of State - [“Joint Statement on the Trilateral United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Indo-Pacific Dialogue”](#) [January 6]
- Press Release: Republic of the Philippines - [“Resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal deferred due to technical woes”](#) [January 22]
- Press Release: Mastercard - [“Feet in the Mud, Head in the Sky: A Morning Among the Mangroves”](#) [January 22]
- Press Release: World Economic Forum - [“3 ways public-private partnerships can help restore ocean health”](#) [January 16]
- Press Release: Norwegian Offshore Directorate - [“Parts of the Norwegian shelf can be opened for mineral activity”](#) [January 9]
- Press Release: U.S. Department of State - [“Secretary Antony J. Blinken Remarks to the Press”](#) [January 8]
- Podcast: [“Sea Control 390 - Islamic maritime law with Dr. Hassan Khalilieh”](#) [CIMSEC - January 18]
- Podcast: [“The Houthi Threat to Red Sea Shipping, With Katherine Zimmerman”](#) [Council on Foreign Relations - January 16]
- Podcast: [“Sea Control 489 - The strategic importance of NATO’s north flank with Julian Pawlak”](#) [CIMSEC - January 11]
- Opinion: [“Annual Review & Forecast”](#) [Sea Technology - January 2024]
- Opinion: [“The Panama Canal is in dire straits”](#) [The Washington Post - January 26] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Will 2024 be a turning point for IUU fishing?”](#) [Brookings - January 24]

- Opinion: [“Why Australia should work with India on a maritime strategic fleet”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - January 24]
- Opinion: [“The lack of data from Russia may render Arctic climate forecasting meaningless”](#) [Arctic Today - January 23]
- Opinion: [“Shipping and geopolitical risk: Don’t forget about Korean Peninsula”](#) [Freight Waves - January 23]
- Opinion: [“The Red Sea Crisis Proves China Was Ahead of the Curve”](#) [Foreign Policy - January 20] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Taiwan or South China Sea: which is the riskier flashpoint for US-China ties?”](#) [South China Morning Post - January 16] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Why Saudi Arabia Is Staying on the Sidelines in the Red Sea Conflict”](#) [Foreign Policy - January 16] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Don’t Bomb the Houthis: Careful Diplomacy Can Stop the Attacks in the Red Sea”](#) [Foreign Affairs - January 11] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“How building fake aircraft carriers and destroyers in the desert could be helping China better threaten the US Navy”](#) [Business Insider - January 11]
- Opinion: [“America fights back”](#) [The Economist - January 11] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Welcome to the new era of global sea power”](#) [The Economist - January 11] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Taiwan and the South China Sea: Two Views”](#) [China-US Focus - January 9]
- Opinion: [“How Iranian tech empowers Houthi drone, missile attacks in the Red Sea”](#) [Defense News - January 8]
- Opinion: [“Russia, China and the Threat to the North Pole”](#) [The Wall Street Journal - January 5] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“A big Navy is vital. A more lethal one would be even better.”](#) [The Washington Post - January 4] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Saving the Panama Canal Will Take Years and Cost Billions, If It’s Even Possible”](#) [Bloomberg - January 2] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Even more US-Australia submarine collaboration on the horizon”](#) [Defense News - December 30]
- Opinion: [“China Wants to Dominate the New Era of Clean Shipbuilding”](#) [Bloomberg - December 29] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Importance of Naval History Underscored at Future-Warfighting Seminar”](#) [Naval History Magazine - February 2024]
- Analysis: [“Why Conflict In Middle East Is Complicating India’s Maritime Security”](#) [Eurasia Review - January 29]
- Analysis: [“Why is India unnerved about the visit of a Chinese research ship in its backyard?”](#) [South China Morning Post - January 26] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Taking robots and AI to war at sea”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - January 25]
- Analysis: [“The Red Sea warship decision: a continuation of the continental drift in our strategy”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - January 23]
- Analysis: [“What does Red Sea disruption mean for Europe's economy?”](#) [Reuters - January 23]
- Analysis: [“Containing the Risk: Disruption to shipping in the Red Sea is having big impact on routes vital to China.”](#) [The Wire China - January 21] [Paywall]

