

Editor's Comments

Dear *JTMS* Readers,

Greetings again from *JTMS*. The temperatures have once again dropped, and winter is here. While the changing of the seasons marches on, the conflicts we are seeing in Ukraine and the Middle East remain. Territory, and the conflicts it engenders, continues to be an important issue for study to create a better understanding of how these conflicts occur and how they may be avoided in the future. Before I introduce this issue, I would like to welcome our new editorial board members.

First, Jevon Dixon investigates the socioeconomic and political patterns of cyberattacks in the maritime sector. He uses data from the Maritime Cyber Attack Database, Democracy Index data from the Economist Intelligence Unit, political regime data from Freedom House, and income level data from the World Bank. Descriptive statistics and hierarchical clustering are employed to identify patterns in the data set. His analysis reveals that socioeconomic, (geo)political, and technological factors influence the dynamics of maritime cyber-incidents. Notably, the research highlights the attribution problem in cyberspace as seen by the huge percentage of cyberattacks from unknown origins. The findings reveal clusters of countries that are targeted similarly by cybercriminals. Dixon provides evidence that geopolitical tensions are increasingly reflected in the maritime cyber-domain. It suggests the need for tailored national maritime cybersecurity strategies and the establishment of an international framework for collaborative efforts among governments, private sector, and international organizations.

Second, Ipshita Chakravarty asserts that, while a plethora of literature exists on the ethnographic study of tribes native to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI), a paucity of literature that evaluates its geostrategic relevance in India's maritime security discourse exists. Chakravarty deploys a content analysis model and a descriptive approach to arrive at its findings to address this blind spot. She finds the geostrategic relevance of the ANI has amplified with the pivot to Asia being completed, the enunciation of the Indo-Pacific strategy and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) emerging as a battleground for the two Asiatic giants, India and China. The ANI acts as India's naval sentinel in the eastern sector of the IOR. It is a springboard for power projection, forward presence and defender of India's national interest amid conventional threats in the IOR. Chakravarty concludes that to navigate the geopolitical power shift in the IOR, the Indian mainland has adopted a proactive approach to the capacity building of the archipelago.

Third, Alik Naha contends that deepening the strategic partnership between Seoul and New Delhi is crucial to establish partnerships that can advance the shared values inherent in the strategy of fostering a "free Indo-Pacific." According to Naha, amid the

backdrop of the great power competition between the United States and China, which casts a shadow over the Indo-Pacific region, New Delhi and Seoul recognize the significance of forging stronger ties to wield a substantial influence on global dynamics in economics, technology, and politics. While the bilateral relationship between India and South Korea has witnessed rapid evolution over the past decade, South Korea has received relatively less attention within India's Indo-Pacific initiative compared to other strategic partners such as Japan, the United States, Australia (through the QUAD), and ASEAN. Naha contends that, as middle powers capable of uniting smaller countries in the region, both India and South Korea bear a responsibility to contribute to the construction of a positive regional order.

Fourth, Eduardo Cavalcanti de Mello Filho presents an alternative interpretation of Grotius, challenging the conventional association of his ideas solely with the "freedom of the seas" and *res communis*. This perspective hinges on Grotius' emphasis on expediency as a pivotal factor in shaping the law of the sea, such as considering whether it is expedient for coastal states to exert sovereignty over territorial waters. Cavalcanti's reassessment aims to evaluate the compatibility of contemporary law of the sea, including recent developments like the 2023 Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, with the Grotian tradition. Given Grotius' substantial influence on scholarly perceptions of the law of the sea, the proposed reassessment may impact how relevant epistemic communities conceptualize the contemporary law of the sea. Under positive international law, it is also posited that the Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, identified as Grotian, could influence the status of the high seas by emphasizing a community-oriented approach, supplanting the "freedom of the seas" as the default rule.

Fifth, Vasiliki Lampiri discusses whether maritime delimitation agreements can be terminated in the face of sea-level rise due to the invocation of a fundamental change of circumstances under Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. She explains that the authentic and correct interpretation of the boundary exception in Article 62(2) (a) covers equally land and maritime boundaries, and thus maritime delimitation agreements cannot be terminated due to climate change. Even in the event of a different interpretation, sea-level rise could not amount to a fundamental change of circumstances because the threshold to meet the conditions of Article 62(1) is extremely high. Lampiri asserts that, despite the extensive scholarship on the effects of sea-level rise on baselines and unilateral limits, few articles focus exclusively on its effects on maritime delimitation agreements. Through an examination of Articles 31 and 62 of the VCLT—on treaty interpretation and the *rebus sic stantibus* clause, respectively—this article provides a step-by-step analysis and deconstructs the arguments advocating for the termination of maritime agreements in the face of climate change.

Sixth, Pranav Bhaskar and Sitakanta Mishra attempt to divine the future of the Quadrilateral Group (Quad) by scrutinizing its evolution, the pronouncements of its leaders, and observing the reorientations of its members' security strategy in collaboration with other members. Since its inception, the Quad has been perceived, and also dismissed, as the "Asian NATO." Most of the literature rejects the extrapolation of the Cold War scenario and the emergence of NATO in the evolving Indo-Pacific strategic context. While China has viewed it as an anti-China grouping, the Quad members deny it as a military grouping intending to counter China. They conclude that the Quad, in the short term, will evolve as

an Informal Intergovernmental Organization if one examines the members' reorientation of military-strategic posture and the group's agenda. In the longer term, depending on the pace of Chinese assertive behavior, it may take the form of a military-strategic alliance or a different avatar, which is unpredictable. Last but not least, Vishal Singh Bhadauriya reviews *The New Cold War: The United States, Russia, and China from Kosovo to Ukraine* by Gilbert Achcar.

In closing and as always, I would like to thank our readers, our authors, and our editorial board and staff for their continued support. May you have a healthy and happy 2025.

Jongyun Bae
Editor