

Managing Editor's Comments

Dear *JTMS* Readers,

Greetings again. As spring fades to summer in Seoul the weather is warming and we are putting the finishing touches on our Summer/Fall 2022 issue. At the same time, whispers of a return to normal life turned out to be too good to be true. As we cautiously imagine what normal life means for each of us, not only as academics but everyday people, it is hard not to be jolted back to the reality that, for the people in war-torn Ukraine, this tentative return to the mundane life we have all missed so much during COVID is currently beyond their reach. Instead, they are faced with a struggle for the survival of not only their country, but themselves. Before this, the norm of state sovereignty had become so matter of fact that a journal such as this came to exist: not to contemplate the issue of invasion or annexation, but largely non-kinetic territorial disputes that have largely come to be the realm of international law, politics, and arbitration. The shock in the initial days of the Ukraine conflict demonstrated this fact as the international community channeled its collective outrage and rallied to aid the Ukraine with military, humanitarian, and financial aid, also taking aim at Russia with punishing financial sanctions. Needless to say, state sovereignty is not as safe as we had believed nor is interstate war a thing of the past. In such a turbulent environment, *JTMS* continues to examine sources of territorial conflict between states in hopes that, in some small way, we can contribute to a better understanding that discourages escalation to the point of the kind of bloodshed that fills our news and various media feeds today. On that grim note, I would like to introduce our current issue.

First, Maximilian Ernst notes that China's assertive policy toward the South China Sea (SCS) is commonly explained as a function of Beijing's objective to control shipping lanes and resources (fish, hydrocarbons), and to cater to nationalist sentiments. Some publications also point to the alternative explanation of China's military-strategic interests. By analyzing Beijing's SCS policy, including aggressive action but also offers of cooperation, Ernst determines which explanation is more adequate. He finds that China not only coerces SCS littoral states, but also offers cooperation in maritime security and joint resource exploration. As the example of the Philippines demonstrates, these offers are predicated on littoral states' unequivocal acceptance of Chinese illegal territorial claims. Beijing views joint resource exploration as means to the end of physical control over SCS maritime territory, supporting its military-strategic interests. If the littoral state accepts China's territorial claims, it is granted access to resources within its EEZ or may develop said resources jointly with China. Ernst suggests that Asia-Pacific states should reconsider their SCS policies, accounting for the fact that China's ultimate objective is not control over commercial

shipping lanes and resources, but the deployment of military assets on SCS maritime territory to support A2/AD and further military-strategic objectives.

Second, Stefan Kirchner, Nuccio Mazzullo, Ayonghe Akonwi Nebasifu, Pamela Lesser, Paula Tulppo, Katri-Maaria Kyllönen and Katharina Heinrich show that holistic, interdisciplinary research has a key role to play in the study of cross-border environmental governance using the example of the northernmost regions of continental Europe, in particular the border regions between Norway and Finland and between Sweden and Finland, respectively. Their article is meant to inspire a debate on the modalities of future research related to Arctic governance and to suggest that Arctic governance research requires a broader research philosophy that transcends the dominant views from the perspectives of law and political sciences. Kirchner et al.'s article is not intended as a recapitulation or summary of research but rather contains a call for action by establishing the outlines for a new approach in international and interdisciplinary research into cross-border environmental governance, with a particular view to the protection of biodiversity in the Arctic. Such interdisciplinary research has the potential to contribute to strengthening the position of local stakeholders in the area in question, including rural, indigenous, and underrepresented communities. In addition, such interdisciplinary research can strengthen the capacities of relatively small cross-border institutions, such as border river commissions, by generating and sharing scientific knowledge, the generation of which would have been beyond the economic, technical, or other means of such institutions often providing public services that are disproportionately important in relation to their size or funding.