- Analysis: [“Manila gets tough in the South China Sea as a showdown looms”](#) [The Japan Times - January 21] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“How Houthi Attacks Have Upended Global Shipping”](#) [The New York Times - January 21] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“How could Panama Canal restrictions affect supply chains?”](#) [McKinsey & Co. - January 19]
- Analysis: [“Shipping oil through troubled waters”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - January 18]
- Analysis: [“Blue carbon offset: How the ocean can combat climate change”](#) [Cayman Compass - January 17] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Houthi attacks are starting to reshape shipping flows”](#) [The Washington Post - January 16] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“How drug traffickers made the Galápagos Islands their gas station”](#) [The Washington Post - January 13] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Australia’s Red Sea conundrum: much ado about nothing?”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - January 11]
- Analysis: [“The Balearic-Strait-Canaries Axis and Spanish Maritime Strategy”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - January 11]
- Analysis: [“MILEX 23 and the future of European naval ambitions”](#) [CIMSEC - January 10]
- Analysis: [“Surveying the Seas: China’s Dual-Use Research Operations in the Indian Ocean”](#) [Center for Strategic & International Studies - January 10]
- Analysis: [“Harnessing the ocean-climate nexus after COP28”](#) [The Jakarta Post - January 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Red Sea Shipping Takes Another Blow From Iran”](#) [Foreign Policy - January 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“The Electric: The U.S. Races China and Russia to Mine the Ocean for Battery Metals”](#) [The Information - January 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“European navies try to keep up in cat-and-mouse game of seabed warfare”](#) [Defense News - January 4]
- Analysis: [“Top Stories 2023: U.S. Operations in the Western Pacific”](#) [USNI News - January 4]
- Analysis: [“US Makes its Move in the Arctic: How Will Moscow Respond?”](#) [Wilson Center - January 2]

Events on the Maritime Domain



- On January 10, 2024, Exim India Shipping Times and its partners held the [9th East Coast Maritime Forum 2024](#) in Kolkata, India.
- On January 11, 2024, Center for Strategic & International Studies Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program hosted an in-person discussion on [“Navigating Security Challenges in the Black Sea Region.”](#)
- On January 16, 2024, Center for Strategic & International Studies Asia Program hosted a hybrid discussion on [“Indo-Pacific Forecast 2024.”](#)
- On January 16, 2024, Maritime Research Alliance held an event at Copenhagen Business School for [“Maritime Research Alliance PhD Day: Decarbonizing the maritime sector.”](#)
- From January 16-17, 2024, Pacific Forum and their partners held the [Operationalizing Integration in the Indo-Pacific \(OIIP\): 2024](#) dialogue in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, which sought “to facilitate dialogue and solutions between the private and public sectors in the hopes of hastening integration.”

