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Managing Editor's Comments

Dear *JTMS* Readers,

We are pleased to present this issue of *JTMS* to round out 2018 and kick off 2019. This past year has seen an escalation of tensions between the U.S. and China over trade which is sure to spill over into other areas of tensions such as the East and South China Seas. In addition, the issues of piracy and maritime security continue to be hot topics. Finally, this year has also highlighted environmental issues such as loss of fish stocks, warming seas and species' extinction. This issue of *JTMS* has its finger on the pulse of all of those important concerns.

First, Alexis Ian P. Dela Cruz argues that the absence of a regional seas convention (RSC) in the South China Sea, one of the world's most critical marine environments, is alarming. Presently, a United Nations body coordinates East Asian marine environmental "policy" on the basis of participating states' goodwill. His contribution addresses this regional legal gap by examining RSCs elsewhere to understand whether state practice on marine environmental protection now includes the duty to conclude RSCs.

Second, Natalie Klein examines the implications of the *Timor Sea Conciliation* for other maritime boundary disputes. Her offering provides original perspectives on conciliation under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for the settlement of maritime boundary disputes. In addition, Klein brings up new factors to consider regarding agreement on the delimitation of Korea's maritime boundaries with China and Japan.

Third, Awet Tewelde Weldemichael discusses how the oft-romanticized view of the Indian Ocean region glosses over the physical and systemic violence that dots its history. He illustrates this point through a broad analysis of the crimes of illegal fishing and maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia, and specific examination of the tragic case of three Thai fishing boats that Somali pirates captured in mid-April 2010.

Fourth, in the first of two articles dealing with the Arctic, Ekrem Korkut and Lara B. Fowler's article considers whether international law and the Law of the Sea have sufficient rules to protect the Arctic marine environment, and if so, to what extent those protections apply. There are many issues in the Arctic Ocean including outer continental shelf claims, passage rights through the Arctic Straits, protection of marine biodiversity, protection of the marine environment, and military activities. In this research, the authors examine solely the issue of the protection of the Arctic marine environment and the polar code.

Finally, Stefan Kirchner discusses the serious threat liquefaction of dry cargoes poses threat to maritime safety. As this is a frequent cause of loss of life at sea, this text aims at raising awareness of the utility of existing international law norms to contribute to disaster risk reduction (DRR) at sea in this context. He argues that awareness of Arctic conditions and risks can help increase awareness of specific Arctic risks among crew members. There are not specific DCL-related rules in the Polar Code but learning about Arctic-specific risks can complement existing rules, such as those of the IMSBC Code, to enhance seafarer safety.

As always, we could not do what we do without our editorial board, our authors, our peer reviewers and you, our readers. I would like to thank all those involved for your continued support and wish you a safe and happy start to the New Year. We look forward to bringing you even more great research and the ongoing improvement of *JTMS*.

Best Wishes for 2019,
Lonnie Edge
Co-Managing Editor