

Editor's Comments

Dear *JTMS* Readers,

Greetings once again from the *Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies*. As we move through 2025, the maritime and geopolitical landscape continues to reveal both the enduring significance of the law of the sea and the adaptive resilience of states facing evolving regional and technological challenges. The articles in this issue illuminate how legal innovation, strategic calculation, and governance reform intersect across multiple maritime domains—from Europe and the Indo-Pacific to Southeast Asia and beyond.

Our first contribution, by Panagiotis Palaios and Andreas-Minos Zompanakis, explores the role of geopolitical uncertainty in defense procurement through a case study of the Hellenic Navy's 2021 frigate acquisition. By integrating the Analytic Hierarchy Process with a volatility-based geopolitical risk model, the authors demonstrate how strategic alliances, technology transfer, and defense industrial cooperation can reshape procurement outcomes, urging decision-makers to incorporate geopolitical variables into quantitative frameworks for future acquisitions.

Our second article, by Deniz Kocak, examines maritime critical infrastructure and hybrid threats in Southeast Asia. Drawing on securitization theory and content analysis of defense policy documents, the study reveals how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states pursue divergent technological and governance strategies despite shared vulnerabilities. Kocak highlights that modular, threat-specific cooperation—rather than broad multilateralism—offers the most viable path to regional resilience in the face of hybrid cyber and subsea threats.

The third contribution, by Gülay Çağla Fıratlı, revisits United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) compulsory jurisdiction in disputes pending maritime delimitation. Through textual and contextual interpretation, the article argues that obligations of conduct under Articles 74(3) and 83(3) remain justiciable even where states have invoked the Article 298 opt-out clause. This insight strengthens the jurisprudence of cooperative conduct and underscores how legal interpretation can promote dialogue and provisional arrangements despite contested boundaries.

The fourth article, by Ipsa Sahu, turns to strategic diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific through the case of the Philippines. Using discourse analysis of official documents and elite narratives, Sahu maps Manila's adaptive engagement with the United States, China, India, Japan, and South Korea. The study shows how the Philippines navigates great-power rivalry by diversifying security partnerships, maintaining strategic autonomy, and advancing a rules-based maritime order that aligns smaller-state agency with multipolar realities.

For our fifth article, in a multi-level theoretical contribution, Tran Bach Hieu, Le Hoang Kiet, and Tran Xuan Hiep analyze Sino-Indian competition in the Indian Ocean Region through David Singer's system-state-individual framework. Their study conceptualizes the IOR as a "smokeless battlefield" shaped not by direct conflict but by infrastructure investment, soft diplomacy, and leadership-driven nationalism—offering a layered understanding of contemporary power politics in the maritime domain.

Our sixth piece, by Haidy Ahmed, proposes a new implementation agreement to UNCLOS—modeled on the BBNJ Agreement—to strengthen the governance and protection of submarine communications cables. Ahmed argues that such an agreement could balance the sovereign rights of coastal states with global digital interdependence, ensuring that the backbone of the world's internet infrastructure receives the same cooperative legal attention as marine biodiversity or straddling fish stocks.

Our seventh article, by Maxim Shoshany, applies a scientific-geospatial method to evaluate the equitability of the 2022 Lebanon–Israel maritime boundary agreement. Through an equal-breadth perpendicular line analysis, Shoshany concludes that, despite political controversy, the technical delimitation itself meets the fairness standards of international maritime jurisprudence—offering an objective benchmark for assessing future boundary negotiations in the eastern Mediterranean.

Finally, in our book review section, first, we feature *Cultural Influences on the Law of the Sea: History, Legacy, and Future Prospects*, edited by James Kraska and Hayoun Ryou-Ellison. This timely volume underscores how regional traditions, values, and historical experiences shape the interpretation and practice of maritime law, reminding us that legal universality is always tempered by cultural plurality. Second, *Connecting the Indian Ocean World: Across Sea and Land*, edited by Shimada & Seshan, eds., is a vibrant collection whose archival range and methodological diversity illuminate the lived textures of circulation and coastal-hinterland linkages across time.

Together, these contributions demonstrate the breadth of contemporary maritime studies—from the technicalities of vessel procurement to the legal frontiers of undersea governance, from Southeast Asia's hybrid vulnerabilities to the Mediterranean's enduring boundary debates. Each advances a richer understanding of how law, strategy, and technology intertwine across an increasingly contested oceanic order.

As always, we extend our deep gratitude to our authors, reviewers, and readers for their ongoing commitment to rigorous and innovative scholarship. Your support sustains *JTMS* as a forum for critical dialogue and maritime insight.

Warm regards,
Jongyun Bae
Editor