- From January 17-19, 2024, US Climate Variability and Predictability Program (US CLIVAR) and their co-sponsors hosted a hybrid workshop on [“Polar Amplification of Climate Change Across Hemispheres and Seasons: Causes and Constraints.”](#)
- On January 24, 2024, Hudson Institute hosted an event on [“Reinforcing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.”](#) A recording is available.
- On January 24, 2024, Alaska Sea Grant and Alaska Ocean Observing System co-hosted the [January 2024 Alaska Marine Policy Forum](#); a one-hour meeting held every other month with participants across the state interested in marine policy in Alaska.
- From January 29-31, 2024, SAE Media Group hosted the [9th annual Maritime Reconnaissance and Surveillance Technology](#) conference in London, United Kingdom.
- From January 29-February 1, 2024, the hybrid [Arctic Frontiers 2024: Actions and Reactions](#) conference took place in Tromsø, Norway with the aim to “connect different expertise and perspectives from areas such as policy, science and business.”
- On January 31, 2024, The Heritage Foundation will host a virtual event titled [“NATO Secretary General on Modern Needs of the Alliance 75 Years After Its Founding.”](#) Registration is still open.
- On February 5, 2024, The Heritage Foundation will host a hybrid event on [“An Agenda for Regaining America’s Maritime Security and Competitiveness.”](#) Registration is still open.
- On February 6, 2024, Economist Impact and The Nippon Foundation will hold a [Back to Blue in Japan](#) event on “Eliminating marine chemical pollution: a roadmap for Japan and beyond.”
- From February 6-7, 2024, Pacific Forum International will host the virtual [“Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes Workshop Series”](#) to “explore common environmental crimes in the region and their gendered impacts” in the Coral Triangle region.
- On February 8, 2024, DNV will host its virtual [“Maritime Energy Transition Summit”](#) to showcase the latest advances in alternative fuels, energy efficiency technologies, and more.
- From February 27-28, 2024, the IGGS Group will be hosting the [World Maritime Forum](#) in Copenhagen, Denmark, with one of the key focus areas of this year’s forum being sustainability.
- On February 29, 2023, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore will hold a workshop on [“Navigating Global Challenges: ASEAN’s Responses to the Changing Strategic and Economic Landscape.”](#)
- On February 29, 2024, Maritime Research Alliance and Danish Shipping will co-host a [Conference on Continuing Professional Development Courses for the Maritime Sector](#).
- From March 11-13, 2024, The Economist Group will host [The 11th Annual World Ocean Summit & Expo in Lisbon, Portugal](#), which “convenes the widest cross-section of the ocean community from business and finance to government, national and international policy-makers, civil society, and academia. The summit is designed to instigate action to develop a sustainable ocean economy; to encourage new partnerships across industries, with NGOs, scientists, technology developers and investors.”
- From March 12-14, 2024, [Oceanology International](#) will host their 2024 Expo in London, Excel.
- On March 30, 2024, U.S. Naval Institute and Center for Strategic & International Studies will hold a maritime security dialogue event on [“The Future of AUKUS”](#) with Admiral Harry Harris Jr, USN (Ret.).
- On April 11, 2024, the International Maritime Organization will be holding an [“IMO Seminar on implications, challenges and opportunities of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships \(MASS\) for ports and public authorities.”](#)

Handbill Spotlight

Deep-Sea Mining

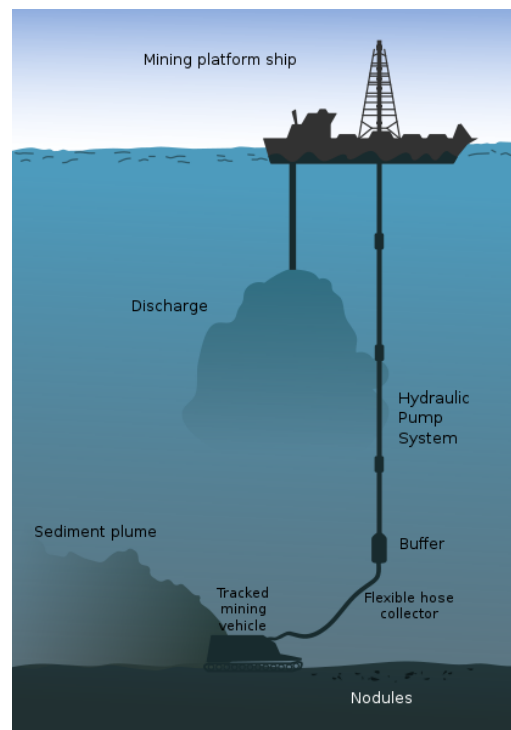
Issue Background ¹

Deep-sea mining commonly refers to the extraction or retrieval of mineral deposits from ocean floor at or below 200 meters (656 feet)—an area believed to contain rich resources of valuable and critical minerals including copper, cobalt, nickel, manganese, platinum, zinc, lead, iron, silver and gold. Although [scientific exploration](#) into the deep sea began as early as the 1870s, [serious discussions](#) about the commercial potentials of deep sea minerals only started to emerge in the 1960s, and the industry remains in an early, experimental stage. As of 2023, no large-scale commercial extraction operations—or “exploitation”—have occurred in the deep sea. Deep-sea mining projects are thus limited to the stage of [“exploration,”](#) where companies and organizations obtain and exercise exclusive rights to test the technical feasibility, commercial viability and environmental impacts of deep-sea mining within a given region.