Third, Alik Naha explains that, in the Indian Ocean region, the Bay of Bengal is re-emerging economically and strategically and argues the region has become a theater of strategic powerplay due to its strategic relevance, the presence of critical SLOCs, and the strong economic prospects of several adjoining states. India is the region's largest naval power, and it strives to maintain a rule-based maritime order. Therefore, Naha investigates possible strategies for India for becoming a regional net security provider by using content analysis. He finds that as key forces in the region fight for strategic and economic initiatives, the Bay of Bengal's strategic importance will only increase. As a result of these advantages, rival states' naval capabilities and presence in the Indo-Pacific will enhance. Along with a pervasive sense of competitiveness in the region, there are more opportunities for friendly nations to collaborate. India must be willing to try new things and let go of old inhibitions when it is needed. It must pursue principles like burden-sharing and fully utilize the friendly navies eager to assist India's position in the area. India would have to manage its relations with China as it continues to construct a Bay community. Naha predicts the Sino-Indian dynamic will have a profound impact on the region's growing security architecture in the maritime sphere, meaning India must work on building trust, strengthening, and diversifying its engagement with partner countries, and continue its HADR role to further calibrate its position in the region. By strengthening its engagements, India would be able to shift from a reactive to a proactive policy.

Fourth, Saidatul Nadia Abd Aziz and Salawati Mat Basir observe that the intensification of disputes in the South China Sea evolved through time concentrating on assertions of sovereignty by the multiplicity of claimants, increasing of competition over maritime resources and worsening geopolitical rivalries among great powers. They contend the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions are amongst the most dynamic in the world as well

as centers of economic growth for decades, with Southeast Asia at the center. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has placed the promotion of regional peace and security at the forefront of its endeavors and had taken a proactive approach in evolving a comprehensive regional security architecture by building ASEAN-centric regional security frameworks, namely ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific which undertake cooperation in a broad range of areas, including maritime cooperation as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Code of Conduct (COC). Aziz and Basir employ a doctrinal approach and draw data from primary and secondary sources, including desktop research, with a particular emphasis on recent journals, documents, and official reports. They find that, despite the efforts made by ASEAN to balance the influence of great powers, its individual member states craft their own diplomatic relations according to their economic needs and development. Therefore, because the ASEAN Framework has very weak foundations, it is crucial for ASEAN to focus on the implementation of COC and multilateralism to strengthen its ability to shape regional security dynamic. ASEAN already possesses the mechanisms; all that remains is to endow them with significant implementation powers.

Fifth, Sriparna Pathak and Obja Borah Hazarika highlight that India and China have been locked in a border standoff since May 2020 and, even after 14 rounds of border talks between the two militaries, a resolution is nowhere in sight. Their viewpoint paper aims to outline how the events unfolded, track reactions from countries worldwide, and analyze the Chinese rationale behind the attacks. Following an inductive form of reasoning and moving from the particular to the general, statements on the digital platform from heads of state and important people in positions of power from both sides are taken cognizance of and analyzed. Both primary and secondary literature sources are looked into to outline how the crisis unfolded. They contend that the Galwan crisis is a watershed moment in the history of India-China relations and has implications for regional and global stability. As China, owing to its economic and political clout in the international arena, continues rising and posing challenges for the liberal, democratic Western world, countries like India have to take cognizance of the new realities around China and accordingly tweak their foreign policies in accordance. The authors conclude that, for India, it is essential to understand how it can recalibrate its relationship with China by taking note of the countries that stood by it during such a crisis with China.

Finally, in our book reviews we have an excellent assessment of Dariusz Rafal Bugajski's *Navigational Rights and Freedoms in the International Law and Practice* that I'm sure our readers will enjoy.

In closing, I would like to thank our editorial board and staff for their dedication in spite of the difficulties of the past few years of pandemic life. I would also like to thank our authors and readers for their continued faith in *JTMS* and to join us in sending our collective thoughts and prayers to all those enduring the war in Ukraine. May they find peace in the near future.

Lonnie Edge
Managing Editor