Currently, deep-sea mining is governed under a dual regime. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a coastal state has sovereign rights to explore and exploit natural resources on its [continental shelf](#)—“seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea,” roughly between 200 to 350 nautical miles beyond its coast. Meanwhile, the seabed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction—“the Area”—are specifically designated as [“the common heritage of mankind”](#) and must be managed [“for the benefit of humankind as a whole.”](#) The International Seabed Authority (ISA), an autonomous international organization under the UNCLOS framework, is tasked to administer the mineral resources of the Area, including by considering and adopting [rules, regulations and procedures on deep-sea mining](#) and the “equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits” derived therefrom.

Recent Events

As global development and the transition to renewable energy both contribute to an increase in long-term demand for valuable and critical minerals, businesses are expressing more interests in the commercial exploitation of deep-sea minerals as an alternative or as an additional option to land-based mining. However, the rising commercial interests are contrasted with gaps in international governance. In June 2021, the Republic of Nauru notified the ISA that it hopes to sponsor an exploitation project in the Area, and thus [officially requested](#) the ISA to complete



¹ Image: Deep sea mining schematic with ship as mining platform. (Credit: [G.Mannaerts/CC BY-SA 4.0](#))

negotiations and adopt regulations on deep-sea minerals exploitation in two years, before June 30, 2023. The ISA adopted [several regulations](#) on the exploration of deep-sea minerals in the 2010s, but was still preparing and revising draft regulations on exploitation at the time. Meanwhile, a number of environmental advocates and researchers have argued that deep-sea mining could cause significant and irreversible damage to [biodiversity and ocean ecosystems](#), and that more studies should be conducted before large-scale commercial activities can be allowed. Accordingly, a number of countries including Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have proposed [a moratorium of deep-sea mining](#), while France has called for a complete ban on the practice. The ISA's [28th Assembly session](#), held in July 2023, did not reach a conclusion on either the exploitation regulation or the moratorium, and negotiations are expected to resume during the ISA's next meeting in [March 2024](#).

At the same time, movements towards deep-sea mining and corresponding controversies are also observed within national jurisdictions. On January 9, 2024, the government of Norway [decided to open up](#) 280,000 square km (108,000 square miles) of its national waters for deep-sea minerals exploration operations. While some experts [have criticized](#) the development as a step towards Norway's opening up to commercial exploitation, others defended the move either as a necessary prerequisite to [learn more](#) about the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining, or as a way to [fulfill the world's needs](#) for critical minerals. In the same vein, Cook Islands said in July 2023 that the country would ["proceed with caution"](#) to assess the feasibility of deep-sea mining in its national waters, while Japan [announced plans](#) to start extracting critical minerals from its seabed as early as 2024.

Keep In Mind

When UNCLOS was signed in 1982, deep-sea mining was only a concept—an idea for the future given the relatively abundant access to metals and minerals at the time. Today, 22 contractors sponsored by more than 20 countries have applied for and obtained exclusive rights to [examine the feasibility](#) of deep-sea mining in international waters. As demands for critical minerals continue to be on the rise given their significance in renewable energy, electric vehicles and critical technologies, and as accessible land-based resources simultaneously start to deplete, business and political interests in deep-sea mining will only increase.

National and international governance of deep-sea mining will face different challenges. As an increasing number of countries express interests to open up their waters to deep-sea mining, both businesses and environmentalists will need to familiarize themselves with a variety of jurisdictions to balance economic interests and environmental concerns. At the international front, much attention will be drawn to the ISA and to its ability to make rules on deep-sea minerals exploitation. At the same time, it should be cautioned that, although the United States [recognizes UNCLOS](#) as customary international law, the U.S. is not a party to the Convention and, thus, has not been a member of the ISA since its establishment in 1994. This may become an issue of concern as the international community proceeds to govern and make rules about deep-sea mining through the UNCLOS and the ISA framework.

This issue's [Spotlight](#) was written by Amanda Jin, ICAS Long-Term Research Assistant

ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

— Annual Publication —

ICAS 2023 Annual Report

Now approaching the 10-year anniversary of its founding, ICAS has established itself as a fresh voice in the Washington, D.C. think tank community. The team at ICAS is delighted to provide you with a concise overview of our achievements throughout 2023, produced while committedly observing the intricate and dynamic bilateral relationship between the United States and China.

ICAS is committed to maintaining our ongoing engagement with the global community, dedicated to conducting timely and relevant analyses of the U.S.-China relationship. We are excited about the potential achievements that lie ahead and sincerely appreciate your continued support.

Explore & Share the ICAS 2023 Annual Report:

<https://chinaus-icas.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ICAS-2023-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>



— MAP Commentary —

Navigating U.S.-China Maritime Relations

By Nong Hong

January 22, 2024

At the start of 2024, the outlook for U.S.-China maritime relations continues to be marked by complex dynamics and ongoing tensions, particularly within the Indo-Pacific region. Several key factors are shaping the relationship...

Read Online: <https://chinaus-icas.org/research/navigating-u-s-china-maritime-relations/>

— BCCC Commentary —

Emission Control Areas in the Mediterranean and their implications for the South China Sea

By Nong Hong

January 11, 2024

Globally, the implementation of Emission Control Areas (ECAs) has become widespread as a means to regulate and mitigate air pollution resulting from maritime activities. ECAs are specifically

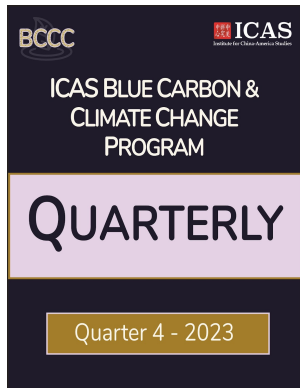
designated maritime zones where stringent regulations are in place to control sulfur oxide (SOx), nitrogen oxide (NOx), and particulate matter emissions from ships...

Read Online:

<https://chinaus-icas.org/research/emission-control-areas-in-the-mediterranean-and-their-implications-for-the-south-china-sea/>

— BCCC Quarterly Publication —

Blue Carbon & Climate Change Quarterly: 2023 Q4



The first week of 2024, the ICAS Blue Carbon & Climate Change Program released its BCCC Quarterly newsletter for 2023 Q4. This issue features a 'Theme of the Quarter' on "Multinational Climate Engagements" and a 'Blue Carbon Country Profile' on 'The United Kingdom.'

Released each quarter, the BCCC Quarterly records the most important trends and developments regarding blue carbon policies and regulations in China, the U.S., and other regions, as well as international regimes, such as under the United Nations framework. It also includes two special sections—the 'Theme of the Quarter' and the 'Blue Carbon Country Profile'—that aim to bring a fresh and applicable element to each issue. A condensed, Chinese-language is also regularly released soon after the full issue.

[Explore & Share the BCCC Quarterly 2023 Q4 Issue \[In Chinese\]](#)

[About the BCCC Quarterly](#)

[Explore the ICAS Blue Carbon & Climate Change Program](#)

BCCC Quarterly (Q4 2023) - 1


Theme of the Quarter: Multinational Climate Engagements

News on Multinational Climate Engagements
COP28 Reached Several Key Agreements to Combat Climate Change

On December 13, the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference—also known as 2023 Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC or simply as COP28—concluded in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, reaching the milestone "UAE Consensus." Following days of discussions and negotiations, the conference achieved agreements on several critical issues demanding immediate action. These include confirming the urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels, the establishment and implementation of a "loss and damage" fund, and the reaffirmation of the commitment to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The most noteworthy achievement was when delegations of different countries reached an agreement on plans for transitioning away from fossil fuels, which is unprecedented in the history of the United Nations Climate Change Conferences. More countries are beginning to recognize that in order to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, specifically to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5°C, it is necessary to gradually phase out all fossil fuels. Previously, for various reasons including energy security and economic development, many countries refused to seriously discuss the issue of fossil fuels at all. COP28 is the first time that fossil fuel is specifically marked as a primary cause of climate change in the Conference's outcome document. Indeed, the consensus still falls short of some countries' expectations because transitions cannot happen overnight for those countries originally opposed to phasing out fossil fuels. It took a longer time for countries to reach an agreement on this issue because some countries, especially the developing countries, considered the term "phase down" or "phase out" of fossil fuels to be too radical. Delegations eventually agreed that the phrase "transition away from fossil fuels" best aligns with the collective interests of countries worldwide. Generally speaking, even though the details of this agreement are somewhat ambiguous, adoption of the first deal on fossil fuels is a victory for humanity.¹

Additionally, COP28 successfully—and fairly easily—approved the climate disaster "loss and damage fund" that was first tabled at COP27. Developed countries aim to contribute to the fund in order to support developing nations vulnerable to climate change. During the conference alone, not only did the fund receive over US\$700 million in donation pledges from various countries, it was also confirmed that the fund will be managed by the World Bank. Later, it also mobilized another US\$57 billion from different global solidarity groups, governments, businesses, investors and philanthropies. Overall, COP28 raised



¹Image: Delegates during the Closing Plenary at the UN Climate Change Conference COP28 at Expo City Dubai on December 13, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (Source: COP28 / Anthony Ffrench via Flickr)

BCCC Quarterly (Q4 2023) - 22

Blue Carbon Country Profile: The United Kingdom

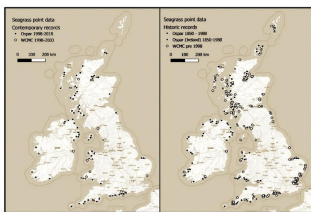
A. Potential of the United Kingdom in Blue Carbon Affairs

The United Kingdom, with its extensive marine and coastal environments, plays a significant role in global blue carbon affairs. Notably, the United Kingdom's definition of what counts as a blue carbon resource slightly differs from that of many other countries. Saltmarsh, seagrass, and mangroves that are generally considered as the three types of blue carbon resources all can be found in the British Isles and UK Overseas Territories. In addition, the UK also includes macroalgae, seafloor sediments, and kelp forests in the defined list of blue carbon resources, and they are widely distributed along the UK's coastal areas as well. Still, the UK has relatively few blue carbon resources in total reserves compared to countries with rich blue carbon resources, and some blue carbon ecosystems cannot even survive in some parts of its water. Nevertheless, since the UK has committed to a legally binding target to reach Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, blue carbon ecosystems still make a significant contribution in terms of carbon capture and coastal ecosystem conservation. The most recent data shows that these ecosystems sequester and store around 2% of UK emissions per year.²

- Amount of mapped seagrass: 84.39 km² (2021)
- Amount of mapped saltmarsh: 350 km² (2022)
- Amount of mangroves: 316km² (2021)

◦ Note: Mangroves can only be found in UK Overseas Territories because they cannot survive in the British Isles due to its geographical location and climate.

- Key Institutions of Study on Blue Carbon: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Key Regions of Interest: Scottish Special Areas of Conservation, Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas



²Seagrass point data from the DEFRA and UNEP-WORLD Conservation Monitoring Centre datasets showing contemporary records (left) and historic records (right). (Source: Green AE, Unsworth RW, Choudhry MA and Jones PS (2021) Historical Analysis Expanses Continental Seagrass Loss for the United Kingdom. Front. Plant Sci. 12:629962. doi: 10.3389/fpls.2021.629962)